



Gifted in Rural America:

Faces of Diversity



The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N.

Blank International Center for Gifted

Education and Talent Development

College of Education

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Dedication

*To the gifted students and the teachers in rural
America who reflect the diversity of our country.*

And

*In honor of Jocelyn Wallace, Henry D. Wallace,
and Linda Wallace-Gray,
whose funding support made this report possible and
available to the nation.*

*And in special Memorial Tribute to
Henry B. Wallace,
September 18, 1915–August 3, 2005.*

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This report is available at no cost online at www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank

I. Introduction

Stereotypically, when people think of diversity, especially ethnic diversity, it is usually associated with urban settings. However, diversity, in all its forms, is found in all types of communities including rural communities, which are often perceived to be “ethnically bland.”



If we were to choose one word that best captures

the reality of current American education and the aspirations for our future, that word would be diversity. America has always been diverse, but this national characteristic has become its most distinguishing feature.

Diversity is becoming a salient attribute of talented and gifted programs. We know firsthand that exceptional talent cuts across gender, ethnicity, family background, language, and geography. To begin to understand gifted programs is to begin to understand diversity.

Stereotypically, when people think of diversity, especially ethnic diversity, it is usually associated with urban settings. However, diversity, in all its forms, is found in all types of communities including rural communities, which are often perceived to be “ethnically bland.”

Gifted education is inextricably linked to rural education. The earliest pioneers of gifted education were from rural communities. Lewis Terman, from rural Indiana, authored the famous longitudinal research that broke stereotypes about the “frailty” and “shyness” of gifted students. As well, he introduced psychometrics as an effective means of recognizing giftedness. Leta Stetter Hollingworth, born in a sod house in Nebraska, first articulated the social-emotional needs of gifted students, as well, pioneered research with profoundly gifted students.

There are a number of natural ties between gifted education and rural education. Both have borne the brunt of educational fads, both have received low priority in terms of funding, and both have received minimal national attention.

The 21st century brings new perspective to these connections, and diversity is the key to this new perspective. Attention and appreciation for gifted education are on the rise. More educators and the public in general realize that America has many bright and talented students and their needs are not always met in school. At the same time, there is a national re-thinking about small and rural schools. America is figuring out that bigger is by no means better and that urban does not trump rural. Through the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation (to name only two), the nation is focusing on how the “essence” of rural schools can be brought to non-rural communities to benefit the education enterprise.

Gifted education, rural settings, and ethnicity come together in this report. The purpose of this report is to highlight diversity as the common thread that is interwoven throughout these concepts.

The educational opportunities of gifted and talented students living

Rural Definitions

As described in *Gifted Education in Rural Schools: A National Assessment*, Colangelo, Assouline, & New, 1999, pp. 28–30.

Federal

Among the federal offices that have definitions of rural, the **Census Bureau's** two definitions are among the most commonly used. In its decennial survey, the Bureau defines rural as a residual category of places “outside urbanized area in open country, or in communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants,” with a population density of “less than 1,000 inhabitants per square mile.” In its monthly household sample surveys, however, the Census Bureau uses the term nonmetropolitan instead of rural. Nonmetropolitan refers to counties “outside of, or not integrated with, large population concentrations of 50,000 or more.”

Another federal office, the **Economic Research Service** (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture organizes its classification by counties. There are 10 ERS categories, ranging from the central areas of very large cities at 0, to “completely rural” areas that are not adjacent to any sort of town or city at 9. According to *The Condition of Education in Rural Schools*, which has a thorough chapter concerning the definition and characteristics of rural schools,

all 10 types of counties have rural schools. For example, 12% of the schools in metropolitan areas (0 to 3 on the ERS scale) are in rural places. By contrast, however, there are no metropolitan schools in counties classified as 9.

The **National Center for Education Statistics** (NCES) provides yet another definition and perhaps the one most relevant to education researchers. Differentiating by community type, the NCES has a five-level chart moving from central city to rural. Each community type is defined, in part, by its relation to a metropolitan statistical area. According to the NCES, a metropolitan statistical area is “a large population nucleus and the nearby communities which have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus.”

Developing an Operational Definition of Rural

As Daryl Hobbs has commented, “The term nonmetropolitan is a residual; it is what is left over after the metropolitan areas have been taken out....The concept of rurality once had significant economical, social, and political associations, but the nonmetropolitan concept that replaced it is primarily, though perhaps not totally, geographic.” We are interested in that more

traditional, i.e., non-residual, “concept of rurality.” We believe that this concept still has currency. In trying to tool an operational definition, we have sought one that is as pliable and inclusive as possible, allowing us to investigate the nature of schools in a variety of rural settings, each with its own unique economic, social, and political characteristics.

For the purposes of our initial report (Colangelo, Assouline, & New, 1999), we examined school districts with 2,000 or fewer students, deeming these “rural and small schools.” This definition has the advantage of being relatively useful and uncomplicated for data collection, allowing us to survey all 50 state departments of education. [See *Gifted Education in Rural Schools: A National Assessment*, 1999.] By excluding distance from a metropolitan area as part of the definition, we were also able to be more encompassing. If anything, our definition errs on the side of including districts that may not be severely isolated or lacking in resources. This is in keeping with the philosophy of the Belin-Blank Center; we do not have a single definition for giftedness, finding it limiting to do so. Similarly, we are more interested in capturing the spirit of rurality than in pigeon-holing it with a narrow definition.

in rural areas and small towns in the United States deserve to be of concern to educators. Rural education is truly a national issue because every state has rural schools. In 1999, it was reported that 42% of all public schools are in small towns and rural areas; 39% of all

public school students, nearly 14.2 million, live in rural/small town communities (Colangelo, et al., 1999). Every state has gifted students who are of diverse background. So this too is a national issue. (See Tables 1–6 in Appendix A for statistics on diversity in rural schools.)

Belin-Blank Center (Rural Reports 1, 2, and 3)

Rural Definitions (continued)

A search in a thesaurus brings forth either saccharine images of calico dresses and harvest time (e.g., pastoral, bucolic) or negative terms that reflect an overall dim view of life outside the city (e.g., unsophisticated, crude). As represented by *The American Heritage College Dictionary's* entry, one common element in the definition of rural is that it is “of the country” and “relating to farming; agriculture.” While the word commonly connotes a tractor in a field, equally deserving of the moniker are New England’s fishing villages, logging towns of the Pacific Northwest, and the Southwest’s desert region populated by American Indian reservations and Mexican-American communities. Each of these is a rural area, albeit non-farming in nature. Each plays a significant role in our national heritage.

The Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development (Belin-Blank Center) has made a major commitment to promoting gifted education in rural schools. Through a generous endowment from the Wallace Research Foundation, the Belin-Blank Center issues periodic national reports on major issues that integrate gifted education and rural schools.

Two national reports have been completed. In 1999, we released ***Gifted Education in Rural Schools: A National Assessment***. This report was a state-of-the-art report on gifted education in rural schools. It provided a comprehensive introduction to the issues as well as statistics, graphs, and figures regarding gifted programs in rural schools by state, as well as national information.

The second report, ***Gifted Voices from Rural America*** (2001), focused on case studies of some remarkably gifted students and their teachers in rural schools. The first report set the stage for

the topic. The second report gave voice to the gifted students and teachers in rural settings, thus capturing the humanity of the topic.

The third report (2006), titled ***Gifted in Rural America: Faces of Diversity***, focuses on the ethnic diversity of gifted students in rural schools. It reflects the face of gifted education in rural America. Through interviews and descriptive statistics, we feature four rural areas: Alabama, Iowa, Washington, and Hawaii and thus present a snapshot of the nation. We hope these stories highlight the interwoven and dynamic elements of ruralness, giftedness, and diversity.

The three reports form a comprehensive look at America’s gifted students in rural settings. Due to an endowment from the Wallace Research Foundation, the Belin-Blank Center will periodically publish reports on aspects of gifted education in rural settings. The first three reports are available online at www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank.

Told that it could not close the county's most racially integrated school while maintaining a segregated school, the school board elected to close both.



How Race Plays Out in a School Consolidation Struggle

Rural Education Cooperative Provides Innovation to Small Schools: Clay County, Alabama

Pop: 14,254

Enrollment: 2,329

Race/Ethnicity: White 76%;
Non-White 24%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 56%

Median Household Income:
\$27,885

Source: 2000 Census, www.census.gov

The fight to keep Bibb Graves School open is a familiar one. On one hand were local and state politicians who believed that consolidating the four high schools of Clay County, Alabama, into two would save money, offer students more academic choices, and create larger and more successful athletic teams. On the other were school administrators, parents, and students who believed their school was the most vital remaining facet of a small community.

The story became more complex, however, due to the repercussions of desegregation and the way in which race issues affect Alabama's education system. A law requiring all school closings in Alabama to be reviewed by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) elicited a visit by DOJ officials in 2002. They found Bibb Graves, which was about one-quarter African American, to be a successful school in terms of race. By contrast, another school in the county was 100 percent Caucasian, a number reflective of the county's open enrollment policy and the long but unspoken tradition of maintaining it as an all-white school.

Ironically for the Bibb Graves community, the justice department's ruling was both an endorsement of the school and its death knell. Told that it could not close the county's most racially in-

tegrated school while maintaining a segregated school, the school board elected to close both.

During the harrowing struggle to keep Bibb Graves School open, many people stayed on top of the story via *The Community Connection*, the school/community newspaper published by high school journalism students. Brodrick Thomas, an African American sophomore at Bibb Graves, who served as the paper's final sports editor, said it was an unusual experience to report on the demise of one's own school. It was an "emotional journey," he said, recalling the many heated board meetings and community gatherings he attended on the subject. The most painful moment came at the end of the 2003 school year when the principal gathered the entire student body for an impromptu assembly and announced the closing. Students, faculty, and staff cried at the news, many in disbelief that they had finally lost their long battle.

When asked why the school's closing was so upsetting, Thomas quickly replied: "It's ours. It's in the middle of our town. Our mamas and fathers and brothers and sisters went here before us. Now all that is gone."

(continued on page 8)

The Mission Statement for the Program for Rural Services and Research

The **Program for Rural Services and Research** (PRSR) works collaboratively with rural communities in Alabama to identify and address local, regional, and statewide issues of concern to those communities in the areas of community/economic development, education, health, and cultural documentation. Although the work of the Program for Rural Services focuses primarily on schools, other venues include communities, local governments, workforce development initiatives, churches, and arts organizations. However, PRSR recognizes schools as the dominant organization in rural communities and much of this collaborative work takes place in school settings.

Through this collaborative work and with input from teachers and school administrators, interrelated initiatives that benefit both students and the community at large are created and implemented at local schools. These initiatives include school/community newspapers; hands-on, entrepreneurial science programs; student-run entrepreneurial ventures; interactive online high school courses; Hispanic educational programs; and

student-created documentation of the cultural history of their communities. All provide individual communities, their schools, and their students with opportunities through which they can thrive and prosper within the rural environment.

Through its work over the past thirty years, the Program for Rural Services has conducted research that has resulted in a wealth of support for the value and viability of small rural schools. This research, combined with support provided to rural communities, has been instrumental in helping a number of communities throughout Alabama to fight consolidation and retain their local small schools.

Directly cited from *Program for Rural Services and Research* (2003). Program for Rural Services and Research [Online]. Available: <http://www.prsr.ua.edu/>

Serving Alabama's Rural Communities:

Over its 27-year history, the **Program for Rural Services and Research** (PRSR) has served Alabama through interrelated research and service programs in four areas: community/economic development, education, health, and cultural documentation. Focusing on these areas, PRSR works collaboratively with rural communities to identify and address local, regional, and statewide issues of concern to them. Through this collaborative work and with input from teachers and school administrators, interrelated initiatives that benefit both students and the community at large are created and implemented at local schools.

The development and implementation of programs at PRSR are guided by several basic approaches:

- commitment to the formation of partnerships to help empower rural communities to address local, regional, and statewide issues within the four areas listed above;
- setting agendas in response to concerns and interests identified collaboratively with rural communities and through research;
- all programs are necessarily interrelated and interdisciplinary, reflecting the nature of rural communities;
- the provision of career-related academic and service opportunities for students.

Program for Rural Services and Research and PACERS University of Alabama. PACERS, small school cooperative, <http://www.prsr.ua.edu/index.html>

“The community mourns every student it loses.”

Still a Believer in Small Schools Despite Consolidation

One person who was affected on several fronts by the consolidation fight was Pam Horn. She taught English, journalism (she was the supervisor for *The Community Connection*), and drama at Bibb Graves for nearly a decade and also had both her sons enrolled there. Horn has given considerable thought during the past several years to the ties that bind communities and schools. Although she is somewhat disillusioned by the political and legal wrangling she has witnessed, as a longtime member of the small schools movement, Horn still believes in the need for small schools.

“Teachers and parents in small schools need to understand that they don’t have to be at a disadvantage,” she says. “They have attributes that make their schools wonderful places to get an education.” She continues by saying that members of small school communities are accountable to those who really matter—and she does not mean the kind of accountability to which standards-toting politicians so often refer. Rather, she’s alluding to doing right by family and neighbors.

This is crucial to Horn who was working towards a Ph.D. in English Literature when she and her husband, Cary, returned to the small, rural valley in the foothills of Appalachia where he grew up. “It’s called Coleta Valley, but

you won’t find it on any map,” Horn says with a warm laugh that invokes the fondness she feels for this lovely and out-of-the-way place. With one son in elementary school and another soon on the way, she became involved with a group of parents and educators brought together by the University of Alabama’s Program for Rural Services and Research. Several years later, after she’d gotten her teaching certificate, she was one of the founding members of the organization’s program devoted to rural schools, Program for the Academic and Cultural Enhancement of Rural Schools (PACERS), which seeks to maintain and enhance rural schools.

Horn estimates that as many as 225 students will leave the counties’ public schools in Alabama as a result of the consolidation process. Those families who could, as Horn says, see the handwriting on the wall and also had the means to move have done so already. In a high-poverty area where jobs are centered on the dwindling timber and textile industries, this is not an easy feat. Many children will enroll in private academies, a large mirror system of the public schools, that sprang up in Southern states after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954.

Horn, who is considering home schooling her younger son, says the community mourns every student it loses;

“They were all ours.” In addition to the individual talents the young people will take with them—this one a fine trumpet player and algebra student, that one a basketball player and computer whiz—the schools will also lose money, as each child equals state funds.

Newspaper at the Heart of Community

Another loss will be *The Community Connection*, which ended publication when the school closed. The newspaper, which had a readership of approximately 1,500, played an important role in the community even before the political struggle over the school. Horn started the newspaper in 1996 in affiliation with PACERS’s Community Newspaper Project, the oldest of PACERS’s many and diverse projects (see sidebar on this page). Using only a single, semi-operational computer, she and her students aimed to publish the paper once a month. They covered school events, such as athletic and academic achievements, as well as community news. Even community weddings and births made the paper.

What made the paper feel real to students was that Horn was not afraid of potentially incendiary topics. For example, one issue featured a student editor’s opinion piece about separation of school and prayer and a counter

PACERS

The PACERS Small Schools Cooperative is an association of rural schools committed to education reform and to maintaining and enhancing small schools. It is an integral part of the PRSR that was started out of the belief that the school-community relationship is paramount to the health and continuation of rural communities. PACERS builds from the strengths of communities, involves all members of the community, and celebrates local knowledge. PACERS Initiatives include:

- PACERS Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative supports entrepreneurial education, enterprise opportunities, and skills-development in order to strengthen these and other rural schools.
- PACERS Community Newspaper Project works with teachers, students, and schools to find the resources they needed to produce newspapers vital to everyday community life; it was formed out of awareness that a local news media is vital to the health of a democratic community and also that

writing is an effective way to teach and learn English.

- PACERS Rural Science Initiative works with teachers and schools to promote the use of authentic living labs, including greenhouses, aquaculture units, ponds, wetlands, and gardens.
- PACERS Arts Project engages students in the study, documentation and celebration of their communities through hands-on arts projects imbedded in their curriculum.
- PACERS Hispanic Program: Evolving from and growing out of five years of work in communities in northeast Alabama, this program focuses resources in two areas: education and community organizing. It also works with high schools to assist them in ways to better serve their Hispanic students and to engage them in activities to strengthen personal growth.

Program for Rural Services and Research and PACERS University of Alabama. PACERS, small school cooperative, <http://www.prsr.ua.edu/index.html>

The students' work on the paper has obvious consequences as their writing is read and commented on by all members of their community, from their grandparents to the church minister.

Rural African Americans Face Educational Challenges

- 10.3% of African Americans live in rural communities.
- 91% of rural African Americans live in the South.
- 54% of all rural African Americans aged 25 or older and living in the "Black Belt" (see p. 11) do not have high school diplomas.

opinion by a local minister. They also reported on a recent fad that had students, including African Americans, wearing T-shirts emblazoned with Confederate flags. And during the past few years, every newspaper staff member logged many hours at school board and community meetings regarding the possible closing.

PACERS Assistant Director Robert Youngblood explains that all of his organization's work is based on three "C's": community-based, consequential, and contextual. The Community Newspaper Project, which currently has 27 affiliate schools, fulfills all three qualities. In a series of small rural communities that no longer have their own newspapers, publications like *The Community Connection* provide an important service. The students' work on the paper has obvious consequences because their writing is read and commented on by all members of their community, from their grandparents to the church minister. And their work is contextual because they use writing skills—and in the case of Bibb Graves, politics, law, economics, and ethics as well—for real-world purposes.

The combination also makes for compelling learning experiences for students who may not receive much challenge in small schools where course offerings can be slim. "My interest in

getting up and going to school changed [with the newspaper project]," says Coffeeville High School graduate and Newspaper Project alum Ozzie Pugh. "School was more interesting. I knew seventh period was coming. I had to do a story, an article, interview someone. Before, when seventh period was coming, it meant being in class and maybe nodding off."

Although none of the PACERS projects are specifically designed for gifted students, Youngblood says that they create "relevance and meaning" in a way that appeals to kids in search of greater academic challenge. And although Horn's journalism classes have been filled with a hodgepodge of students—the class valedictorian, student athletes, and a special education student who was told he could not write well enough—were all part of last year's staff, she concurs that there is great appeal to gifted students. Being able to get out into the community and connect with new people and experiences, she says, provides good potential for them to go above and beyond usual expectations. For example, when a textile mill closed in 1999, her student journalists did not just cover the basic facts, but reported on how the closing would affect local families as well as the village in Mexico to which the plant was moving.

A Pond Brings Possibilities to Rural Students

About an hour south of Bibb Graves, another PACERS school is gearing programming directly to its gifted and talented population. Loachapoka Elementary in east central Alabama is not a school with many obvious assets, save for the close-knit community from which it's built. Nearly all of its 350 students are eligible for free/reduced lunch. More than half of the students hail from single-parent households, and a large percentage of the school's families are on welfare.

Recently retired teacher Deborah McCord says the school's students, which are 95% African American, are clearly disadvantaged in terms of educational opportunities and experiences. Few of them have computers at home. Extracurricular activities are often out of the question because many families do not own cars and must rely solely on school buses for transportation. And although they live just four hours from the Gulf of Mexico, most students have never seen the ocean. Paradoxically, Loachapoka is ineligible for special funding because it sits just outside of two different federally recognized zones: Alabama's "Black Belt" and Appalachia. (The "Black Belt" encompasses 623 counties in 11 Southern states. According to *The Reference Book on Regional Well-Being: U.S.*

Regions, in the "Black Belt," and Appalachia, poverty is concentrated more heavily in the Black Belt South than in any other U.S. region.)

As head of the gifted and talented program, McCord has tried to better the odds for some of these students, taking them on field trips, including an annual outing to a marine biology lab off the coast of Mobile, Alabama. More opportunities have come right on the school grounds, however, from projects that were started with funding and technical assistance from PACERS. They started in 1998 with a small pond on the campus that the elementary and high school share, followed by a greenhouse and a nature trail.

Today, Loachapoka students are raising fish in the pond. All areas of the curriculum can be touched on via the project, says McCord: "They learn chemistry from studying the water quality and biology of the fish; there are conservation issues, and then, in conjunction with fish production, there are math skills, such as graphing

"All areas of the curriculum can be touched on via the pond."

“This program has brought so many opportunities to students that they wouldn’t have had.”

and metric conversion.” There are concepts that many students would never learn, much less remember, in the regular classroom, which they use (out of necessity) each day in their work at the fish pond.

The projects, which come under the auspice of PACERS Rural Science Initiative, were initially introduced with all of the school’s 5th- and 6th-grade students. As Alabama has increased its standards, placing more regulations on what classroom teachers need to cover, there simply has not been enough flexibility for most teachers to work the pond into their regular curriculum. As a result, it has become the primary domain of the 3rd- through 8th-grade gifted program that McCord headed until last year (all 2nd graders at Loachapoka Elementary take an enrichment program, after which some students are identified to continue as 3rd graders and others test into the program later).

An Opportunity for a Few that Can Benefit Many

Several years ago, after searching for ways to better identify gifted minority students, the school switched from using the Stanford-Binet test to other standardized measures as identification tools. The gifted program now serves about 25 students. Two of those children who McCord says are thriving as a result of their work at the pond and greenhouse are Britney and Marcus.

When Britney started the program as a third grader she was fearless about handling the fish. She has since been able to travel to the coastal marine biology lab and to several state conferences at which she has presented information about her and her classmates’ work at the pond. Although her very high IQ indicated that she had the capacity for high-ability work, McCord says the girl had no experiences outside of her rural home and school. The experiences with the gifted program, then, have “really opened doors for her to travel and see what she can do.”

Similarly, Marcus may never have left Loachapoka without his exposure to the PACERS’s project. He comes from a large family, with eight people sharing a small mobile home. His mother works at home and his father is a laborer. Marcus suffers from asthma, a condition that afflicts rural blacks in Alabama at a high rate. It is so severe,

says McCord, that it is not uncommon for him to spend an hour a day in the school nurse's office. Marcus has always been a strong reader, but he became interested in science via the pond and the fish. Even during the summer months and since he has moved up to high school, Marcus continues to work there. "He can't get enough," says McCord, who is certain that Marcus will go to college, a goal that would have seemed out of reach to him previously.

Although the PACERS programs at Loachapoka mainly benefit the school's gifted and talented students, McCord strongly defends them. "This program has brought so many opportunities to students that they wouldn't have had," she says emphatically. "There's a trend to do away with GT programs and provide enrichment to all students. For our students, if GT is no longer an identified area that gets funding, our students will lose these opportunities. Every teacher and student in our school has the option of using these facilities, but they may not as they just don't have time. But if we lose the funding, then none of our students will have these opportunities."

It only takes a short drive up the highway to the now vacant Bibb Graves School to see that losing opportunities, such as a pond or a newspaper, creates definite holes in a child's educational experience.

Jermaine

In his study of Jermaine, a verbally-gifted African American student from one of Alabama's poorest communities, Thomas Hebert identified some of the influences that allowed the 10-year-old boy—facing high obstacles—to succeed.

1. A supportive teacher protected and challenged him.
2. Satellite television allowed an outlet to the world beyond his small community and provided ideas for his writing.
3. The natural world, including the many small animals he enjoyed studying, provided solace and nurtured his imagination.
4. Support from extended family members provided a sense of connection in the absence of a father and the near absence of his mother, who was rarely at home.

Hebert studied Jermaine's life and educational habits over the course of three years, and was assisted by Teresa Beardsley, Jermaine's longtime teacher. In an article for *Gifted Child Quarterly*, "Jermaine: A Critical Case Study of a Gifted Black Child Living in Rural Poverty," the two paint a picture of a friendly, confident, and exceptional child living in the midst of what many American educators would consider dire conditions. The following was adapted from their article. Significant sections were reprinted with permission.

Jermaine attends the elementary school in Pine Grove, Alabama, a pre-kindergarten through sixth-

grade facility serving 255 children. All students are African American, and 98% are eligible for a federally subsidized free-lunch program. The children are bussed from six small communities, all within 25–30 miles of Pine Grove and separated by rural highways. The school facility, a red-brick building constructed in the late 1940s, is in great disrepair, with rain leaking through the roof, dilapidated furniture, and equipment in need of repair. It consists of three classrooms and a modest lunchroom, with nine mobile trailers housing classrooms behind the school. There is no media center, gymnasium, art room, or music facility.

Schools throughout Milledge County, one the poorest counties in Alabama with a per capita personal income of \$10,759, have annually been on a list of school districts threatened to be taken over by the state department of education if achievement test scores do not increase substantially. The schools' problems extend to its special education programs: although the state legislature in Alabama mandated identification and programming for gifted students in 1972, Milledge County has not complied with the law since its inception.

Standardized testing in Pine Grove consists of the Stanford Achievement Tests conducted each spring. Throughout the three-year investigation, Jermaine's achievement scores ranged from the 86th to the 99th national percentiles in language arts and
(Continued on page 14)

reading, with vocabulary and language expression ranked as his most prominent strengths. Jermaine's scores in math were in the average range. According to Teresa and several of Jermaine's former teachers, when his (overall) test scores are compared with the above-average students in his class scoring in the 40th to 50th percentiles, Jermaine's performance is considered remarkable. In addition, it is important to consider that some educators believe that minimal exposure to urban culture may negatively impact test scores. For example, Jermaine has never experienced a modern shopping mall. As one expert (Spicker 1992) has noted, a child living in an isolated rural area who had never seen a shopping mall might be hard-pressed to describe one.

Jermaine's home is up a hill on a dirt road. The house is a cabin with a cinder block foundation. It is heated with a wood stove and cooled by opening windows and doors. In second grade, Jermaine included an entry in his creative writing folder that described an account of his typical morning routine before school:

5:30 *Jermaine wakes up the family
Gets bathing pan, soap and rag
Goes out to bathroom to get water
Puts water on heater and bathes
Finds some clothes, finds booksack and shoes*

7:00 *Jermaine goes to bus stop
Gets to school and waits for breakfast to get ready
Eats and talks until Mr. Jones tells us to go to class.*

Even in a poor community, Jermaine's family is considered among the poorest and then are viewed as outcasts by other community members. His family's reputation affected Jermaine's experience in school when he first arrived. Teresa explained that the creative behaviors displayed by Jermaine during his early school experiences were not always appreciated by adults in his elementary school. The assistant principal referred to him as "that bad little boy I have to keep my eye on," while another teacher who had observed Jermaine during bus duty commented, "That boy is just too bad to handle."

Although Teresa's fellow teachers were often bewildered by his classroom antics, they appreciated Jermaine's advanced vocabulary. The creative writing portfolio maintained by Teresa provides many fine examples of Jermaine's impressive imagination and language skills. As a first grader in after-school enrichment sessions, he wrote an autobiography that began: *I was tumbling through my mother's stomach—BOOM... BOOM...BOOM. I came out crying. Everybody comes out crying. Someone was holding me, and I wanted my momma. I was named Jermaine after my granddaddy. He didn't have a nickname or a middle name, so I don't either. He was my momma's daddy.*

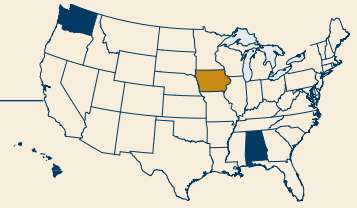
The life experiences of Jermaine—including a family living in extreme poverty and a rural school also grappling with poverty and lack of resources—highlight many significant issues in addressing the needs of gifted students in rural settings. In discovering Jermaine and investigating the community in which he lived, we call attention to a significant issue in this country. The impoverished conditions uncovered in Pine Grove, Alabama, resemble what Renzulli (1973) described as an "educational and psychological disaster." Although Jermaine has managed to survive in this community, we cannot overlook the fact that other children are "wasted daily by a system that has shut its eyes and turned its back on them." We must ask ourselves these questions: How many other children like Jermaine have gone unnoticed in similar communities? How many lives have been wasted? For how many more generations must this work exist in our country?

Adapted from "Jermaine: A Critical Case Study of a Gifted Black Child Living in Rural Poverty," Thomas P. Hebert and Teresa M. Beardsley. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 2, Spring 2001. Printed with permission from National Association for Gifted Education.

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III. Iowa

Small Town Transformed



Columbus Junction, population 1,900, is a town in flux. More than a decade ago, when an old meat-packing plant was bought by new owners and re-opened, it began recruiting workers from Mexico. At first, many of these were men who came alone, but it didn't take long for their families to follow. The change is apparent throughout this small community, but perhaps nowhere as much as in the local schools.

Columbus Junction: Small Town Transformed

Columbus Junction, Iowa

Pop: 1,900

Enrollment: 1,044

Race/Ethnicity: White 45.0%;
Hispanic 54.3%;
African American .07%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 59%

Median Household Income:
\$33,167

Source: 2000 Census, www.census.gov

Drive off the four-lane interstate in southeastern Iowa for a few miles and the black expanse of soil, the pride of this farming state, begins to give way to a few houses. Within less than a mile, you have entered Columbus Junction, a small town comprised of old houses—some of them charmingly kept up, but many others in need of paint and yard work—newer trailers, and a two-street downtown. At the confluence of Main and Walnut streets you will find the usual array of small town shops, a bank, an old movie theater front, and several taverns. The difference lies in the names of many of the businesses: La Panederia, a bakery, sits across the street from La Reyna, a grocery store that stocks more beans and tortilla chips than Fruit Loops™ and Jell-o®.

When Sarah Davis, now a bilingual kindergarten teacher at Roundy Elementary School, graduated from Columbus Junction High School in 1988, there were perhaps five Hispanic students in her class. Less than a decade later, in 1997, the entire district of just over a thousand students was 38 percent Hispanic. Five years later, in the 2002–03 school year, that number is even larger: almost half of all the district's students are Hispanic, and the elementary school, with a 57% Hispanic population, is the harbinger of future statistics.

Davis, who has lived in the same house most of her life, says that for many natives, it is not the same town they grew up in. “A lot of rural people find it difficult to see changes in their hometown,” she acknowledges. Still, she is impressed by the way many residents, especially older ones (nationwide, Iowa has the second largest population of residents 85 years of age and older), have adapted. She turns to her grandparents as an example. A few years ago, a Mexican family moved in next door to them. “At first, my grandparents wouldn’t have much to do with them,” Davis recalls, “But then the family’s little girl would come over to play, and they’d talk with her. Gradually, the two families started sending homemade cakes and cookies back and forth, and now they’re quite friendly.”

Similarly, the schools have had to adapt to a changing student population. Some teachers acknowledge that until recently, it has been frowned on for students to speak Spanish at school, even in the hallways and lunchroom. “There was an expectation for them to acculturate,” comments April Dirks, a bilingual social worker at the high school (the K–6 elementary and 7–12 high school are located side by side). As a result, Hispanic students were segregated from their white peers, often without social outlets such as sports and dances. Today, the school boasts a

soccer team—still a relatively rare sport among rural Iowa schools—that is comprised largely of Hispanic students, and several performance groups that specialize in folk music and dance.

The most profound changes in school culture were instigated at the elementary school about six years ago by a group of teachers who became convinced that the growing population of young kids from Spanish-speaking homes was in dire need of bilingual education, rather than the usual English as a Second Language (ESL) pull-out then offered. “We had seen that when our students were taught all in English with ESL pull-out, they would do great, then eventually plateau,” recalls Davis.

Jaci Thornburg, one of the teachers who helped pilot the program, says the teachers did a lot of research into the value of bilingual education. “If you teach a student to read and write in his or her native language, then the student’s English will be better,” she says; thus, the school’s focus on literacy issues. Students in K–2 whose parents elect for them to be part of the bilingual program are in a literacy block for part of the day during which they study reading and writing in Spanish. The rest of their subjects are taught in a regular classroom with English translation available. The hope is that by third grade most students will be able to

Quoted from McCabe, M. (2004). English language learners. *Education Week* [Online]. Retrieved September 7, 2005, from <http://edweek.org/rc/issues/english-language-learners/>

A survey of state education agencies found that, in 2000–01, more than 4 million students with limited proficiency in English were enrolled in public schools across the nation, making up almost 10 percent of the total pre-K through 12th grade public school enrollment. According to that same report, the population of students who are English-language-learners has grown 105 percent, while the general school population has grown only 12 percent since the 1990–91 school year...

The original objectives of bilingual education were to ensure that students would not fall behind academically because of a poor command of English and to gradually teach them the language. If language-minority students were taught some subjects in their native tongue, proponents insisted, they potentially could learn English without sacrificing content knowledge (Gandara, 1999). The method...typically used by schools is known as “transitional bilingual education.” With this method, instruction is provided for some subjects in the students’ native language but a certain amount of each day is spent on developing English skills. Classes are made up of students who share the same native language.

But bilingual education’s critics argue that the approach keeps students in a cycle of native-language dependency that ultimately inhibits significant progress in English-language-acquisition. In addition, critics of bilingual education contend that “time on task” in English is essential to English-language learning (Rossell & Baker, 1996a). Proponents counter that if students first learn to read in the language they are fluent in and then transfer the skills over to English—their second language—they will develop stronger literacy skills in the long term (August & Hakuta, 1997). In addition, they argue that in an increasingly global society, far from discouraging native-language retention, schools should work to help students maintain their native tongues, even as they also teach them English (Fillmore, 1991; Gandara, 1999). People on both sides of the debate point out that there is a shortage of teachers who are qualified to teach using the primary language of many students (Gandara, 1999)...

Attempts to compare the effectiveness of English-immersion to bilingual education have been controversial and inconclusive.

From Iowa Department of Education:
2004 total enrollment of English Language Learners (ELL) in Iowa Public and Non-public students: 15,810. In 1991: 3,725 [graph available at <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/is/ell/doc/ell01.pdf>]

Whereas Hispanic families rarely used to attend school programs, such as concerts and other children's performances, turnout is now approximately 60 to 79 percent Hispanic.

transition into the regular curriculum all day, although bilingual classes are still available as new students of all ages from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking environments arrive throughout the school year.

Adaptations for the new students go beyond the curriculum. The school's phone system, for example, offers a menu of options in Spanish and English ("Press 1 if this is a Spanish-speaking call; Press 2 if this is an English-speaking call"). All school-to-home communications, such as report cards and notices, are in both languages. Adult ESL classes, which are popular with many parents, are held at school in the evening. Parent-teacher conferences are conducted with a translator when necessary, and school programs have translators as well. Whereas Hispanic families rarely used to attend school programs, such as concerts and other children's performances, turnout is now approximately 60 to 70 percent Hispanic. Thornburg believes that "through really trying to communicate with them on a frequent basis and showing we respect their language and culture, they've become increasingly comfortable with the school."

Although the school is gradually reaping the rewards of this effort to reach Hispanic families, it has not always been easy. The core group of

bilingual teachers has repeatedly had to re-state the reason for their work. "We have to keep explaining to colleagues," says Davis, "that just because we're teaching students in their native language doesn't mean they're not learning." The need to re-explain is partly due to the school's high staff turnover. Located about 45 minutes away from Iowa City, home of The University of Iowa, the school attracts many recently graduated teachers who come for a few years and then move on to a larger district or closer to their own homes. The district has also experienced a wave of teacher retirement in the past five years.

A further complication was the departure of the principal who had originally approved and highly supported the program, followed by the need to educate a new principal who admitted to knowing little about bilingual education. "We took him research paper after research paper," recalls Thornburg of Principal Dan Vogler, who has been at Columbus Junction for many years. "He's come to really believe in what we do." He added that the teachers also routinely present research and data to the school board (which, incidentally, has no Hispanic members). Given the positive numbers and depth of information they have presented the board, Thornburg believes it would be hard for them to say no to the teachers' program.

Finding good and affordable bilingual materials remains an uphill battle. The teachers make many things themselves, including “tons” of guided reading books. Recruiting teachers is also an issue. Finding quality educators who will stay for awhile is a difficulty faced by many rural districts, but when those educators also need to have some Spanish or more ideally an ESL background, it is even harder. Thornburg double-majored in elementary education and Spanish with a minor in ESL, and bilingual kindergarten teacher Betsy Nefzger has a similar educational background; but Davis and several other teachers only have college or even high school-level Spanish and have had to build their skills without outside training. In response to the ever-growing Hispanic population, the success of the program, and the turnover of teachers, the principals at all of the district’s schools struggle to recruit qualified teachers.

One of the areas that appear to be benefiting from the bilingual program is the district’s Talented and Gifted Program. Karlen Uhde, K-12 TAG Coordinator, is in her second year at Columbus Junction. The Iowa native brings a unique perspective to the changes in the rural school, having taught in Mali, Somalia, Brazil, and an Eskimo village near the Bering Strait. Overall, she’s been very impressed with how supportive the community is of

its newer residents. As an example, she notes two eighth-grade students who were recently accepted to the Blank Summer Institute at The University of Iowa, a summer residential program for gifted students. Both students, Oscar and Elizabeth, come from single-parent Hispanic families where Spanish is the main language and where no one has attended college.

“This could be a life-changing event for these kids,” says Uhde of the summer camp. And yet neither child has the financial resources to cover the program’s costs, even with scholarships from the University. Uhde was heartened that a group of religious leaders was providing small scholarships to each child, and the meat-packing plant also contributed.

That these students were identified for the program at all signals a turning point for Columbus Junction’s Hispanic students. There is a stark contrast in

“We have to keep explaining to colleagues that just because we’re teaching students in their native language doesn’t mean they’re not learning.”

There are four Hispanic students in the elementary TAG program and ten white students; there are 11 Hispanic students in the middle school TAG and 20 whites; and just one Hispanic student in the high school TAG as compared with 29 whites.

the number of Hispanic students in the high school TAG program as compared to the lower grades. There are four Hispanic students in the elementary TAG program and ten white students; there are 11 Hispanic students in the middle school TAG and 20 whites; and just one Hispanic student in the high school TAG as compared with 29 whites.

“I can’t say exactly what’s happening regarding this trend and the make-up of the program,” says Uhde. “I think it’s due to an awareness and effort on the part of the teachers.” She notes that students tend to be identified for gifted programs when they’re younger, so it makes sense that with the increased efforts at serving Spanish-speaking students in the younger grades, the numbers would be higher. Uhde follows State of Iowa guidelines to identify students to the TAG program: a combination of Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores, a cognitive ability test given in third grade, and a teacher nomination; Spanish-speaking students are also commonly given a non-verbal test to assess their abstract reasoning.

Current middle schoolers are as likely to have younger siblings who have been in the bilingual program since entering school as they are to have older ones who have experienced the more traditional pull-out program. Oscar and Elizabeth had not previously been iden-

tified for the school’s TAG program, although Oscar’s third-grade sister, Epy, has been in TAG since kindergarten. “Neither of these two has been a high achieving, standout student,” says Uhde. And while she regrets the fact that they had not been identified, she credits their current teachers with noticing the students’ high abilities in a given subject—Oscar in math and Elizabeth in social sciences.

Oscar was on the school’s most recent Math Olympiad team—one of his first opportunities to shine. He’s a shy boy and has a group of friends for whom school success is not considered to be “cool.” Unlike Elizabeth, who was near tears when she learned of her acceptance, Oscar did not broadcast the news. Uhde thinks he is definitely proud of his accomplishment, however, and will bloom in the new setting.

By contrast, his younger sister, Epy, has had no problem blooming. The bubbly, talkative third grader, who was in the district’s first bilingual kindergarten class has long had her teachers’ attention. “By no means was I ready for Epy!” exclaims Thornburg, who had the girl for two years in her 1st/2nd-grade looped classroom. Totally bilingual by first grade, Epy could hear a word in English one time and use it in context. “I was explaining Groundhog Day to the first graders,” Thornburg remem-

bers, “and when I said it was a legend, not an exact science, Epy said, ‘Oh, it’s bogus,’ a word she’d learned the week before.” That same year, Epy read Harry Potter in both Spanish and English.

Although all of her teachers believe Epy would have succeeded without the bilingual program, because she is such a curious child who simply loves the process of learning, they are also very glad she stayed in the program for three years. Thornburg says that when a student does as well as Epy has with English, “it’s tempting to take her out of bilingual education, but you want her to have the lifetime advantage of being bilingual. The whole goal is to make them bilingual, bi-literate students.”

Whereas Oscar, who is quiet and has talents mainly in one subject, has not garnered much attention from his teachers (one former teacher, unaware of his recent success, described him as “average”), Epy has had the advantage of extra challenge from teachers from her earliest school days. “It’s really been to her benefit to have her teachers notice her talents and encourage and nurture her from a young age. This has to help in terms of skills and confidence when it comes time to take an achievement or ability test,” comments Uhde, who regrets that Oscar has not reaped the same rewards. “It does have something to do with her being verbal and outgoing.”

As proof of the growing awareness of Hispanic students’ abilities by faculty, she points to a sixth-grade girl who started at Columbus Junction last fall. “She didn’t have any English,” says Uhde, “but the bilingual teacher came to me almost immediately and asked that I test her for TAG.” Indeed, the girl tested quite well and has since been in both the bilingual program and TAG. She has been participating with Soaring High, an academic team that competes with other schools. Part of the team’s work includes research using reference materials, such as atlases, maps, and encyclopedias, and writing questions. Uhde laughingly shares that the girl’s question was regarding Elvis’s age at death—“You can imagine the kinds of information that appeals to middle school kids!”

Students like this one will continue to be the norm at Columbus Junction, a rare Iowa school district where whites will soon be the minority. Despite limited resources in hard economic times

“ . . . you want her [Epy] to have the lifetime advantage of being bilingual. The whole goal is to make them bilingual, bi-literate students.”

(Iowa's education budget has been reduced in recent years), faculty and staff are aware of the crucial role they play in the lives of community children.

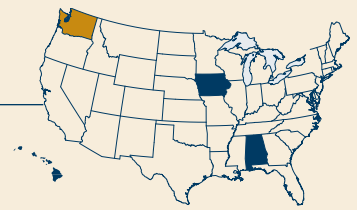
Social worker April Dirks, LISW, provides a sketch of the home situation of the majority of Columbus Junction's Hispanic families: many parents are in the United States without proper documentation and can be deported or lose their jobs at any time. They have no health insurance and do not own their own homes; many families live in mobile homes. Their work, which involves cutting and machinery, is dangerous; job-related injuries are high. Older students who arrive from Mexico often have a very limited education; it's not uncommon for 17- and 18-year-olds

who want to enroll at the high school to test at an 8th-grade level.

With such grim realities, Dirks is especially heartened by Oscar's and Elizabeth's successes. Many students, white or Hispanic, rarely leave Columbus Junction, she says, or have ambition to gain the skills that would let them move beyond the relatively limited work possibilities of their community. She thinks in particular of a current high school student, a white girl, who, despite her 4.0 average and obvious talent, is going to work at the meat packing plant next year rather than attend college. "I hope that seeing these Hispanic kids succeed," says Dirks, "will inspire other students to realize their options."

IV. Washington

Instilling Hope: Revolving Student Body Poses Challenges



*“They come in August, or
later, and then leave between
Thanksgiving and Christmas.”*

Robert Webb, principal of Wahluke High School

Revolving Student Body Poses Challenges

Wahluke High School, Mattawa, Washington

Pop: 2,609

Enrollment: 389

Race/Ethnicity: White 12.5%;
Hispanic 86.3%; Asian 0.4%;
American Indian 0.7%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 86%

Median Household Income:
\$31,964

Source: 2000 Census, www.census.gov

When Anita Sitio was in eighth grade, her mother fell from a ladder while picking apples. Because both of her parents were Mexican nationals, worked as farm laborers, and had only been in the United States for a few years, the family had no health insurance. Her mother's recovery was long. It fell to Anita to stay home and care for her mother and youngest sister, who was four at the time. Friends and teachers brought the adolescent her school work. Anita says that staying up with her school work was not too hard when compared to the frustration of trying, often unsuccessfully, to alleviate her mother's pain. As one of the brightest students in her class, Anita's ability to succeed in the eighth grade was not altogether surprising; until you find out that she missed nearly seven months of school!

Such absences are more common than not for students at Wahluke High School in Mattawa, Washington. Located in the heart of the state's bountiful apple orchards and vineyards, Mattawa is a permanent home to about 2,800 people, 63% of whom are not U.S. citizens. In addition to this population, hundreds of migrant workers and their families travel to and from the area throughout the year, following the planting and harvest cycles. In other words, most of the population is either recently arrived to the area or moving

in and out of the region over the course of a year.

"They come in August, or later, and then leave between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Then a lot of them are back again in March," says Robert Webb, principal of Wahluke High School since 2000, of his migrant students and their families.

In a school district where 62% of the 1,613 students are migrants and nearly three-quarters of all students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, the academic focus could easily be disrupted. But Webb and his staff have found ways to deal with an ever-changing student body. For example, they switched from a semester system to trimesters. While teachers and school administrators could rarely convince a migrant family to stay late enough in the year to complete the first semester, Webb says that it's often possible to convince them to stay the extra week or two that will allow a student to complete the first trimester.

The district has also woven learning across age groups. High school students mentor younger students in an after-school program, as well as during the summer; older students teach English to non-native speakers during evening classes; and the school's Learning Center is open at night for parents to come and learn how to access the Internet or use Microsoft Word.

But perhaps the most important thing Webb has done is to instill high expectations. Expecting migrant students to graduate and go on to college is not a given when one considers the statistics. Nationally, only about 40% of migrant students who graduate from high school, go on to college. Data regarding migrant college entrance and completion rates are limited because few programs track students beyond high school graduation. Furthermore, funding for the Migrant Student Record Transfer System was terminated in 1994, eliminating a nationwide database on migrant students. Because the majority of migrant students are Hispanic, numbers regarding the Hispanic population are relevant. As of 1995, only about 45% of Hispanic high school graduates enrolled in four-year institutions. But at Wahluke, 78% of 2003 graduates enrolled in a two- or four-year colleges.

A Four Letter Word

“There’s a four-letter word we use that I love,” says Webb. “It’s *hope*. We focus students not on the diploma but beyond that to college. Our counselors and teachers constantly ask the kids, ‘Where are you going to school? What is this leading to? What careers are you considering?’”

Jan Phillips, Wahluke’s guidance

A 2002 study by the U.S. Department of Education, *The Same High Standards for Migrant Students: Holding Title I Schools Accountable*, examined how the federal Migrant Education Program (MEP) is helping migrant students succeed in school and meet academically challenging standards, and whether states and districts are including migrant students in standards-based reforms. Among the study’s key findings:

- Expectations about student performance were low in Title I schools serving migrant students.
- Many of the Title I schools that served migrant students used different standards for their limited-English-proficient students.
- States’ knowledge of migrant student participation in assessments was weak.

- Few schools with migrant students received disaggregated achievement scores.
- Fewer students in Title I schools that serve migrant students were enrolled in higher-level courses.
- Teachers in schools serving migrants were less experienced.
- Title I schools with migrant students tend to be much poorer, and have high proportions of students who are minorities and limited-English-proficient.
- A few states and school districts are committed to aligning local instruction between programs that share migrant students.
- Technology is enabling states and districts to access other states’ and districts’ content and performance standards.

counselor, agrees that keeping students’ sights set high is the key to the school’s success. Given the large migrant population, she says that it’s “hard to keep the whole population on task. The language difference makes it even harder.” But instilling such high expectations has helped to pull everyone up and focus both students and staff.

Webb and Phillips cite two examples of how high the bar is raised at the rural school. In order to graduate, each student must take five credits each of math and English. This is one or even two credits more than many schools require, putting them among the hardest graduation requirements in the state. In addition, more than 55% of seniors take Advanced Placement® classes. History, government, English, and calcu-

*Nearly two-thirds of seniors
take Advanced Placement classes.*

lus have all been taught since AP was first offered during the 2000–01 school year. Phillips says that she encourages all students to take the classes, regardless of whether they are likely to pass the test or not, because she knows they will benefit from them.

Anita, who graduated from Wahluke in 2003, right on schedule, despite the nearly yearlong hiatus she took while caring for her mother when she was 13, says that AP U.S. Government and Politics was her favorite class. “Both the teacher and some of the other students challenged me to do my best,” she recalls. As a freshman at the University of Washington, Anita faced another obstacle to high achievement common to many of Wahluke’s students: Because she and her family are illegal aliens, she is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Phillips says that this impediment to higher education can make many students despair. “Most of our students have the poverty issue; adding the issue of residency just compounds their frustration. Our job is to keep their hope alive and to keep them focused,” she explains.

Throughout the year, she works to find alternative funding for students. A current student already has nearly \$40,000 in scholarships, and two years ago a Wahluke graduate won a prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship

from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Anita, who received a Diversity Scholarship, says that a representative from the financial aid office is one of the most important members of her support system at college. Phillips credits the success of students like Anita with their dedication to education across the board.

The young woman, whose family lives in a single-wide mobile home, was vice president of student government and involved in a number of service organizations via which she helped work at the town library, picked up garbage, and organized an annual blood drive.

“I’ve known since middle school that I wanted to go to college,” recalls Anita. “My parents took me to the orchards to work, and I hated it. I remember planting onions—rows and rows with little holes to put the onions in; you’re on your knees for nine hours a day in the burning sun. There is sand everywhere and it gets in your eyes. My parents said, ‘This is a really hard life. If you don’t want to be out here, you need to go to college and get an education.’”

Now that she’s there, Anita plans to remain involved in community service and to also become active with minority programs. She is pre-law—her favorite class so far is Human Rights in Central America—with the hope of eventually working to improve the

rights of agricultural workers like her parents and the parents of her classmates back in Mattawa.

Challenging the Most Gifted

Although Webb is unabashedly proud of the school's successes—they were awarded an Inspiration Award by the College Board two years ago—he is the first to admit that there is no specific programming for gifted and talented students. The district does not even identify these students. There are activities such as Knowledge Bowl, Chess Club, and, for middle-school students, Odyssey of the Mind®, that attract some of the top students, but Webb would like “to be more conscious of how to address gifted and talented students.”

One way in which academically gifted students sometimes find extra challenge during high school, is to enroll in college courses. Washington state has a program called Running Start that allows high school students to take community college classes for free, but Wahluke students are too far away—at least an hour's drive—to take advantage of it.

For the moment, the AP classes and tough graduation requirements are the school's best ways for challenging and identifying all students as top-notch

learners. “We need to be using the same techniques with all our students that we use with the highest-achieving kids,” says Webb, who co-wrote a grant during his first year with the intent of training all of the school's teachers in AP methodology. Although the school's teacher turnover is high, necessitating training newcomers every year, Webb is determined to get the teachers into the mindset that “these kids aren't dumb; they are capable.”

He is certain that if they can just keep students in school, they will succeed. One case in point is Hugo Gonzales, a student who had been traveling between Texas and Mattawa with his family. As a junior, he entered school two-thirds of the way through the year and begged teachers to let him into pre-calculus, a class he had started the previous year. They let him in and he completed the class. Then, as a senior, he talked his parents into letting him stay in Mattawa the entire year. Now, he is starting college in Texas, proving that stability is a major stepping stone to academic success.

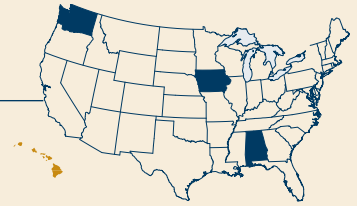
It is hard not to wonder what the Hugos of the world might accomplish if allowed to focus on school during their growing-up years, rather than constantly adjusting to new schools, new homes, and different languages. Webb notes that convincing the families of the power of education is not an issue:

“We need to be using the same techniques with all our students that we use with the highest-achieving kids.”

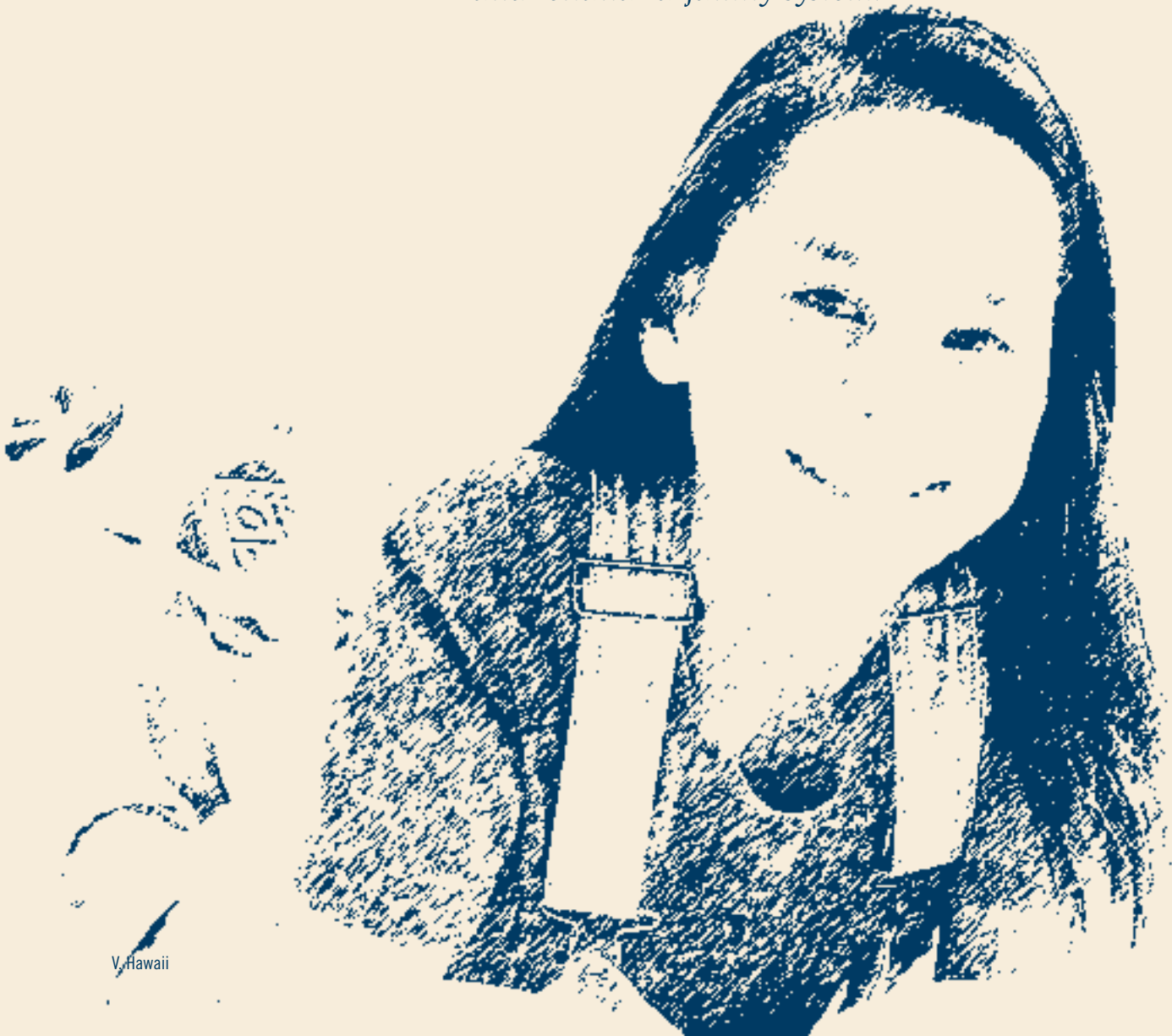
“We have families who give their kids laptop computers that are more valuable than the places where they live.” Still, the parents, most of them uneducated and unskilled, are reliant on farm labor work. Only the education their children are fighting to attain will help break the cycle.

V. Hawaii

Na Pua No'eau, Hawaii



Na Pua No'eau is built on four major interrelating components: talent enhancement, integration of Hawaiian culture and values, and two Hawaiian concepts: ho'ala hoou—to reawaken, to rise up again, and 'ohana—a family system.



Na Pua No’eau: A Hawaiian Gift

Hawaii (“The Big Island”)

Pop: 148,677

Enrollment: 26,172

Race/Ethnicity: White 31.5%;

Asian 26.7%;

African American 0.5%;

American Indian 0.4%;

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific
Islander 11.2%; Other 1.1%; Two or
more races: 28.4%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 53.1%

Median Household Income:
\$39,805

Source: 2000 Census, www.census.gov

For many people who have never been to Hawaii, images of the islands come from the glossy pages of travel magazines. Graceful women in grass skirts offering leis to arriving visitors. Beachside fires with roasting pigs. A volcano’s mesmerizing lava flowing into frothy waves. Springing less quickly to mind are images of rural poverty: a household forced to catch its own water or rely on a generator for power, for example.

Statistically, Hawaii has 39 percent of public schools located in small towns or rural area, according to the 2001–2002 National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey. The majority of native Hawaiians live in rural areas and are well below the socioeconomic status of other ethnic groups.

Hawaii has changed dramatically in the past several decades, and yet many of the changes have not benefited the local population. In this way, rural Hawaii has much in common with ski communities of the American West and coastal Florida. Places that are geographically near each other in Hawaii are often worlds apart in socioeconomic terms; high-rise hotels and upscale shops catering to tourists co-exist in counties and communities with pockets of impoverished rural homes.

David Sing, a professor at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and the director of Na Pua No’eau, a gifted education program for native Hawaiian students, has witnessed the state’s transformation firsthand. “As in many parts of the world, indigenous people tend to be in remote areas,” explains David Sing, who grew up on O’ahu. “You may live in a county or geographic city that’s seen as urban, but the area you live in has all the aspects of being rural, meaning you have very limited resources in terms of water, electricity, transportation, etc.”

When he was growing up in a rural part of O’ahu, Sing and his friends would wait an hour to hitch a ride to take them to the beach. Thirty years later, he says he would have to wait just to cross the same street because the traffic is so dense. “The area is still considered rural, and the homes and circumstances of people living there haven’t changed,” he explains, “but in order to make the beaches more accessible, all of this other stuff—stores and tourist stuff—has popped up, all of which benefits the people driving past, not the locals.”

Another misconception that many people unfamiliar with Hawaii may have is that most of the non-Caucasians who populate the state are native Hawaiians. In fact, according to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, only 22.1% of the state’s residents descend from the

people who populated the islands prior to colonization in 1778, the year Captain James Cook arrived. The rest of the population is made up of Japanese (21.9%), Caucasians (21.1%), Filipino (15.9%), Chinese (5.8%), and Other (13.3%). The three Asian groups arrived in waves, attracted by work on the sugar cane plantations, which are now nearly obsolete.

Under the plantation system, which ran from the early 1800s until the 1980s and '90s when sugar production moved off the islands, native Hawaiians experienced a similar predicament to Native Americans on reservations: their culture was deemed inferior and their language was forbidden. Schools were used to instill Western culture in children. As recently as the 1960s, young people learned that Hawaiian ceremonies, crafts, and lore were upheld, if at all, within the family and not in the greater culture.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, Hawaiians have reconnected with their culture, pulling it from obscurity. Sing recalls that this movement initially began with the popularity of Hawaiian music and was also connected to the popularity of the tourism industry. It was not until the early 1980s that education began to recognize the importance of Hawaiian culture and identity. Sing, who has been teaching for 28 years,

Working Against the Odds

Sing says that “The median of Hawaiians and the median of general population is very different.” Here are some indicators that illustrate his point.

- Hawaiian students are more likely than their non-Hawaiian peers to attend low-quality schools. Fully 79 percent of predominantly Hawaiian schools are in corrective action, compared to just 17 percent of predominantly non-Hawaiian schools.
- Schools with high concentrations of Hawaiians tend to have teachers with less experience and tenure.
- The standardized test scores of Hawaiian students are the lowest among all major ethnic groups, consistently lagging behind total DOE averages by at least 9 percentiles.
- In 2000–01, more than 18 percent of Hawaiian students were classified as requiring special education, compared to just 11 percent of non-Hawaiian students.

- 58 percent of Hawaiian students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, as opposed to 35 percent of non-Hawaiians.
- Total enrollment for 2001 – 2002: 182,798.
- Native Hawaiian teenagers have a significantly higher use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana than Hawaiian teens as a whole.
- Native Hawaiians comprise 29.8 percent of the homeless population, topped only by Caucasians at 40.9 percent.
- Nearly 28 percent of all native Hawaiians receive welfare (i.e., TANF/TANOF, Med-Quest, and food stamps).
- Of the state's prison inmate population, 39 percent are Native Hawaiians. Caucasians follow at 23 percent.

Statistics from The Office of Hawaiian Affairs' *Data Book*, http://www.oha.org/pdf/databook_6_02.pdf, and *Left Behind: The Status of Hawaiian Students in Hawai'i Public Schools*, a report by Shawn Malia Kanaiaupuni and Koren Ishibashi, http://www.ksbe.edu/pase/pdf/reports/02_03_13.pdf

started one of the first educational programs for native Hawaiians that was not a deficit model but rather celebrated Hawaiian cultural strengths.

In 1990, Sing created Na Pua No'eau with the goal of helping Hawaiian children (the term “Hawaiian” will be used to refer to people of pure or mixed Hawaiian heritage for the remainder of this case study) to develop their gifts. The program is named for a native flower and refers to the blos-

soming of children's innate talents and self-discovery. In keeping with the Hawaiian viewpoint, explains Sing, Na Pua No'eau works from the belief that everyone has outstanding abilities given to them by those who come before.

"The areas of these gifts comprehensively span the whole spectrum of human experience," Sing wrote in a recent article, "and are believed expressible throughout a person's lifetime as well as across generations. Subsequent acknowledgement of these given gifts by individuals themselves, family members, or others prompts the nurturing and utilizations of such abilities so that (a) the development of the whole person is realized, (b) the contributions benefit others, and (c) the particular gifts are passed on to future generations."

Na Pua No'eau has gradually expanded from an initial center at the University of Hawaii at Hilo to seven centers located around the islands. In the late 1990s, the centers served as many as 4,500 students a year in after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Recent educational budget cuts, which have adversely affected gifted and talented programming throughout the state, have translated to more limited programming. In 2003, approximately 600 students will be served via summer residential and weekend programs.

Na Pua No'eau is built on four

major interrelating components: talent enhancement, integration of Hawaiian culture and values, and two Hawaiian concepts: *ho'ala hoou*—to reawaken, to rise up again, and *'ohana*—a family system. The topics of the programming offered to students is decided, says Sing, by local interests and the resources available at the various sites. On the big island of Hawai'i, for example, programs take advantage of Kilauea, the famously active volcano, and the Keck Observatory, home of the world's largest optical and infrared telescopes.

Whether they stay on their home island or travel to another island, students are often profoundly affected by Na Pua No'eau programs and what they learn about their home and its rich culture. Many students have never traveled to another island; Sing, for example, did not leave O'ahu until he was 19. Becca Killi, a recent graduate of the University of Hawaii at Hilo, became involved with Na Pua No'eau as a high school freshman. She grew up in Happy Valley, a small village on the northwest side of Maui. "I had never been all the way around Maui," she says, "so it was really exciting for me to see it all and learn about the various cultures there." Another Na Pua No'eau program took her to Kaho'olawe, a small island that was used by the United States military during World War II as a training ground. Following protests in the 1970s, the is-

land was returned to Hawaii, and the military was forced to clean up the remnants of the bombing they had done there. Killi became intrigued by its cultural and ecological significance to the Hawaiian community: “It’s an important and not very well known part of our history,” she notes.

Killi now realizes that the lessons she learned during these programs and via Na Pua No’eau’s leadership institute, which took her to the “Big Island” for only the second time in her life, were unique. “Because of my family’s limited resources,” she says (Killi’s mother is a full-time parent and her father is deceased), “I would not have been able to do these things without Na Pua No’eau. Not only was it paid for (Na Pua No’eau covers all expenses for students), but I learned things I wouldn’t have learned in school: how to live with people different from me, how to live with limited resources.”

The long-term effect on Killi’s educational and professional goals has been profound. She received her B.A. in May 2003, in Hawaiian Studies and Communication Studies and is currently pursuing a teacher’s certification through the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Program, a new program that trains teachers for Hawaiian language schools, Hawaiian language and culture programs in English language schools,

An Alternative: Kamehameha Schools

Hawaiian students, both rural and urban, have a unique opportunity that few minority students in other parts of the country share. Kamehameha Schools (KS), the largest independent school in the United States, was established in 1887 to serve Hawaiian students. Founded by the will of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter and last royal descendant of Kamehameha the Great, the main school on O’ahu sits on a 600-acre campus featuring 70 major buildings, seven miles of road, and seven athletic fields.

Along with students who attend on the Hawai’i and Maui campuses, the total preschool-grade 12 enrollment for the schools is 5,500. More than 90 percent of the costs to educate every student are subsidized by Kamehameha Schools, which is the largest private landowner in the state. Day students pay less than \$1,500 a year for tuition, and financial aid is available to students demonstrating additional need. About 80 percent of KS graduates go on to a four-year college or university.

and schools serving students with a strong Hawaiian cultural background.

Kanoe Hook is another graduate who believes her educational and professional path has been greatly influenced by her adolescent and teenage experiences with Na Pua No’eau. Hook, who participated in programs for six years beginning in fifth grade, says that the first summer set the tone for the years to come.

The schools’ long-standing policy of admitting only students of Hawaiian ancestry has recently been challenged, however. In 2002, they admitted a non-Hawaiian student for the first time in decades. In response to the uproar that it caused, the school has since reaffirmed its commitment to admitting only students with Hawaiian heritage. According to an article in *The New York Times*, another student who was recently denied admittance has sued the schools for race discrimination in Federal District Court.

Sources:

“Na Pua No’eau: The Hawaiian Perspective of Giftedness.” Darline E. Martin, David K. Sing and L. ‘Alapa Hunter. *Underserved Gifted Populations: Responding to Their Needs and Abilities*. Joan Franklin Smutny, editor. Hampton Press, Inc., Cresskill, NJ. 2003

Data Book. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

“Pondering Poi Dog: The Importance of Place to the Racial Identification of Multi-Racial Native Hawaiians.” Shawn Malia Kanaiaupuni and Carolyn A. Liebler. http://www.ksbe.edu/pase/pdf/reports/demography-well-being/02_03_24pdf

“Student Sues for Admission to Schools for Hawaiians,” Adam Liptak. *The New York Times*. June 29, 2003.

Unlike a rural school in many parts of the country which have classes of 100 students or less, rural Hawaiian schools are comparable to their urban counterparts, with graduating classes as large as 500 students.

“I took Hawaiian crafts,” she remembers. “We learned how to make tools, old Hawaiian tools, like fish hooks and water collection gourds. It took a lot of patience. We hiked down a very steep valley to the beach to pick rocks. There’s a Hawaiian belief that everything is living, gods are everywhere, so we had to ask permission to take the rocks. We also had to figure things out for ourselves; we couldn’t use regular tools to make these things. At the time, I was so confused by why we were doing things this hard, long way, but, of course, it was all about the experience.”

A 2003 graduate of Pepperdine University with a degree in sports medicine, Kanoe says the classes she took taught her much more than just how to make things. “I don’t think I’d be where I am today without the leadership aspect of Na Pua No’eau. It taught me traditional Hawaiian values: working together, family, the importance of ancient ways, hospitality, and that you can’t dismiss where you came from.” Kanoe was introduced to Hawaiian language through the program and went on to study it in high school. Now, she is pursuing a Ph.D. in physical therapy in Los Angeles, after which she plans to return to Hawaii to get an M.A. in Hawaiian culture and language. She is particularly interested in *lapa’au*, a traditional Hawaiian health and heal-

ing method that she said is akin to the work of medicine men in Native American cultures.

“You can’t go through life being the best person you can be without first learning where you came from,” says Kanoe with sage confidence. “That’s what the program taught me. Be proud of your heritage; use everything that people in the past have given you. I use this value in my science classes all the time.”

Both Sing and Na Pua No’eau coordinator Suzanne Chun say that one of the benefits of the program is for students to be around others who are pursuing their gifts and who are interested in Hawaiian culture. Due to state budget cuts, many schools have experienced reductions in gifted and talented programming in recent years. During the academic year, Chun is a Gifted and Talented Coordinator at Keaau Elementary School, which is located on a Hawaiian homestead in a rural part of the Big Island. (Homesteads are similar to reservations; the land was bequeathed by one of the Hawaiian monarchs and is reserved for native Hawaiians.) Sixty-four percent of the students are eligible for free/reduced lunch. The middle school into which many of Chun’s students feed no longer has gifted and talented programming. As a result, some of her most gifted students

are choosing to apply for exemptions that will allow them to go to a different school, even though this will also mean traveling longer distances.

One peculiarity of Hawaii's rural schools is their size. Unlike a rural school in many parts of the country which have classes of 100 students or less, rural Hawaiian schools are comparable to their urban counterparts, with graduating classes as large as 500 students. This phenomenon is due in part to the high construction costs that make building new schools prohibitive. The problem is heightened because the power to build, which in most parts of the country is in the hands of local school boards and community members who are served by the school, rests with the state's single Board of Education located in Honolulu.

"Our schools are bulging," comments Sing, who says he often wonders why "we have rural kids attending the equivalent of urban schools." In the 2004-2005 school year, for example, at nearly 800 students (570 of whom are Asian), Chun's school is more in keeping with the size of an elementary school in a small metropolitan area. And Baldwin High School, which Killi attends, has about 1,700 students (1,300 of whom are Asian). Both schools are considered rural by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Although Na Pua No'eau is not specifically for rural students, many of the program's attendees are rural simply because a higher percentage of Hawaiians live in rural areas as compared to other ethnic groups. While Sing does not have statistics by geographic area, he has surveyed Na Pua No'eau students for socioeconomic background and found that more than 50 percent of them are eligible for free/reduced lunch, a number that correlates to many rural and blue-collar industrial areas.

Na Pua No'eau is open to all Hawaiian youth, whether they currently live in the state or not. One of Sing's primary hopes is that the program will improve Hawaiian students' educational attainment. When he started teaching, only 4% of the students at University of Hawaii at Hilo were Hawaiian; today that number is 18%. And by Sing's estimate, at least 580 students at Hilo have been Na Pua No'eau attendees. Clearly the program's gentle nourishment of its students' gifts is succeeding.

"You can't go through life being the best person you can without first learning where you came from."

End Note:

Reading these cases one is struck by diversity not only in the students' ethnicity but in the geography that we refer to as rural.

Each account highlights how diverse gifted students are in rural districts, while simultaneously presenting common characteristics. A strong sense of their commitment to excel is revealed. They have their share of challenges but they strive to meet those challenges. They certainly break the stereotype that, "things come easy to gifted students." These students demonstrate that, indeed, perspiration accompanies inspiration.

Rural schools and communities have been looked to as a sentimental connection to the "past" of America. However, rural schools and communities are also a vibrant connection to the "future" of America. Diversity and giftedness will continue to be part of the fabric that defines rural.



Appendices

Appendix A. Rural Data Interpretation

Appendix B. Iowa Timeline of Education and Gifted Education

Appendix C. Iowa School Data

Appendix D. Vision Statement and Programs of the Belin-Blank Center

Appendix E. References



A. Rural Data Interpretation

2001 – 2002 Common Core of Data: America's Public Schools

As demonstrated in Table 1, 49% of all public schools in the United States are small towns/rural areas. There are 87,000 American public schools of which 43,500 are in small towns/rural areas. Twenty-seven percent of all public school students are in small towns/rural areas. This amounts to about 12.5 million students living in small towns/rural areas.

Tables 2–6 show the diversity and location of public school students across America. Approximately 40% of all public school students are minority students. Over 2.5 million minority students (5.5 percent of all public school students) live in small towns/rural areas. Tables 5 and 6 further illustrate two other factors associated with diversity.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2001–02 and 2002–03, and "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2001–02.

Table 1. Percentage of Public Schools in Small Town/Rural Areas, by State: 2001–2002

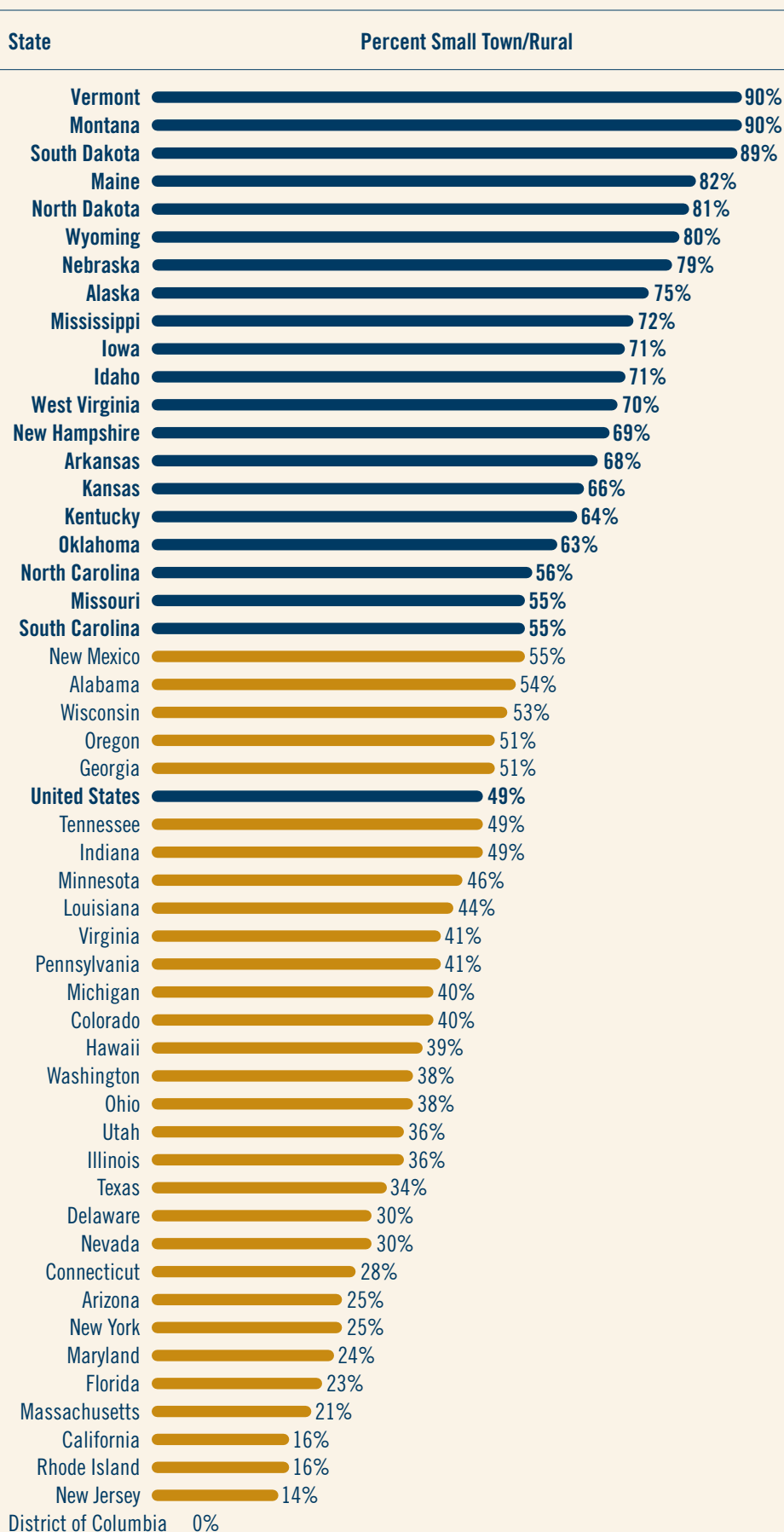


Table 2. Percentage of Public School Students by Race or Ethnicity, by State: 2001–02

	State	White, Non-hispanic	Black, Non-hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaskan
States in bold print are the top 20 in percentage of rural schools from Table 1.	United States	60.0%	17.1%	17.0%	4.2%	1.2%
	Alabama	60.5%	36.5%	1.5%	0.8%	0.7%
	Alaska	60.4%	4.7%	3.6%	5.9%	25.5%
	Arizona	51.3%	4.7%	35.3%	2.1%	6.6%
	Arkansas	71.1%	23.3%	4.2%	0.9%	0.5%
	California	35.0%	8.4%	44.5%	11.2%	0.9%
	Colorado	66.8%	5.7%	23.3%	3.0%	1.2%
	Connecticut	69.2%	13.8%	13.7%	3.0%	0.3%
	Delaware	59.6%	31.1%	6.6%	2.4%	0.3%
	District of Columbia	4.6%	84.4%	9.4%	1.6%	0.0%
	Florida	52.5%	24.9%	20.4%	1.9%	0.3%
	Georgia	53.8%	38.2%	5.5%	2.4%	0.2%
	Hawaii	20.3%	2.4%	4.5%	72.3%	0.4%
	Idaho	85.4%	0.8%	11.2%	1.3%	1.3%
	Illinois	59.0%	21.2%	16.2%	3.5%	0.2%
	Indiana	83.0%	11.8%	3.9%	1.0%	0.2%
	Iowa	89.6%	4.1%	4.0%	1.7%	0.5%
	Kansas	77.8%	8.9%	9.8%	2.2%	1.3%
	Kentucky	87.7%	10.3%	1.1%	0.7%	0.2%
	Louisiana	48.7%	47.8%	1.6%	1.3%	0.7%
	Maine	96.2%	1.4%	0.6%	1.1%	0.7%
	Maryland	52.4%	37.2%	5.4%	4.6%	0.4%
	Massachusetts	75.7%	8.6%	10.8%	4.5%	0.3%
	Michigan	73.4%	20.0%	3.6%	2.0%	1.0%
	Minnesota	82.0%	7.0%	3.8%	5.2%	2.0%
	Mississippi	47.3%	51.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.2%
	Missouri	79.0%	17.5%	2.0%	1.2%	0.3%
	Montana	85.9%	0.6%	1.9%	1.0%	10.6%
	Nebraska	81.8%	6.9%	8.2%	1.6%	1.6%
	Nevada	54.5%	10.3%	27.4%	6.1%	1.7%
	New Hampshire	95.0%	1.2%	2.1%	1.5%	0.2%
	New Jersey	59.4%	17.9%	16.0%	6.6%	0.2%
	New Mexico	34.3%	2.4%	51.0%	1.1%	11.3%
	New York	54.8%	19.9%	18.6%	6.2%	0.4%
	North Carolina	60.0%	31.3%	5.2%	1.9%	1.5%
	North Dakota	88.7%	1.1%	1.3%	0.8%	8.1%
	Ohio	80.1%	16.7%	1.9%	1.2%	0.1%
	Oklahoma	63.7%	10.8%	6.5%	1.5%	17.5%
	Oregon	79.1%	3.0%	11.5%	4.2%	2.2%
	Pennsylvania	77.7%	15.3%	4.8%	2.1%	0.1%
	Rhode Island	73.4%	8.1%	14.8%	3.2%	0.6%
	South Carolina	54.7%	41.7%	2.4%	1.0%	0.2%
	South Dakota	86.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.0%	10.2%
	Tennessee	71.8%	24.8%	2.1%	1.2%	0.2%
	Texas	40.9%	14.4%	41.7%	2.8%	0.3%
	Utah	84.7%	1.0%	9.9%	2.8%	1.5%
	Vermont	95.8%	1.2%	1.0%	1.5%	0.5%
	Virginia	62.8%	27.1%	5.5%	4.3%	0.3%
	Washington	73.5%	5.4%	10.9%	7.5%	2.6%
	West Virginia	94.5%	4.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.1%
	Wisconsin	80.1%	10.2%	5.0%	3.4%	1.4%
	Wyoming	87.3%	1.4%	7.2%	0.9%	3.2%

**Table 3.
2001–2002 Enrollment**

Total US Enrollment	46,560,366
Total Minority Enrollment	18,565,866
Percentage of US Enrollment	39.87%
Total Small Town/Rural Enrollment	12,491,957
Percentage of US Enrollment	26.82%
Total Small Town/Rural Minority Enrollment	2,598,304
Percentage of US Enrollment	5.58%

Table 4.
Percent of Students Who Are
Minority, by Community Type
and by State: 2001–02

States in
bold print are
the top 20 in
percentage
of rural
schools from
Table 1.

State	Total students	Number of minority students	Percentage of Minority Students by Community Type		
			City, large and midsize	Urban fringe of city	Small town or rural
United States	47,687,871	18,815,623	62.5	35.9	20.8
Alabama	737,294	286,738	70.2	29.4	30.4
Alaska	134,358	53,147	38.2	0.0	41.3
Arizona	922,180	448,977	52.9	40.0	51.0
Arkansas	449,805	130,082	47.4	15.2	23.0
California	6,248,610	3,969,986	74.3	61.2	42.2
Colorado	742,145	245,957	46.1	30.6	21.6
Connecticut	570,228	175,347	69.1	20.8	8.4
Delaware	115,555	46,593	57.7	39.3	30.7
District of Columbia	75,392	65,331	86.6	0.0	100.0
Florida	2,500,478	1,187,811	53.1	50.5	32.4
Georgia	1,470,634	679,379	80.3	50.6	33.7
Hawaii	184,546	147,055	81.8	80.0	78.0
Idaho	246,521	36,038	14.5	18.0	14.6
Illinois	2,071,391	850,215	75.4	31.4	8.5
Indiana	996,133	169,586	41.2	12.2	4.0
Iowa	485,932	50,460	22.1	7.6	5.0
Kansas	470,205	103,682	42.8	12.3	14.8
Kentucky	654,363	76,327	31.5	16.7	5.2
Louisiana	731,328	374,643	75.0	41.8	39.4
Maine	205,586	7,454	11.4	3.3	2.7
Maryland	860,640	409,252	77.0	49.7	20.6
Massachusetts	973,140	236,008	56.3	13.6	5.9
Michigan	1,730,668	457,160	71.2	18.3	7.3
Minnesota	851,384	153,277	53.6	12.9	8.2
Mississippi	493,507	260,273	75.5	28.7	53.0
Missouri	909,792	195,030	48.9	23.8	6.4
Montana	151,947	21,472	14.2	8.0	14.9
Nebraska	285,095	52,007	29.8	17.7	10.9
Nevada	356,814	162,454	52.4	47.7	25.7
New Hampshire	206,847	10,315	13.9	4.2	2.3
New Jersey	1,341,656	545,067	79.3	38.8	16.7
New Mexico	320,260	210,462	63.7	71.5	68.7
New York	2,872,132	1,296,450	80.2	23.5	6.9
North Carolina	1,315,363	525,730	54.4	33.0	34.0
North Dakota	106,047	12,028	9.1	7.6	13.0
Ohio	1,830,985	361,762	54.3	13.1	3.3
Oklahoma	622,139	225,558	48.7	26.4	35.0
Oregon	551,480	115,610	27.7	21.5	16.3
Pennsylvania	1,821,627	406,806	66.1	13.8	5.2
Rhode Island	158,046	42,113	54.4	13.4	4.6
South Carolina	691,078	303,295	56.3	36.4	47.6
South Dakota	127,542	17,670	16.4	7.3	13.3
Tennessee	925,030	256,719	—	—	—
Texas	4,163,447	2,462,268	75.4	47.3	42.4
Utah	484,677	73,388	29.9	12.7	10.7
Vermont	101,179	4,259	14.1	5.5	3.6
Virginia	1,163,091	432,410	59.4	35.8	22.7
Washington	1,009,200	267,425	36.0	26.0	20.0
West Virginia	282,885	15,423	10.7	6.9	4.0
Wisconsin	879,361	174,894	45.4	10.3	6.4
Wyoming	88,128	11,192	15.3	18.4	11.3

Table 5. Migrant Students by State: 2002–03

	Migrant Students	
	Number	Percent of Total Enrollment
Alabama	7,825	1.06%
Alaska	10,220	7.61%
Arizona	2,094	0.23%
Arkansas	8,813	1.96%
California	230,478	3.69%
Colorado	12,653	1.70%
Connecticut	4,551	0.80%
Delaware	291	0.25%
District of Columbia	814	1.08%
Florida	49,091	1.96%
Georgia	9,539	0.65%
Hawaii	1,520	0.82%
Idaho	8,347	3.39%
Illinois	N/A	N/A
Indiana	N/A	N/A
Iowa	4,538	0.93%
Kansas	12,526	2.66%
Kentucky	14,801	2.26%
Louisiana	4,077	0.56%
Maine	N/A	N/A
Maryland	348	0.04%
Massachusetts	2,203	0.23%
Michigan	N/A	N/A
Minnesota	987	0.12%
Mississippi	2,405	0.49%
Missouri	4,616	0.51%
Montana	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	13,419	4.71%
Nevada	548	0.15%
New Hampshire	155	0.07%
New Jersey	868	0.06%
New Mexico	1,924	0.60%
New York	N/A	N/A
North Carolina	15,132	1.15%
North Dakota	291	0.27%
Ohio	1,568	0.09%
Oklahoma	N/A	N/A
Oregon	20,394	3.70%
Pennsylvania	8,768	0.48%
Rhode Island	N/A	N/A
South Carolina	518	0.07%
South Dakota	2,265	1.78%
Tennessee	N/A	N/A
Texas	108,649	2.61%
Utah	4,105	0.85%
Vermont	858	0.85%
Virginia	1,273	0.11%
Washington	N/A	N/A
West Virginia	135	0.05%
Wisconsin	1,028	0.12%
Wyoming	210	0.24%

States in bold print are the top 20 in percentage of rural schools from Table 1.

Table 6. English Language Learner Enrollment by State: 2002–03

State	ELL Students	
	Number	Percent of Total Enrollment
Alabama	10,568	1.4%
Alaska	16,378	12.2%
Arizona	143,744	15.6%
Arkansas	15,146	3.4%
California	1,599,542	25.6%
Colorado	86,128	11.6%
Connecticut	22,651	4.0%
Delaware	3,449	3.0%
District of Columbia	5,798	7.7%
Florida	203,712	8.1%
Georgia	70,464	4.8%
Hawaii	12,853	7.0%
Idaho	18,747	7.6%
Illinois	168,727	8.1%
Indiana	42,629	4.3%
Iowa	13,961	2.9%
Kansas	17,942	3.8%
Kentucky	6,343	1.0%
Louisiana	11,108	1.5%
Maine	2,632	1.3%
Maryland	27,311	3.2%
Massachusetts	51,622	5.3%
Michigan	59,912	3.5%
Minnesota	51,275	6.0%
Mississippi	2,250	0.5%
Missouri	13,121	1.4%
Montana	6,642	4.4%
Nebraska	13,803	4.8%
Nevada	58,753	16.5%
New Hampshire	3,270	1.6%
New Jersey	57,548	4.3%
New Mexico	65,317	20.4%
New York	178,909	6.2%
North Carolina	59,849	4.5%
North Dakota	883	0.8%
Ohio	25,782	1.4%
Oklahoma	40,192	6.5%
Oregon	52,331	9.5%
Pennsylvania	N/A	N/A
Rhode Island	10,087	6.4%
South Carolina	7,467	1.1%
South Dakota	4,524	3.5%
Tennessee	N/A	N/A
Texas	630,686	15.1%
Utah	43,299	8.9%
Vermont	1,057	1.0%
Virginia	49,845	4.3%
Washington	70,431	7.0%
West Virginia	1,281	0.5%
Wisconsin	25,764	2.9%
Wyoming	3,519	4.0%

B. Iowa Timeline of Education and Gifted Education

Sources: State Historical Society of Iowa
Iowa Talented and Gifted Newsletters (1974-2001)
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The Belin-Blank Center is part of the College of Education at The University of Iowa; therefore, as part of our on-going series of reports, we want to highlight the State of Iowa. We are proud of the fact that Iowa is known for its leadership in educational initiatives, especially for special education and gifted education.

Timeline

- 1830** First school in Iowa Territory: Galland School in Lee County.
- 1846** Iowa becomes the 29th state to join the Union.
- 1847** The State University of Iowa, first state university, is founded. Later, it is renamed The University of Iowa.
- 1858** State legislature passes the School Act of 1858, sometimes called the Free School Act, which laid the foundation for Iowa's public school system.
- Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm, the nation's first land-grant college, is chartered. Later, it is renamed Iowa State University.
- 1868** Alexander Clark, Sr., sued the Muscatine schools to allow admission of his daughter. The Iowa Supreme Court held that "separate" was not "equal" and ordered Susan Clark, an African American, admitted to the public schools. This effectively integrated Iowa's schools 96 years before the federal court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*. Alexander Clark, Jr., was the first African American graduate of the College of Law at The University of Iowa. Alexander Clark, Sr., was the second one.
- 1876** Iowa State Normal School is founded. In 1909, it becomes Iowa State Teachers College. In 1961, it is renamed the State College of Iowa, and from 1967 to present is known as the University of Northern Iowa.
- 1897** Consolidated schools spell the beginning of the end for the one-room rural schools and the independent districts. Because of the excellence of Iowa's educational system, the literacy rate in this state became the highest in the nation, hovering around 99.5%.
- 1913** Iowa Department of Public Instruction is established.
- The movement to consolidate rural schools continues.
- 1935** Iowa Testing Programs, an academic unit in the College of Education at The University of Iowa, introduces Iowa Every Pupil Tests, later named Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), the first Iowa standardized achievement tests for students in grades K through 8.
- 1942** Iowa Testing Programs introduces Iowa Tests of Educational Development, standardized achievement tests for students in grades 9 through 12.

- 1959** The American College Testing Program is founded. This college-entrance testing program evolves from the Iowa Tests of Educational Development at The University of Iowa.
- 1973** Statewide organization for gifted students, Iowa Talented and Gifted Association (ITAG), is initiated by advisory committee members.
- 1974** Iowa Talented and Gifted Association (ITAG) is officially organized and the first ITAG conference is held in Fort Dodge.
- 1976** First gifted education legislative efforts. Iowa Department of Public Instruction designates \$45,000 to be used for “in-service training” for local teachers about gifted education.
- 1977** First annual Iowa Summer Institute for Gifted Education (later named Conference for Talented and Gifted, CONTAG) is held at Coe College, Cedar Rapids.
- 1978** HF 2361 provides money for two-year pilot programs for instruction of TAG for up to ten school districts. Affiliation of first ten local ITAG chapters.
- 1979** First ITAG recognition awards are given for excellence in teaching the gifted. Later, these are known as the “Distinguished Service Award.”
- First Problem-Solving Super Bowl.
- 1980** A grant from the Myron & Jacqueline N. Blank Education Foundation marks the beginning of the Belin Fellowship Teacher Training Program at The University of Iowa.
- 1981** Seventeen teachers from Des Moines and West Des Moines participate in the first Belin Fellowship Teacher Training Program.
- Iowa Code 442.31 authorizes additional allowable growth funds for gifted students upon submission of a comprehensive plan from a school district or school board.
- 1984** Over half of the public school districts in Iowa have programs for gifted and talented students (237 out of 438 districts).
- 1985** Mini-grants are offered by ITAG to gifted students.
- 1986** Young Scholars Conference is held at Drake University, Des Moines.

- 1986** ITAG initiates high school and advanced research awards.
- 1988** The Connie Belin National Center for Gifted Education is established at The University of Iowa by the State of Iowa Board of Regents.
- Iowa Governor's Institute for the Gifted and Talented is awarded to the Belin Center.
- Myron & Jacqueline N. Blank establish an endowed chair in gifted education at The University of Iowa.
- Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Act enacted.
- 1989** First Iowa Annual Talent Search for seventh and eighth graders, Iowa State University.
- 1990** First Leadership Institute for TAG professionals in Iowa is conducted at The University of Iowa.
- 1991** First Henry B. and Jocelyn Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development takes place at The University of Iowa.
- 1992** Iowa TAG Endorsement is established and is required by August 31, 1995. The University of Iowa completes its proposal in 1992.
- Post Secondary Education Options Act is changed to include 9th- and 10th-grade students identified as gifted.
- 1993** Elementary Talent Search, named the Belin Elementary Student Talent Search (BESTS), is established. It is later re-named the Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search.
- 1995** The Belin Center is renamed the Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.
- 1998** The Belin-Blank Center at The University of Iowa initiates a National Program for Gifted in Rural Schools.

- 1999** The Belin-Blank Center publishes *Gifted Education in Rural Schools: A National Assessment* and hosts the First Wallace Family National Conference on Gifted Education in Rural Schools.
- National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering, an early-entrance to college program, is established at The University of Iowa.
- Amended Iowa Code 257 changes TAG funding from property tax-dependent money to State funding.
- 2000** Talent Search Program expands to 7th–9th graders.
- 2001** The Belin-Blank Center publishes *Gifted Voices from Rural America* and hosts the Second Wallace Family National Conference on Gifted Education in Rural Schools.
- The Belin-Blank Center’s Iowa Online AP Academy (IOAPA) is established to make AP® courses available to every student in Iowa’s accredited high schools.
- Small School Summit hosted by the Belin-Blank Center, the College Board, and Apex Learning; held September 26 on The University of Iowa campus.
- 2002** Launch of the Belin-Blank Center’s Assessment and Counseling Clinic.
- 2004** Opening of the Blank Honors Center, home to the first national elementary-through-college gifted center.
- A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students* is published by Belin-Blank Center.
- 2006** The Belin-Blank Center publishes *Gifted in Rural America: Faces of Diversity*.

C. Iowa School Data

Table 1. Iowa Public High School Enrollment Distribution: 2003–04

Grades 9–12 Enrollment	2003–04	2004 Percent of High Schools
<100	24	6.6%
100–199	117	32.1
200–299	84	23.1
300–399	35	9.6
400–499	26	7.1
500–599	12	3.3
600–699	14	3.8
700–799	6	1.6
800–899	3	0.8
900–999	2	0.5
1,000–1,099	5	1.4
1,100–1,199	5	1.4
1,200–1,299	6	1.6
1,300–1,399	4	1.1
1,400–1,499	5	1.4
1,500–1,599	8	2.2
1,600–1,699	2	0.5
1,700–1,799	2	0.5
1,800+	4	1.1
Total	364	

Table 2. Advanced Degree and Experience of Iowa Full-Time Public School Teachers by Enrollment Category: 2003–04

Enrollment Category	Number of Full-time Teachers	Percent with Adv. Degree	Percent Females	Percent Minority	Average Years Total Years Experience	Average Years District Experience	Average Age	Average Salary
<250	426	7.7%	78.6%	1.2%	12.6	10.2	40.9	\$31,292
250–399	1,509	13.7	70.4	0.7	13.9	11.1	41.9	33,016
400–599	3,008	15.3	67.6	0.8	15.1	12.2	42.0	35,424
600–999	5,175	17.5	68.0	0.7	15.4	12.3	42.4	37,004
1,000–2,499	8,511	23.9	71.3	1.0	15.8	12.1	42.5	39,204
2,500–7,499	6,120	33.7	73.6	1.3	15.0	11.4	41.9	41,131
7,500+	8,492	37.5	74.7	4.3	14.8	11.6	42.7	42,894
State	33,688	26.9	72.0	1.8	15.1	11.8	42.4	39,432

Iowa Data: Iowa Department of Education, *The Annual Condition of Education Report: A Report on Prekindergarten, Elementary, and Secondary Education in Iowa*, 2004.

Table 3. Characteristics of Iowa Full-Time Public School Teachers by Minority and Non-Minority Groups: 2003–04

Characteristics	Non-Minority	Minority
Number	33,079	609
Percent	98.2%	1.8%
Average Age	42.4	40.7
Percent Female	72.0%	68.9%
Percent Advanced Degree	26.8%	30.0%
Average Total Experience	15.2	12.0
Average District Experience	11.8	9.3
Average Salary	\$39,430	\$39,522

Table 4. Percent of Iowa Public School PK–12 Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Meals by Enrollment Category: 2002–03 to 2003–04

Enrollment Category	2002–03 Number	2002–03 Percent	2003–04 Number	2003–04 Percent
<250	1,819	37.4%	1,610	38.0%
250–399	5,142	30.8	5,713	32.0
400–599	10,315	25.8	10,623	27.1
600–999	18,088	24.4	18,246	25.2
1,000–2,499	32,045	26.4	34,889	28.1
2,500–7,499	21,531	22.3	21,561	22.7
7,500+	48,474	37.7	51,589	40.0
State	137,414	28.5	144,231	30.0

Table 5. Iowa Public School PreK–12 District Race/Ethnicity by Enrollment Category 2003–2004

Enrollment Category	Total Enrollment	White		Hispanic		American Indian		Asian		African American		Total Minority	
	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<250	5,125	4,942	96.4%	118	2.3%	18	0.4%	20	0.4%	27	0.5%	183	3.6%
250–399	16,378	15,929	97.3	217	1.3	43	0.3	103	0.6	86	0.5	449	2.7
400–599	38,930	37,717	96.9	638	1.6	93	0.2	201	0.5	281	0.7	1,213	3.1
600–999	72,063	69,327	96.2	1,467	2.0	239	0.3	469	0.7	561	0.8	2,736	3.8
1,000–2,499	124,890	115,028	92.1	5,889	4.7	692	0.6	1,687	1.4	1,594	1.3	9,862	7.9
2,500–7,499	95,139	84,605	88.9	4,815	5.1	300	0.3	2,026	2.1	3,393	3.6	10,534	11.1
7,500+	128,701	96,793	75.2	10,517	8.2	1,450	1.1	4,196	3.3	15,745	12.2	31,908	24.8
State	481,226	424,341	88.2	23,661	4.9	2,835	0.6	8,702	1.8	21,687	4.5	56,885	11.8

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Basic Educational Data Survey, Enrollment File, 2003–04

Table 6. English Language Learners' Primary Languages for PK–12 Iowa Public and Nonpublic Students 1985–86; 2000–01; 2001–02; 2003–04

Language	1985–86	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	% of Total ELL Students 2003–04
						2003–04
Spanish	807	7,128	9,117	9,730	11,271	72.9%
Bosnian	0	369	1,114	1,105	751	4.9
Vietnamese	439	768	729	700	713	4.6
Laotian; Pha Xa Lao	548	411	436	425	423	2.7
Serbo-Croatian	0	556	540	465	345	2.2
German	24	153	119	113	181	1.2
Arabic	26	82	158	169	166	1.1
Chinese; Zhongwen	89	80	93	88	150	1.0
Korean; Choson-o	136	76	73	51	116	0.8
Russian	0	65	53	93	98	0.6
Cambodian; Khmer	239	101	105	86	84	0.5
Nuer	0	6	13	10	74	0.5
Albanian; Shqip	0	44	38	32	41	0.3
French	20	31	50	49	46	0.3
Hmong	101	29	31	52	44	0.3
Latin	0	1	3	5	44	0.3
Tagalog	0	4	9	11	42	0.3
Croatian; Hrvatski	0	10	33	37	37	0.2
Japanese; Nihongo	0	40	40	35	37	0.2
Marathi	0	1	2	1	27	0.2
Persian; Farsi	0	4	5	24	29	0.2
Somali	0	28	30	32	24	0.2
Swahili	0	22	27	30	33	0.2
Thai	333	23	13	34	34	0.2
Ukrainian	0	15	18	20	24	0.2
(Afan) Oromo	0	15	1	3	10	0.1
Amharic	0	5	10	8	9	0.1
Corsican	0	2	2	7	8	0.1
Hindi	0	6	11	19	16	0.1
Indonesian; Bahasa I	0	13	10	6	11	0.1
Sudanese	0	13	34	19	19	0.1
Thai Dam, Tai Dam	0	142	0	12	18	0.1
Turkish	0	0	7	7	9	0.1
Urdu	0	8	3	11	14	0.1
Afrikaans	0	3	18	7	5	<0.1
American Indian	20	5	0	4	3	<0.1
Armenian; Hayeren	0	0	0	0	1	<0.1
Azerbaijani	0	3	3	4	0	<0.1
Bashkir	0	0	1	2	1	<0.1
Bengali; Bangla	0	3	1	5	3	<0.1
Bulgarian	0	4	4	3	1	<0.1
Burmese; Myanmasa	0	1	1	1	0	<0.1
Byelorussian	0	0	0	0	1	<0.1
Czech	0	3	0	0	0	<0.1
Dinka	0	0	0	0	5	<0.1
Estonian	0	0	0	0	2	<0.1
Faroese	0	1	0	8	7	<0.1

Language						% of Total ELL Students
	1985–86	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2003–04
Finnish; Suomi	0	2	2	0	0	<0.1
Frisian	0	0	0	1	1	<0.1
Georgian; Kartuli	0	0	2	1	2	<0.1
Greek	0	2	8	6	7	<0.1
Guarani	0	0	0	2	0	<0.1
Gujarati	0	4	2	1	7	<0.1
Hebrew; Iwrith	0	1	0	10	1	<0.1
Hungarian; Magyar	0	0	0	2	0	<0.1
Icelandic; Islenzk	0	1	2	1	2	<0.1
Italian	7	1	2	0	6	<0.1
Kannada	0	0	0	1	1	<0.1
Kazakh	0	0	14	0	0	<0.1
Kinyarwanda	0	3	6	4	4	<0.1
Kirghiz; Kyrgyz	0	0	3	11	1	<0.1
Kirundi	0	9	11	6	4	<0.1
Kurdish; Zimany Kurd	0	13	8	5	6	<0.1
Latvian; Lettish	0	1	1	1	0	<0.1
Lingala	0	1	2	4	3	<0.1
Macedonian	0	2	2	0	0	<0.1
Malay; Bahasa Malays	0	1	3	4	3	<0.1
Malayalam	0	2	0	0	0	<0.1
Maori	0	1	1	1	0	<0.1
Marshallese	0	0	0	0	4	<0.1
Nauru	0	0	0	0	1	<0.1
Nepali	0	1	1	1	7	<0.1
Norwegian	0	3	2	4	3	<0.1
Oriya	0	0	0	8	2	<0.1
Pashto, Pushto	0	0	0	0	4	<0.1
Polish	0	11	7	2	5	<0.1
Portuguese	0	10	11	8	5	<0.1
Punjabi; Panjabi	0	10	3	8	6	<0.1
Romanian	0	5	4	2	3	<0.1
Samoan	0	3	1	1	4	<0.1
Serbian; Srpski	0	434	13	9	3	<0.1
Singhalese	0	3	3	1	4	<0.1
Slovak	0	0	4	1	1	<0.1
Slovenian	0	4	6	6	4	<0.1
Swedish; Svenska	0	0	0	0	2	<0.1
Tamil	0	3	0	2	3	<0.1
Telugu	0	1	1	2	1	<0.1
Tibetan; Bodskad	0	5	6	8	4	<0.1
Uzbek	0	1	0	0	0	<0.1
Wolof	0	0	1	0	0	<0.1
Yoruba	0	5	5	4	3	<0.1
Not Identified	361	619	454	519	358	2.30
Total	3,150	11,436	13,546	14,170	15,452	100.0

D. Vision Statement and Programs of the Belin-Blank Center

Iowa Talent Project (ITP)

A partnership program between the Belin-Blank Center, The University of Iowa, and the Des Moines Public Schools. ITP allows gifted minority students who qualify for the Des Moines Central Academy (gifted program) to earn scholarships to The University of Iowa by completing an intensive course of study at the Des Moines Academy and successful performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams. ITP students enter the University of Iowa and are part of the Belin-Blank Center. They receive a special transition program to help them with the academic and social adjustment from high school to college.

Vision Statement

The Vision of the Belin-Blank Center

Our vision is to inspire and serve the worldwide gifted community of students, educators, and families through exemplary leadership in advocacy, programming, and research.

The Belin-Blank Center focuses on:

- Identifying gifted and talented learners
- Providing specialized opportunities for students
- Conducting comprehensive research on giftedness
- Supporting professional development for educators
- Disseminating information through conferences and publications
- Assessing and counseling gifted students and their families
- Enhancing educational opportunities through technology
- Leading in local, national, and international policy formation
- Promoting equity and access in developing talent
- Consulting with schools and professionals
- Advocating for children and families
- Evaluating gifted programs

Programs of the Belin-Blank Center

Professional Development

Advanced Placement Teacher Training Institute
Belin-Blank Fellowship Program
Practicum in Teaching and Curriculum Development
Pre-service and Summer Workshops
Precollege Faculty Training Program
State Endorsement in Gifted and Talented Education

Talent Search

Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search (BESTS) Grades 4–9

Student Programs

Advanced Placement Summer Academy
Asian & Pacific Studies Institute
Blank Summer Institute for the Arts and Sciences
Challenges for Elementary School Students
Challenge Saturday (Math, Science, and Language Arts)
Environmental Health Sciences Institute for Rural Youth
Excellence Program for Gifted Rural Students
Foreign Language Summer Institute
Iowa Governor's Summer Institute for the Gifted and Talented Students
Iowa Online AP Academy
Iowa Talent Project
Invent Iowa
Junior Scholars Academy
National Scholars Academy
Weekend Institute for Gifted Students

Programs of the Belin-Blank Center (continued)

Research

Acceleration Practices
Clinical and Assessment Services
College Students
Families
Family Education Program
Inventors
Iowa Acceleration Scale
Practicum in Counseling and Psychological Services
Precollege Students
Psychological and Educational Assessment
Talent Search Data Base
Twice-exceptional Students

Special Events

American Regions Mathematics League
Belin-Blank Center Advanced Leadership Institute
Belin-Blank Center Recognition Ceremony
Invent Iowa State Invention Convention
Wallace National Conference on Gifted Education in Rural Schools
Wallace National Research Symposium on Talent Development

Out-Reach

Gifted Education Program Evaluations
In-services
School Consultations
Staff Development
Weekend/Distance-Learning Programs

International Programs

International Seminars and Consultations
Research and Training

University Programs

Iowa Talent Project
National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering
UI College of Education Honors Opportunity Program

Professional Activities of the Belin-Blank Center

Federal Grants
Fund Raising
Individual Benefactors
Private Foundations
Public Relations
Research Publications
State Grants
State, National, International Presentations
The University of Iowa Foundation
The University of Iowa Media Services
Vision Newsletter
Website: www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank

English Language Learners (ELL) Project

Our nation, including Iowa, is rapidly becoming more culturally diverse, and our educational programs and standards need to reflect this growth. According to recent statistics obtained by the Iowa Department of Education, there have been over 15,000 ELL enrolled in Iowa's schools during the 2003–04 school year. These children and adolescents speak over 90 different languages, encompass approximately 3% of the student population in public schools and 0.5% of the student population in non-public schools. The number of students who are ELL continues to grow each year, making Iowa an increasingly culturally diverse state.

The Belin-Blank Center is excited to announce its partnership with the Iowa Department of Education in a new joint effort to identify gifted English Language Learners in the State of Iowa. This initiative is recognized as a special project of the Iowa Department of Education's federal grant, "Our Kids," which focuses on enhancing the education of all students who are ELL.

The Belin-Blank Center's role in this initiative is to develop procedures and guidelines for teachers and administrators to use in the discovery of students who are both gifted and ELL. To this end, a manual will be created for teachers and consultants in the State of Iowa to facilitate the identification of these youngsters. Workshops also will be offered that will demonstrate how to make effective use of the manual.

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Blank Honors Center

The Blank Honors Center, designed by architects Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck, received an Iowa Chapter American Institute of Architects (AIA) award, as well as an AIA Central States Citation for Excellence. The Center is named after the late Des Moines couple, Myron and Jacqueline N. Blank, who donated \$5 million toward the \$14-million project. Located on the T. Anne Cleary Walkway and attached to the Daum Honors Residence Hall, the Blank Honors Center opened in early 2004 and houses the Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development, as well as the UI Honors Program. By combining the programs, the UI became the first university in the nation to offer under a single roof programs, services and support for academically gifted and talented students all the way from kindergarten through college. The Blank Honors Center was designed to invite intellectual and artistic dialogue among gifted students, educators, and families.

Photo by Josefina M. Lopez, Grade 4,
student in Challenges for Elementary
School Students (CHESS), 2005





Gifted in Rural America:

Faces of Diversity



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