

Media Center Programs for the Gifted in North Carolina

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Beginning about 1960—in wake of the spectacular 1957 Soviet launching of the first artificial earth satellite—and continuing to the present day, American literature on education for the gifted is prolific in curricular methods and programs, though not in relationship to the library. American library literature, likewise, reveals a dearth of information regarding the special needs of the gifted user with little mention of the school instructional media center and its role in the dissemination of programs and services. A careful scrutiny of the *Index to North Carolina Libraries, 1965-1978*, revealed one article, "The School Library Program in the Electric Age," (Spring 1970) with a single sentence devoted to gifted and talented programs:

... Special programs for slow learners, the physically handicapped, and the academically talented are being initiated.¹

Voices have not broken the ten-year silence since that publication. It, therefore, seemed appropriate to examine the extent and nature of existing North Carolina school instructional media center programs and/or services which might have had interim initiation—and to determine the extent that plans were being made for future implementation.

Specifically, the researcher hoped to learn: (1) how extensively distributed, geographically, are North Carolina instructional media center programs and/or services for the gifted, (2) what a comparative analysis of these programs and/or services in urban and rural schools would reveal, (3) what is their nature, and (4) how extensively dispersed are they throughout the curriculum.

The study excluded private and parochial schools, as well as the North Carolina Governor's School. It was limited to a random sample survey of North Carolina public school systems — grades K-12. The study did not evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and/or services to the gifted segment.

A "school instructional media program" includes any planned format of activities, either models of acceleration or enrichment, which in conjunction with the school curriculum, is designed to foster and promote the diverse interests formed by professional or paraprofessional persons in the school media center that is directly related to meeting the needs of the gifted child. "Gifted" refers to that segment of the school population capable of high performance or those with demonstrated achievement or potential in any of the following areas, singly or in combination: (1) general intellectual ability, (2), specific academic aptitude, (3) creative or productive thinking, (4) leadership ability, (5) visual and performing arts, and (6) psychomotor ability.²

Structured response questionnaires were mailed to 46 (25%) randomly selected media supervisors, directors, or coordinators from a total population of 184 serving the various county and city public systems in North Carolina. The 100% response lends to the credibility of the conclusions which have been drawn.

Twenty-four, or 52% reported programs and/or services for the gifted in which a total of 9,478 students were enrolled. Twenty-two, or 48% listed none. Ten urban and 14 rural school systems reported existing programs and/or services. A chi-square test used to analyze the urban-rural distributions showed no statistical significance at the .05 level.

To determine the nature of programs and/or services, three data groups were gathered and analyzed: (1) types of programs and/or services, (2) media utilized, and (3) whether programs and/or services were based on models of enrichment or models of acceleration.

Table 1 reveals programs and/or services offered the gifted, both those listed on the questionnaire, and categories provided by respondents under the rubric "Other," i.e., "Values Clarification," "Advanced Skills Development and Critical Thinking," and "Dramatics."

Table 1
Frequency Distribution of
Types of Programs or Services

Programs and/or Services Include:	Number	Percentage
Reference and Research Skills	19	40
Great Books Program	11	23
AV Production Programs	8	17
Outreach Program to Parents	3	6
Advanced Skills Development and Critical Thinking	3	6
Values Clarification	2	4
Dramatics	1	2

In contrast, Table 2 illustrates the more even distribution of media utilized in programs and/or services for the gifted. 16mm films, sound recordings, and filmstrips top the list with distributions in the 23-26% range, while I-TV, slides, and microforms are less favorably rated.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of
Media Utilized

Media Utilized	Number	Percentage
16mm Films	18	26
Sound Recordings (Records or Cassettes)	17	24
Filmstrips	16	23
ITV	9	13
Slides	9	13
Microforms	1	1

Table 3 indicates the 3 to 1 ratio of models of enrichment over models of acceleration. Four of the 24 systems reporting specified programs and/or services based on both models of enrichment and acceleration.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of
Models

IMC Programs and/or Services are Based on:	Number	Percentage
Models of Enrichment	21	75
Models of Acceleration	7	25

The extent of dispersion within the system curriculums was obtained by questioning: (1) the grade level(s) at which programs and/or services exist, and (2) the subject areas in which they have been developed and are in effect.

Table 4 shows grade level dispersions. The junior high level, 7-9, has the highest concentration, followed closely by the 4-6 grade middle grades. Suprisingly, grades 10-12 comprised only 20% of the total. At the K level, relatively few programs and/or services exist, as the identification process of gifted students has not begun, or is just beginning. A 3% increase (to 14%) over level K is revealed in grades 1-3, and a sharp rise (almost double at 27%) is seen at levels 4-6 when processes for identifying the gifted have been well established.

Table 4
Frequency Distribution of
Grade Levels

Grade Level	Number	Percentage
7-9	19	29
4-6	18	27
10-12	13	20
1-3	9	14
K	7	11

As seen in Table 5, Language Arts is the subject area with the greatest number of programs and/or services, receiving 22 affirmative responses from the 24 systems reporting. Mathematics at 18% and Science at 16% are interestingly, less favorably represented. After Social Studies, ranking fourth at 13%, are Art, Music, and Foreign Language with even fewer programs and/or services. One respondent listed Computer Technology under the rubric "Other." The percentage totals of this and some of the preceding tables are a bit less or more than 100% due to rounding.

Of the 22 negative responses, only 23% reported programs and/or services in the planning stages. 41% responded "under consideration," and 36% indicated none being planned. No systems reported future programs and/or services in the form of written proposals.

It is to be concluded, then, that in 1980 there is a wide distribution of instructional media center programs and/or services for the gifted in North Carolina public school systems. Furthermore, assuming that the sample is

Table 5
Frequency Distribution of
Subject Areas

Subject Area	Number	Percentage
Language Arts	22	32
Mathematics	12	18
Science	11	16
Social Studies	9	13
Art	5	7
Music	4	6
Foreign Language	4	6
Computer Technology	1	1

representative, they are not clustered in urban areas, but are evenly dispersed in both urban and rural areas.

An overwhelming majority are based on models of enrichment, rather than models of acceleration. Reference and research skills and the Great Books Program comprise high percentages of the kinds of programs and/or services available, while 16mm films, sound recordings, and filmstrips are the media most utilized. Surprisingly, instructional television fell low in the category at 13%.

Instructional media center programs and/or services for the gifted are widely available in the curriculums of North Carolina public school systems. They run the gamut from K-12, with every major subject area having representation.

It is probable, though not concluded, that the majority of these programs and/or services were initiated since 1970. From data received, it appears that a zenith has been reached, and that fewer programs and/or services will be implemented in the next few years. A future study, building on the present one, could provide answers to the question of how long present programs and/or services have been in existence. The present research also lends implication to a future study which would address itself to the decline of programs and/or services in grades 10-12, at which level it would seem that the greatest number would be in effect.

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REFERENCES

1. Nancy Jennie Lee Rider, "The School Library Program in the Electric Age," *North Carolina Libraries*, 28 (Spring 1970), p. 51.
2. H. Thomas Walker, "Media Services for Gifted Learners," *School Media Quarterly*, 6 (Summer 1978), pp. 253-54.