As professionals, teachers are responsible for instructing varied sets of students assembled in dissimilar classrooms. Therefore, differentiated delivery of curricula is needed in order to meet the various needs and abilities of any given population. Although gifted students were thought to be able to hold their own academically, they were in need of these differentiated curricula as well. Access to differentiated curricula provides for maximization of gifted students’ learning potential, while helping to deflect the effects of other issues which surface as a result of being academically gifted.

**Literature Review**

Gifted learners have varied experiences in the academic realm (Brewer, 2010; Carper, 2002; Kunjufu, 1986, 2000; Marotta-Garcia, 2011; Swanson, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Yoo & Moon, 2006). However, the at-risk gifted learners’ experiences tended to have longer lasting negative effects in regard to academic success. The review of relevant literature revealed identification practices, social hierarchy of school, advocacy for the gifted learner, life’s occurrences, and achievement and rigor as key factors in gifted students’ progressions through their educational processes, resulting in experiences far different from their peers in general and special education groupings.
Case Study: Freddy

The purpose of this case study is to explore the social emotional, intellectual, academic, and physiological development of a gifted black male identified as at-risk.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of the label of giftedness on young, black males who are also at-risk?
2. What are the social emotional and intellectual impacts of the label of giftedness on young, black males?
3. How do educators, family, and peers impact the development of young, black males identified as gifted?

Rationale/Significance Statements

The concepts explored in this study serve two purposes. The first is that qualitative studies add richness in contextual data that may otherwise be lost in a quantitative study. The second purpose of this study is to explore the factors that affect the gifted, black male students who also have identified risk-factors such as discipline issues and low socioeconomic status.

Definition of Terms

At-risk: factors such as low socioeconomic status, academic or behavioral issues, or unstable home environments that results in the academic underperformance of a student.

Giftedness: students who meet at least three out of four criteria in mental ability, academic achievement, creativity, and motivation as defined by school system policy.
Methodology

Setting

Turnpike Middle School is located in the southeastern region of the United States. The school became Title I approximately five years ago and the demographics of the student population are changing due to the decreasing economic stability of the state and country. The current student population is 70% Black, 15% White, 10% Hispanic, and 5% Asian with 67% enrolled identified as economically disadvantaged.

Participant

The participant in this case study is currently an eighth grade student at Turnpike Middle School.

Data Collection Method

An in-depth analysis of Freddy’s academic and discipline record was conducted prior to the interview to generate a list of semi-structured interview questions. The researchers developed questions based upon an exploratory model of research inquiry. The researchers also took into consideration the research literature when formulating the questions. After receiving parental consent, the researcher used the questions to conduct an interview with Freddy.

Method of Analysis/Interpretation

The recorded participant interview was conducted by one researcher, then sent to the second researcher for member checking (Creswell, 2007). The transcribed interview was placed into a coding chart for side-by-side theme analysis using priori-coding techniques. The defined
themes of interest included academic development and social emotional relationships—with peers, teachers, and family. After the initial coding, the transcribed interview was reviewed for other possible emerging themes. The coded statements were then placed into a coding matrix for further review to help identify possible patterns, discrepancies, and insight. To help increase validity of the research, the student demographic profile was reviewed as an additional artifact to determine standardized test achievement scores, grades, attendance, and discipline records.

**Findings**

**Analysis/Interpretation**

The preliminary results of the study centers on two major themes: (a) Academic Development and (b) Social Emotional Development. Priori coding techniques were used to analyze the data. The following is a summary of the results for academic achievement and social emotional development.

**Summary/Conclusion**

In summary, Freddy revealed a number of issues in the social emotional arena that has affected his academic performance in school. Although, he is highly capable of producing academic work equal to and above his peers, he has experienced low grades and average test scores on norm-references test. Freddy notes that his feeling of isolation in his peer group and the lack of confidence in his ability from some of his teachers contributed to this performance level.
References


