

# Peeling the Onion: Equity in Highly Capable (HiCap)

Austina De Bonte

President, NW Gifted Child Association ([nwgca.org](http://nwgca.org))  
President, Northshore HiCap Parents Council ([hcaparents.org](http://hcaparents.org))  
Founder, Smart is not Easy, LLC

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## Agenda

- ▶ Current equity situation
- ▶ Identification
  - ▶ Outdated practices
  - ▶ What would be better
- ▶ Access to services
  - ▶ Outdated practices
  - ▶ What would be better
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Root cause

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# The Equity Problem

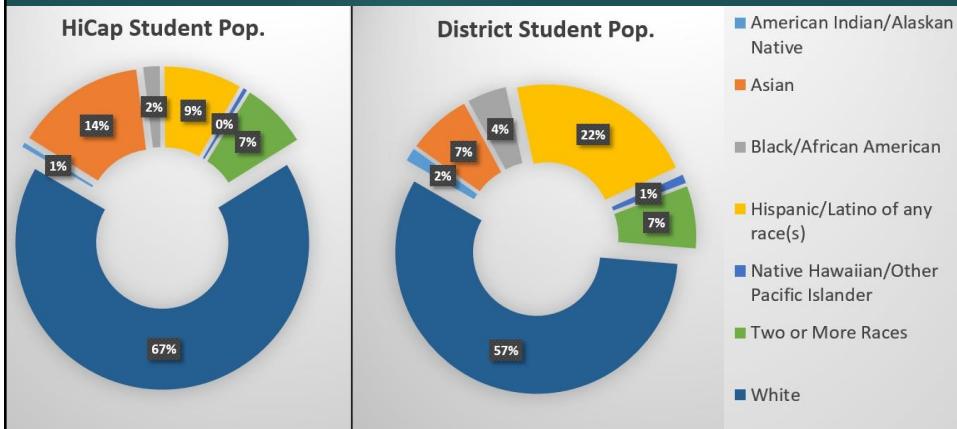
## SEE ME!

GIFTED CHILDREN IN POVERTY AND FROM MINORITY GROUPS ARE 2.5 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO BE IDENTIFIED FOR, AND IN, GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS. CHILDREN DESERVE FAIR IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES.



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# The Equity Problem – WA State



OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/DemographicsPieChart.xlsx>

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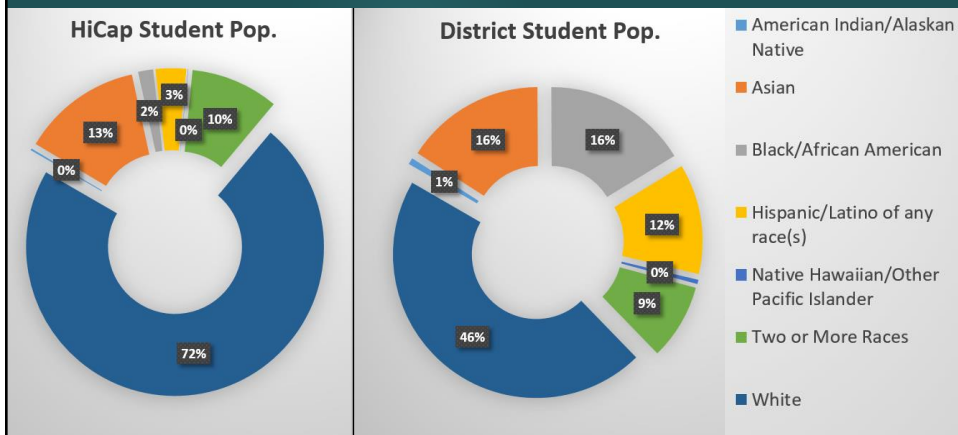
## The Equity Problem – WA State

	% of Statewide Enrollment	% of HiCap Enrollment
Free or Reduced Price Meals	45.0%	21.2%
Section 504	2.7%	3.7%
Special Education	13.4%	2.4%

OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/2014-15StudentReport.xlsx>

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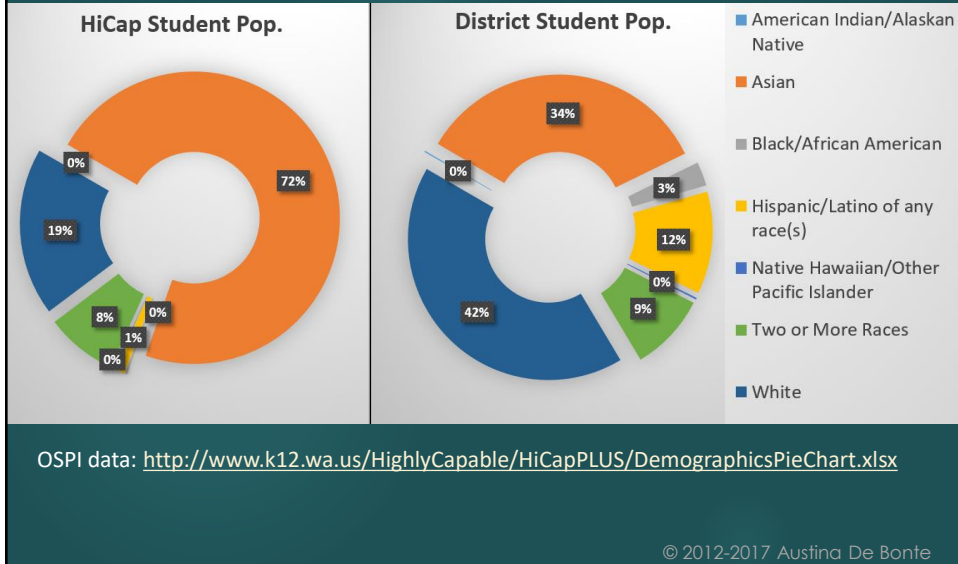
## The Equity Problem - Seattle



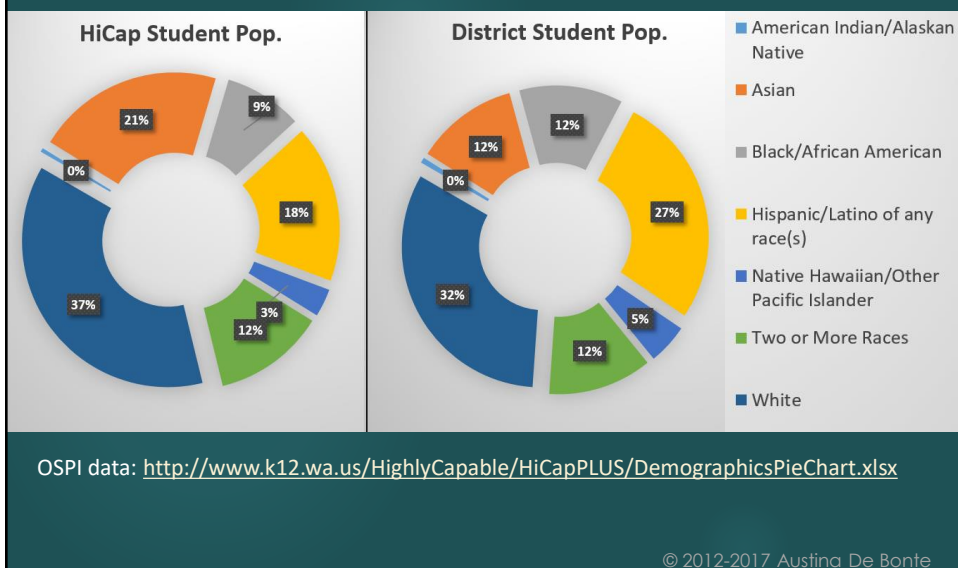
OSPI data: <http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/HiCapPLUS/DemographicsPieChart.xlsx>

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## Across the lake: Bellevue



## A ray of hope: Federal Way



## What is Federal Way Doing Differently?

- ▶ Universal screening in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in ALL schools
- ▶ District data-sweep (and call downs)
- ▶ Several years of investment in more rigorous curriculum - elementary through high school
  - ▶ And learning from some false starts...

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“We cannot close the achievement gap or address the overrepresentation in special education of our subgroups until we address their underrepresentation in highly capable programs.”

Dr. Donna Ford, Vanderbilt University

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**Equity: A complex problem with many layers...**




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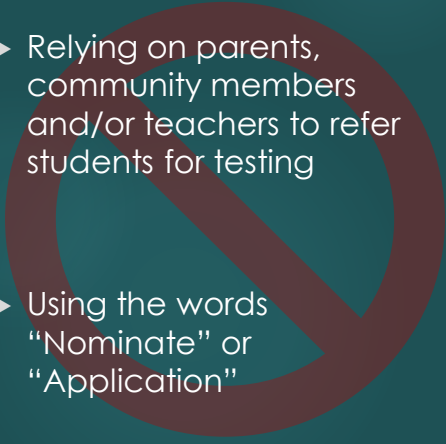
**1<sup>st</sup> Layer: Outdated, biased identification practices**




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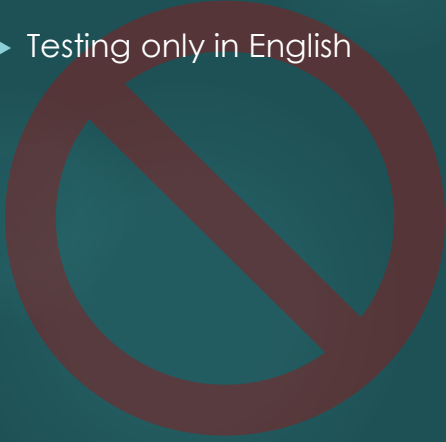
## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Relying on parents, community members and/or teachers to refer students for testing</li> <li>▶ Using the words "Nominate" or "Application"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Universal screening ALL students in a grade level</li> <li>▶ District "data sweep"</li> <li>▶ Referrals are the backup plan</li> <li>▶ Example: Federal Way</li> <li>▶ Use value-neutral language: "Refer" and "Referral" "Placement"</li> </ul>


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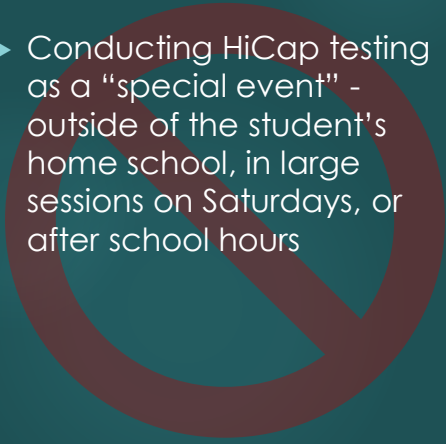
## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Testing only in English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Administer screener &amp; tests in student's native language</li> <li>▶ Consider fast rate of language acquisition as a valid HiCap identifier for ELL students</li> </ul>


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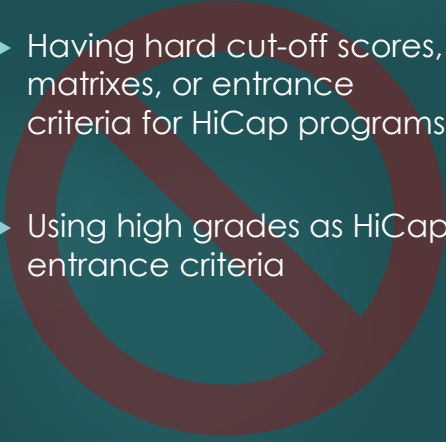
## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Conducting HiCap testing as a “special event” - outside of the student's home school, in large sessions on Saturdays, or after school hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Conduct HiCap screening and testing during the school day, in the student's home school.</li> </ul>


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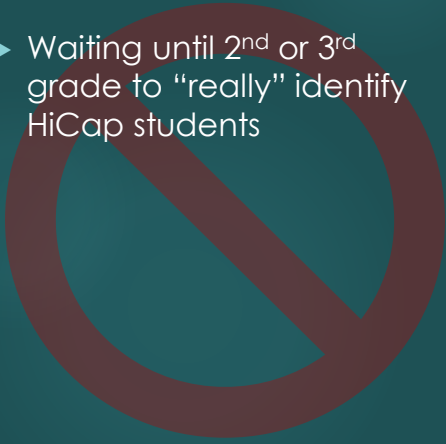
## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Having hard cut-off scores, matrixes, or entrance criteria for HiCap programs</li> <li>▶ Using high grades as HiCap entrance criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use a portfolio-based approach, using diverse types of data points and professional judgment.</li> <li>▶ “OR” not “AND” criteria</li> <li>▶ Both age-normed and grade-normed scores.</li> <li>▶ Consider known biases in the tests being used.</li> </ul>






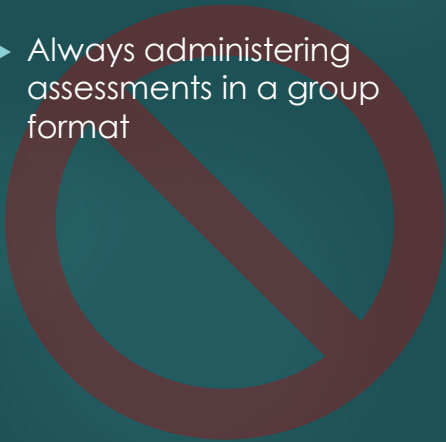
## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Waiting until 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to “really” identify HiCap students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prioritize identifying in early elementary grades to minimize further widening of the opportunity gap.</li> <li>▶ Favor ability testing over achievement testing in young students</li> <li>▶ Use performance-based assessments as a data point</li> </ul>


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## Identification Practices


Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Always administering assessments in a group format</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Administer one-on-one whenever there is reason to believe a student might need it (not just for IEPs/504s)</li> </ul>

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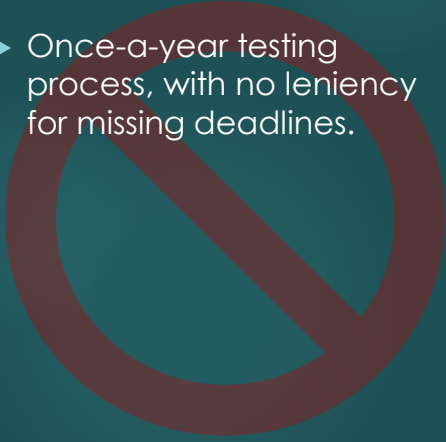



## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Relying on appeals to catch mistakes in the identification process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Proactively gather more data when a student has ambiguous scores. Do not rely on parents to appeal.</li></ul>

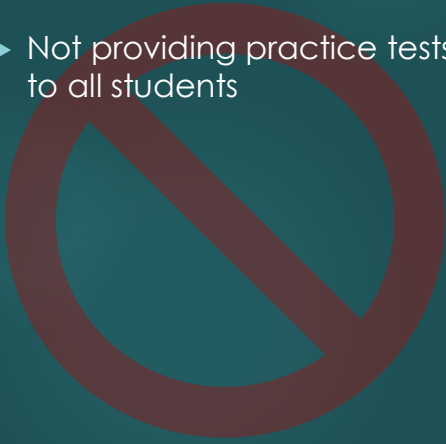



## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Once-a-year testing process, with no leniency for missing deadlines.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Allow students to be referred at any time of year, and have a process for rolling admissions.</li></ul>

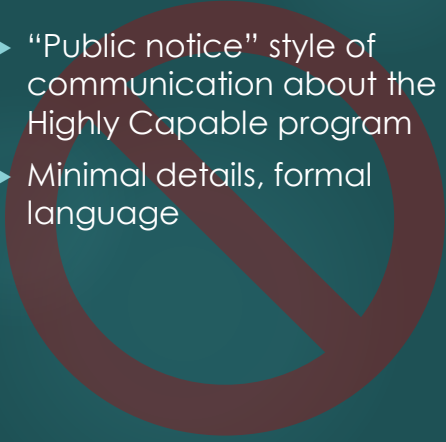



## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Not providing practice tests to all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Have ALL students do a guided practice test before being screened or assessed.</li> </ul>




## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ “Public notice” style of communication about the Highly Capable program</li> <li>▶ Minimal details, formal language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide community-specific communication to respect both language and cultural norms.</li> <li>▶ Advertise the program(s) proactively.</li> <li>▶ Help families understand the benefits of HiCap program(s) so that they actually accept HiCap placement.</li> </ul>



## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Multi-disciplinary selection committees that do not reflect the district population, and do not have HiCap subject matter expertise</li> <li>▶ Screening out Twice Exceptional kids from HiCap consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Members of the committee should represent the district population in gender, race, and ethnicity.</li> <li>▶ All members of the committee must have sufficient expertise about HiCap and Twice Exceptional students, and be up-to-date on the best practices for identification.</li> </ul>



## Identification Practices

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Qualifying HiCap students based on available space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Create HiCap program space for every qualified student.</li> </ul>

**We shouldn't be that surprised...**

**Our identification processes favor families who can navigate a complex system.**


**That is exactly who we see reflected in our HiCap programs.**

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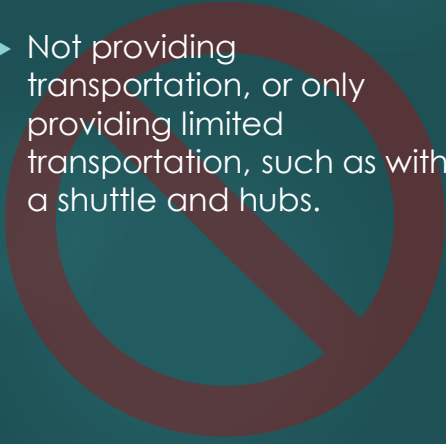
**2<sup>nd</sup> Layer: Even if identification was perfect, equity of access...**




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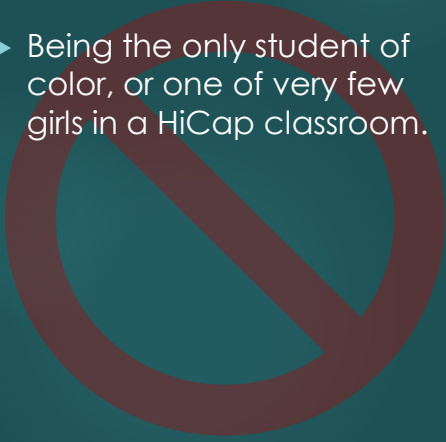



## Access to Services

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Not providing transportation, or only providing limited transportation, such as with a shuttle and hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide full transportation to all students.</li> </ul>

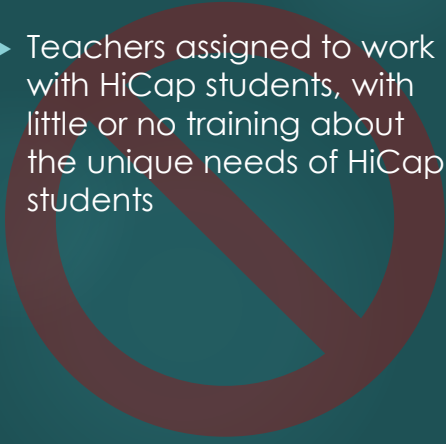



## Access to Services

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Being the only student of color, or one of very few girls in a HiCap classroom.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Schedule a big campaign for outreach and identification in an ethnic/racial/gender group all at once. Place cluster groups together.</li> <li>▶ Only by identifying and placing a group of HiCap students of color together can we satisfy these students' dual needs for community and acceptance.</li> </ul>

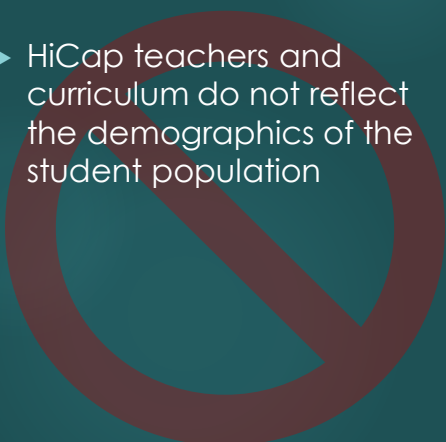



## Access to Services

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Teachers assigned to work with HiCap students, with little or no training about the unique needs of HiCap students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide baseline HiCap professional development for all building staff.</li> <li>▶ Provide detailed HiCap professional development for all classroom HiCap teachers.</li> </ul>



## Access to Services

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ HiCap teachers and curriculum do not reflect the demographics of the student population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Recruiting &amp; retaining HiCap teachers that reflect the demographics of the students.</li> <li>▶ Use curriculum that reflects the demographics of the students.</li> <li>▶ All teachers, including HiCap teachers, must be trained in cultural competency.</li> </ul>



## Access to Services

Outdated Practices	What Would Be Better...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assuming that all students have access to technology after school for homework</li> <li>▶ Assuming that all students have access to homework help &amp; executive function support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide technology to low-income students, or ensure that teachers do not expect access to technology for homework.</li> <li>▶ Teachers must be extra supportive of executive function for HiCap students, all the way through middle school.</li> </ul>

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Layer: Districts need Funding to Implement Equitable Practices



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## State HiCap Funding

In 2016:

- ▶ State funded ~25,000 HiCap students
  - ▶ But 63,551 HiCap students were served
- ▶ HiCap was an unfunded (or severely underfunded) mandate
  - ▶ Not unlike Special Education
- ▶ Districts have been in a tight spot

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## State HiCap Funding

- ▶ HiCap funding is primarily used for:
  - ▶ Identification
  - ▶ Professional Development
  - ▶ NOT: Staff, Transportation, Curriculum (usually)
- ▶ Equitable practices cost more
- ▶ **UNDER-FUNDING HiCap was DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR EQUITY PROBLEM**

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## State HiCap Funding

- ▶ McCleary helped a lot:
  - ▶ Doubled state funding for HiCap to districts
  - ▶ Districts charged to “focus on equitable identification of low-income students”

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Layer: Why should we spend money serving HiCap kids?



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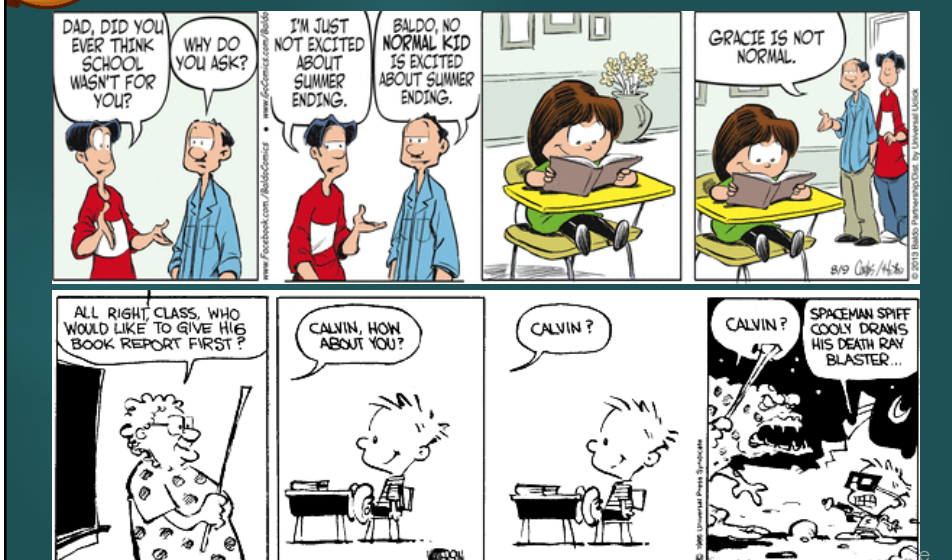
## Why do we serve HiCap kids anyway?

- ▶ Too hard of a problem to solve?
  - ▶ Yes, it is a hard problem
  - ▶ But, it's the law
    - ▶ Districts must identify and serve K-12 HiCap students by law
- ▶ HiCap is an essential intervention for a special needs population

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## Who are HiCap Kids?





## Is it OK for school to be easy?

If a child is allowed to “skate” through regular classrooms where they pick up the new ideas seemingly without trying, they never learn how to tackle a genuinely hard problem.

Eventually, they find themselves in middle school geometry, or high school physics, and may be faced for the very first time with a topic that is not intuitive for them—and have no experience, no strategies, and limited emotional reserves to tackle it.

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## Grit is more important than IQ

- ▶ Duckworth & Seligman studied success at:
  - ▶ West Point Military Academy
  - ▶ National Spelling Bee
  - ▶ Adolescents: High school juniors, 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- ▶ “It wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was *grit*.”
- ▶ “Self-discipline predicted academic performance more robustly than did IQ.”
- ▶ **“In our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent.”**

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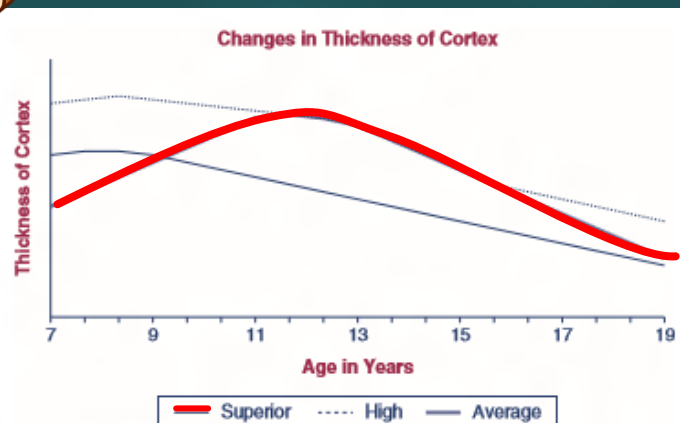
## Underachievement

- ▶ Has its roots in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
  - ▶ But often isn't visible until middle or high school
- ▶ Kids may never have to develop:
  - ▶ How to handle a real challenge
  - ▶ Persistence, perseverance, "grit"
  - ▶ Emotional coping skills
  - ▶ Study skills, time management skills
- ▶ Learning disabilities may be hidden until the material gets challenging enough
- ▶ **Underachievement – very difficult to reverse**  
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/underachievement.htm>

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## A different developmental timetable



**Figure 1.2** Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

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## Empirical evidence agrees...

"Kids who had higher IQs to begin with seemed to have an extended period in adolescence during which they retained the ability to learn at a rapid pace, just like much younger children."

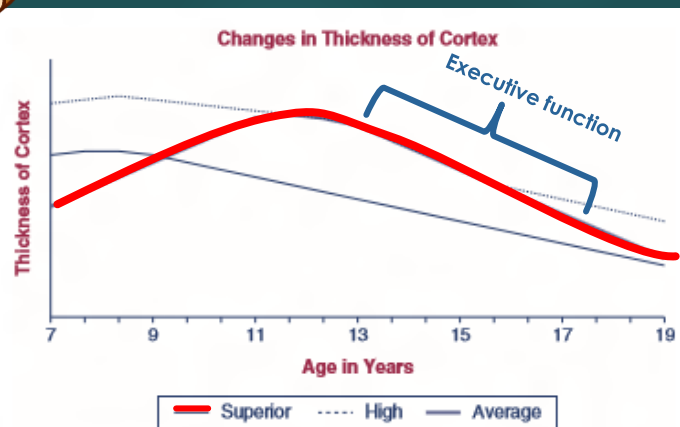
Angela Brant & John Hewitt, Institute for Behavioral Genetics at the University of Colorado

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2013/09/23/224387862/smart-teenage-brains-may-get-some-extra-learning-time>

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## A different developmental timetable



**Figure 1.2** Changes in the thickness of the brain's cortex between the ages of 7 and 19 in individuals of superior, high, and average intelligence.

Source: Adapted from Shaw et al., 2006.

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## Intensity, Sensitivity

- ▶ Over-excitabilities (OEs) – super-stimulatability
  - ▶ Psychomotor
  - ▶ Sensual
  - ▶ Imaginational
  - ▶ Intellectual
  - ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Hard wired - fMRI “Brains on Fire” (Eide, 2004)
  - ▶ Experience a more intense reaction
  - ▶ For a longer period than normal
  - ▶ To a stimulus that may be very small

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## Perfectionism

- ▶ Erase a hole in the paper
- ▶ Impatient with others, aren't “doing it right”
- ▶ Meltdown at the first sign of trouble
- ▶ Can't make a decision
- ▶ Reach for impossible goals
- ▶ Hate criticism, dwell on mistakes
- ▶ Trouble accepting compliments
- ▶ Unwilling to start, afraid to try, “I don't want to”
- ▶ “Challenge Cards” in the corner of the classroom may not work...

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## Social mismatch

- ▶ More complex vocabulary
- ▶ More involved games, stricter rules, fairness
- ▶ Interested in niche topics, ask unusual questions
- ▶ Kids realize very early
  - ▶ They are somehow **different**
- ▶ Gravitate to older kids or adults
- ▶ Feel like they have to “fake it” to make a friend
- ▶ Lonely, social isolation
  - ▶ Even if they have playmates
  - ▶ “No one understands me” “They don’t get my jokes”

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## When the school doesn’t fit...

- ▶ Constantly ask probing or off-topic questions
  - ▶ Annoy teacher & other kids
- ▶ Trouble socializing with other kids
- ▶ Dumb themselves down to “fit in”
  - ▶ Consciously or subconsciously
  - ▶ Particularly gifted girls going “underground”
- ▶ Increasingly introverted
- ▶ Become the class clown
  - ▶ Or the dreamer, the loner, or the victim...
  - ▶ Or the A+ student!

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## HiCap programs help emotionally

It's not uncommon for a HiCap kid to cry in class over a frustration – even in 6<sup>th</sup> grade

... in a typical classroom, this can be socially limiting

... in a HiCap classroom, this is par for the course

Grouping HiCap kids together helps normalize their emotional challenges, OEs, perfectionism

... in a typical classroom, they feel different, their challenges can become pathologized

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## Gifted programs help socially

▶ Program models that place gifted children with other similarly gifted peers

▶ Full-time classrooms

▶ Cluster grouping

▶ Pull-out programs

▶ Serving the whole child is more than just appropriate academics

▶ Prioritize social & emotional growth

▶ Authentic connection is required for key social development stages

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## Why not put one HiCap kid in each classroom? Doesn't that help other kids?

- ▶ HiCap kids are NOT role models
- ▶ When other kids look at the natural abilities of HiCap students, they only get discouraged that there's no way they could possibly "catch up."
- ▶ When HiCap learners are removed from the classroom, other bright kids step up and become more meaningful classroom leaders.

(Delisle & Galbraith, 2003; Winebrenner and Devlin, 2001; Shunk 1998)

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## Won't kids get arrogant if they are put in a HiCap program?

Actually, when kids are among true peers they are no longer the smartest kid in the room

- ▶ Humble
- ▶ Get challenged by peers
- ▶ Develop true self-confidence, self-reliance

**Kids realized they were different in preschool or kindergarten...they already know.**

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## “Equity” does not mean giving the same education to every kid

- ▶ Different kids are in different places
- ▶ Every kid should learn something new at school every day
  - ▶ Vygostky's Zone of Proximal Development
  - ▶ Not too easy, not too hard
- ▶ Not **MORE** work, **DIFFERENT** work
  - ▶ Not just more classwork on top of the “regular” stuff
  - ▶ Make sure the kid doesn't feel punished for being smart by giving them more work
  - ▶ Piles of homework is NOT the goal
  - ▶ Not a pressure cooker, just the right level to build grit

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## Bottom line...

**Mismatch with  
the environment**

Smart is NOT Easy

Emotionally – Socially – Academically

Grit – Executive Function

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## Why do we serve HiCap kids?

- ▶ They are a special needs population
- ▶ Without intervention, they are at risk
- ▶ Nurturing the **WHOLE CHILD**
- ▶ GOAL: Functioning citizens in our community
  
- ▶ NOT:
  - ▶ To create eminent leaders (Einstein, Steve Jobs, ...)
  - ▶ To send more kids to Harvard, Stanford, MIT...
  - ▶ To nurture child prodigies
  - ▶ To increase our international math ranking
  - ▶ To improve the US economy

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HiCap is not a prize, it's a **WHOLE CHILD** intervention

We have a moral duty to identify **EVERY** HiCap student

Our most vulnerable populations need it the most

**This is a social justice issue**

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“When provisions are denied to the gifted on the basis that they are “elitist,” it is the poor who suffer the most. The rich have other options.”

– Dr. Linda Silverman

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