Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined K–3 general education teachers' perceptions and classroom implementation of National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned best practices for gifted education within a rural South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). The study investigated the frequency with which teachers implemented nine recommended strategies: differentiation, flexible grouping, formative assessment, pacing, enrichment, content acceleration, grade acceleration, family involvement, and professional development. It also explored perceived barriers and observed student outcomes related to these practices.

Participants included 60 teachers who reported having at least one formally identified gifted student in their classroom, drawn from a pool of 128 eligible teachers within the RESA. A modified version of the survey developed by Johnsen and Kaul (2019) was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics revealed that while participants overwhelmingly believed in the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned strategies, their implementation varied. Differentiation was the most frequently implemented practice, whereas grade acceleration was the least used. Common barriers included curriculum constraints, limited resources, and low teacher confidence in using specific strategies.

Teachers who regularly implemented NAGC-aligned practices reported student outcomes such as deeper understanding, higher-quality work, and increased engagement. The findings suggest that reducing contextual barriers may enhance the alignment between teacher beliefs and instructional practice. This study contributes to the understanding of how early elementary educators support gifted learners and offers implications for professional development, instructional leadership, and future research.

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Study

Gifted education is an essential component of equitable educational systems, designed to ensure that students with exceptional abilities receive the challenges and support needed to fully realize their potential (Assouline et al., 2015; Callahan, Moon, & Oh, 2017; Gilson & Lee, 2023). The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) estimates that 6–10% of K–12 students in the United States are gifted, emphasizing the need for instruction that meets their distinct academic and social-emotional needs (NAGC, 2025). Research highlights the importance of strategies such as differentiation, flexible grouping, and formative assessments to address the diverse learning requirements of these students (Reis & Renzulli, 2016). However, in K–3 classrooms, general education teachers are typically the primary instructors responsible for nurturing gifted students. Many educators report a lack of specialized training to effectively address the unique needs of gifted students, making it challenging to manage a wide range of abilities across subjects (Callahan, Moon, Oh, et al., 2017; Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

In early elementary grades, the responsibility for fostering academic growth and addressing the social-emotional and developmental needs of gifted students often rests solely on classroom teachers, as specialized gifted programs, advanced classes, and pull-out services are less readily available at this stage (Kaya, 2015). Many K–3 teachers report feeling unprepared to recognize or challenge gifted learners because of limited professional development opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Swanson et al.,

2022). The extent to which teachers implement research-based strategies is significantly influenced by their perceptions of preparedness, beliefs about gifted education, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of practices aligned with the NAGC standards (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

This study replicated research by Johnsen and Kaul (2019), who surveyed gifted specialists in a Texas school district using an instrument aligned with the earlier NAGC Gifted Programming Standards (see Appendix A). Their work provided valuable insights into teacher beliefs and practices related to implementing research-based strategies for gifted education. The present study, however, shifted its focus to K–3 general education teachers, who serve as the primary instructors for all subjects at this developmental stage, within a Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) in Georgia. The survey instrument was adapted to reflect the geographic context of this study and to align with the recently updated 2024 NAGC Initial Gifted Educator Preparation Standards (NAGC, n.d.), ensuring consistency with current best practices and educational expectations.

This focus on K–3 general education teachers is particularly relevant given their central role in nurturing the academic and social-emotional needs of young, gifted students. According to the *NAGC Knowledge and Skill Standards in Gifted and Talented Education for All Teachers* (NAGC, n.d.), general educators are expected to (a) understand definitions, theories, and identification processes for gifted and talented students, including those from diverse backgrounds; (b) the learning differences, developmental milestones, and cognitive/affective characteristics of these students; and (c) plan and implement evidence-based strategies, such as assessing gifted students, differentiating instruction, and nominating students for advanced programs or

acceleration when needed. These responsibilities underscore the critical role general educators play in fostering gifted potential during the formative early years of schooling. By exploring the perceptions and practices of K–3 teachers through the lens of these standards, this study sought to address gaps in understanding and provide actionable insights to support gifted education within general K–3 classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

Georgia's gifted education policies, as outlined in the 2024–2025 *Gifted Resource Manual* (Georgia Department of Education, 2024), provide a comprehensive framework for meeting the needs of gifted students. However, implementation of these policies across the state remains inconsistent, leading to potential disparities in the quality and effectiveness of gifted education programs (Lockhart et al., 2022). A central concern involves the state's reliance on differentiation within the general education classroom as the primary method for delivering gifted services in grades K–3 (Rinn et al., 2022). This approach places the responsibility on general education teachers to provide the differentiated instructional strategies necessary for gifted students to thrive (Brighton et al., 2005; Johnsen et al., 2020; Tomlinson, 2014; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005).

This poses a significant challenge, as K–3 classrooms are composed of students with diverse academic, emotional, and developmental needs, including those identified as gifted (Callahan, Moon, Oh, et al., 2017). While many educators express a strong desire to support gifted learners, they often report feeling inadequately prepared to implement appropriate instructional modifications without ongoing professional development and institutional support (Archambault et al., 1993; Hébert, 2021). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about gifted education—particularly their confidence in recognizing and nurturing

giftedness—can significantly impact the quality of instruction gifted students receive (Barbier et al., 2023). Teachers who feel confident in their abilities are more likely to implement NAGC-aligned strategies effectively, while those with lower confidence may be less inclined to use such practices.

This study addressed the need to examine how Georgia's gifted education policies are implemented in K–3 classrooms, with an emphasis on understanding the challenges general education teachers face and identifying strategies to enhance the quality and consistency of gifted services in the early elementary grades.

Purpose of the Study

This study addressed a research gap by focusing on K–3 teachers within a rural South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). It examined teachers' beliefs regarding National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned, research-based practices for gifted education. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices, the frequency of their implementation, and the barriers that limited their use. It replicated and adapted Johnsen and Kaul's (2019) research on K–12 teachers' beliefs in Texas, tailoring the survey instrument to reflect the geographic and contextual nuances of rural South Georgia. By concentrating on this unique educational environment, the study offered insights into the implementation of gifted education practices in areas where specialized support may be limited.

In many Georgia schools, K–3 teachers serve as the primary providers of NAGC-aligned instruction (Callahan, Moon, Oh, et al., 2017; Georgia Department of Education, 2024). This arrangement presents both challenges and opportunities for examining how

state-level gifted education policies are enacted in general education classrooms. The study's significance lay in its examination of teachers' perceptions of these practices and how such perceptions influence implementation. It also helped identify areas where additional resources or professional development might support teachers in meeting the needs of gifted learners.

The RESA under study served 10,655 K–3 students and employed 556 K–3 teachers. Of these students, 584 (5.5%) were formally identified as gifted—slightly below the national estimate of 6–10% (NAGC, 2025). While the total population included all 556 teachers, the analytic sample for this study was drawn from the verified subset of 128 teachers currently serving at least one formally identified gifted student. This approach ensured alignment with the study's focus on classroom practices specifically used with identified gifted students. These demographic figures underscore the importance of understanding how teachers recognize and implement strategies not only for students already identified as gifted but also for those in the process of being identified. By exploring how services are delivered to both groups, the study offers insight into early educational opportunities and instructional equity.

Barriers to effective gifted instruction—such as time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient professional development—have been widely cited in prior research (Moon et al., 2003). This study explored whether such barriers existed in rural South Georgia, and how they affected the delivery of NAGC-aligned strategies. By identifying and analyzing the challenges reported by teachers, the study contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the conditions that support or hinder gifted education in early elementary classrooms.

The investigation also examined how frequently K–3 general education teachers implemented specific strategies, such as differentiation, flexible grouping, and acceleration, and how they perceived the value of these approaches. These findings illuminated how teachers balanced the needs of gifted learners with those of their classmates in diverse and inclusive environments. The study also provided practical insight into how early gifted identification and services might shape long-term educational outcomes.

Ultimately, this study offered valuable data to inform improvements in the delivery of gifted education in Georgia's rural schools. By highlighting both successes and areas for growth in NAGC-aligned practice implementation, the findings have the potential to guide policy decisions, inform professional development, and support more equitable access to gifted services. Moreover, the insights gained from this study contribute to national conversations about the delivery of gifted education in under-resourced or rural contexts.

Research Questions

This study examined the perceptions and implementation of National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned gifted education practices among K–3 educators in a rural South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). Adapting the work of Johnsen and Kaul (2019), who studied K–12 gifted specialists in Texas, this research focused specifically on early elementary educators, who often bear primary responsibility for recognizing and serving gifted students across all subjects. The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What are the K–3 teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned best practices for gifted education in a RESA in rural South Georgia?
2. How frequently do K–3 teachers in a RESA in rural South Georgia implement specific NAGC-aligned best practices for gifted education in their classrooms?
3. What, if any, is the relationship between K–3 teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned best practices and their frequency of implementation in classrooms in the RESA in rural South Georgia?
4. What barriers, if any, do K–3 teachers in rural South Georgia RESA perceive as preventing the implementation of NAGC-aligned best practices, or what student outcomes do they perceive when these practices are implemented?

The first research question explored the extent to which K–3 teachers perceived NAGC-aligned best practices—such as differentiation, acceleration, and grouping—as effective. Understanding teacher perceptions was essential, given prior research indicating that teacher beliefs influence classroom practice (Callahan, Moon, Oh, et al., 2017; Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

The second question examined how frequently these research-based practices were implemented. Strategies like flexible grouping, formative assessment, and acceleration are central to meeting the needs of gifted learners. This inquiry provided insight into how consistently these practices were applied in early elementary classrooms (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

The third research question assessed the degree of alignment between teachers' perceptions of effectiveness and their reported implementation of NAGC-aligned practices. The study analyzed descriptive trends by calculating alignment scores, which

compared the proportion of teachers who agreed a strategy was effective with the proportion who reported implementing it at least weekly. This approach emphasized observable instructional behavior and highlighted patterns in belief-to-practice alignment. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore relationships among implementation frequencies across strategies. Understanding these trends is critical, as it sheds light on how teacher perceptions may inform—but do not always predict—classroom practice, especially when structural or contextual barriers are present (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

The fourth research question examined the barriers teachers perceived as preventing full implementation of NAGC-aligned practices, as well as any student outcomes observed when such practices were used. Common barriers such as time constraints, lack of resources, and insufficient training have been widely documented (Hébert, 2021; Moon et al., 2003). Teachers were also asked to describe outcomes they associated with these strategies, as prior research links gifted instructional practices to improved academic and social-emotional outcomes (Redding & Grissom, 2021). The study also considered how contextual factors, such as access to professional learning opportunities or curriculum flexibility, may contribute to variability in implementation across classrooms (Hébert, 2021; Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

A quantitative, descriptive survey design was used to investigate these questions. Using a modified version of Johnsen's validated survey instrument, data were collected from a representative sample of K–3 general education teachers across multiple districts within the region. Frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, and descriptive alignment scores were used to identify key patterns in teacher perceptions, implementation, and

perceived barriers. This methodological approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the current state of gifted education practices in early elementary classrooms in rural South Georgia.

Theoretical Premises

This study drew upon three interrelated theoretical foundations to examine K–3 teachers' perceptions and practices related to gifted education: Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), and the framework of Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL). These theories were selected to reflect the multidimensional nature of gifted education, particularly within general education classrooms, where differentiation, enrichment, and cultural responsiveness are essential for equitable instruction.

Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD emphasizes the need for scaffolded instruction that enables students to achieve beyond their independent capabilities through guided support. In the context of gifted education, this framework supports the provision of appropriately challenging opportunities that stretch students' thinking without assuming uniform advancement across all academic domains (Bodrova & Leong, 2024; Swanson et al., 2022).

Renzulli's (1985) SEM broadens the traditional definition of giftedness by incorporating creativity, task commitment, and above-average ability (Reis & Renzulli, 2016). This model advocates for enrichment experiences and flexible grouping that allow students to engage deeply in interest-based learning and project-oriented activities—practices that are especially relevant in inclusive K–3 environments.

The CRPL framework expands upon these foundations by emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive strategies that affirm students' identities, languages, and lived experiences. CRPL underscores the need for equitable identification and support of gifted students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, helping ensure that all learners have access to rigorous and personalized instruction (Bernacki et al., 2021; Ford & Whiting, 2016).

Together, these three frameworks inform the premise that effective gifted education in early elementary settings must be differentiated, enriching, and culturally responsive—particularly given the responsibility of general education teachers to meet a wide range of student needs within self-contained classrooms.

Epistemological Premises

This study adopted a post-positivist epistemological stance, which recognizes that while absolute truth may be unattainable, observable patterns in human behavior and beliefs can be systematically measured, interpreted, and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Post-positivism supports the use of validated instruments and statistical analysis to investigate research questions with objectivity and rigor, while acknowledging that findings are inherently probabilistic rather than definitive.

Aligned with this stance, the study was grounded in the assumption that teacher beliefs, self-reported instructional practices, and perceived barriers could yield valid and meaningful insights when examined through a carefully designed and replicated survey instrument (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Mertens, 2020). Although these constructs are shaped by individual experiences, school culture, and broader educational contexts, shared

patterns across a defined population, in this case, K–3 general education teachers in a rural South Georgia RESA, were assumed to reflect important trends with practical and scholarly significance.

The quantitative survey approach employed in this study reflected this epistemological foundation by seeking to approximate educational realities through statistical relationships and empirical analysis.

Methodological Premises

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design using survey methodology to investigate K–3 teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned best practices for gifted education, the frequency of their implementation, and the barriers preventing full implementation within a rural South Georgia RESA. The research replicated and adapted Johnsen and Kaul's (2019) study by modifying the GT Teacher Beliefs Survey to reflect the Georgia RESA context and by incorporating the 2024 NAGC *Initial Gifted Educator Preparation Standards* (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2024).

Participants included K–3 general education teachers with at least one identified gifted student in their classroom. The survey was administered electronically via Qualtrics, with strategically timed follow-up emails to maximize response rates. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, and limited correlations among practice frequencies to examine instructional patterns (Gall et al., 2007; Mertler & Reinhart, 2016).

Ethical considerations—including IRB approval, informed consent, and confidentiality protections—were followed in accordance with best practices for research

involving human subjects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tourangeau et al., 2000). By clearly outlining this methodological approach, the study established a structured and replicable framework for examining educators' perceptions and practices related to gifted education.

Significance of the Study

This study contributed meaningfully to the field of gifted education by addressing a gap in the literature regarding K–3 teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and perceived barriers to implementing NAGC-aligned best practices. While much of the existing research has focused on upper elementary and secondary grades, early elementary years represent a critical period for recognizing and cultivating gifted potential (Callahan, Moon, Oh, et al., 2017; Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). By examining teachers' perceptions of NAGC-aligned practices, their frequency of implementation, and the challenges encountered, this study assessed the current state of gifted education in early grades to determine whether current practices are effective or in need of improvement.

Findings from this research may inform targeted professional development initiatives aimed at addressing common barriers such as limited time, insufficient resources, and inadequate training (Hertberg-Davis, 2009; Novak et al., 2020). These initiatives could emphasize effective strategies including differentiation, flexible grouping, acceleration, and culturally responsive instruction (Reis & Renzulli, 2016; Swanson et al., 2022). Additionally, the results may hold policy relevance by influencing decisions about resource allocation and systemic support for rural gifted education. Policymakers may use these findings to advocate for increased funding, mandate ongoing

professional development for K–3 teachers in gifted education (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019) or implement mentorship models that pair general education teachers with gifted education specialists (Reis & Peters, 2021).

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study holds potential for practical impact on the educational experiences of young, gifted students. By focusing on educators in a rural Georgia RESA, the research addressed an underexplored population and provided actionable insights to improve both the quality and equity of gifted education services. Through this lens, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to ensure that even the youngest gifted learners receive instruction that is responsive, research-based, and developmentally appropriate.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

Several foundational assumptions underpinned the design, implementation, and interpretation of this quantitative study. First, it was assumed that all participating K–3 general education teachers responded to the survey instrument truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. The reliability and validity of findings in survey-based research are contingent upon participant honesty and self-awareness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because the study relied on self-reported data concerning beliefs, perceived effectiveness, and frequency of implementation of NAGC-aligned practices, the integrity of participant responses was critical to the trustworthiness of the data.

A second assumption was that participants possessed varying degrees of familiarity with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards and related best practices. This variation may have stemmed from differences in teacher

preparation programs, access to professional development, and years of experience with gifted students (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008; Swanson et al., 2022). It was assumed that these differences would be reflected in participants' responses and that such variation would provide valuable insight into the range of perceptions and practices across the RESA region. Additionally, it was assumed that teachers' reported perceptions and instructional behaviors were sufficiently representative of their classroom practices to yield meaningful conclusions, despite the inherent limitations of self-report methodologies (Tourangeau et al., 2000).

Delimitations

This study was intentionally delimited in several ways to ensure feasibility, contextual relevance, and alignment with the research purpose. First, it was geographically delimited to a single rural Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) in South Georgia. This regional focus allowed for an in-depth examination of teacher beliefs and practices within a specific context where access to gifted education resources may be limited or inconsistent. However, as a result of this delimitation, the findings may not be generalizable to urban or suburban districts or to regions with differing demographics, policies, or levels of resource allocation (Callahan et al., 2017a).

Second, the study exclusively examined the perceptions and practices of K–3 general education teachers. This focus reflected the role of these educators as the primary implementers of gifted education services in early elementary classrooms, particularly in the absence of formal pull-out or specialized programs (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). However, the exclusion of other key stakeholders, such as school administrators, gifted specialists, and families, limited the study's ability to account for broader systemic or

institutional influences on gifted service delivery (Hébert, 2021). While the emphasis on classroom-level implementation was justified by the research purpose; it nonetheless represented a delimitation in scope.

Limitations

As with all empirical studies, this research was subject to several methodological and practical limitations. Most notably, it relied on self-reported data, which may have introduced bias due to social desirability, inaccurate recall, or misinterpretation of survey items. Teachers may have overreported or underreported their use of NAGC-aligned strategies based on personal beliefs or perceived expectations, potentially compromising the accuracy of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Tourangeau et al., 2000). While the use of a validated instrument mitigated some of these risks, self-report data remain inherently limited in capturing the full complexity of instructional practice.

Another limitation involved the study's lack of control over school-level variables that may have influenced teachers' ability to implement gifted practices. Differences in professional development opportunities, administrative support, instructional materials, or access to gifted specialists could have impacted implementation fidelity (Peters & Gentry, 2012; Reis & Renzulli, 2016). These contextual factors were not directly measured and may have confounded interpretations of teacher-reported behaviors and barriers.

Finally, the study's cross-sectional design limited the ability to examine changes over time or to infer causality between teachers' beliefs, practices, and perceived obstacles. Although the study yielded valuable descriptive insights and explored patterns of implementation frequency and alignment, it did not capture the longitudinal effects of

professional development, policy changes, or classroom experience on gifted education practices. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and when designing future research to build upon them.

Definitions

Acceleration. A strategy used in gifted education to match students' learning experiences with their readiness and abilities. This often involves advancing them through the curriculum at a faster pace or placing them in higher-grade content areas (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Barriers to Implementation. Challenges and obstacles that prevent educators from applying National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned practices in the classroom. These may include time constraints, lack of professional development, insufficient resources, and limited support from administrators or specialists (Callahan et al., 2017b; Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL). An instructional approach that integrates students' cultural identities with their learning experiences to ensure inclusivity and equity in education. CRPL aims to identify and support gifted potential in diverse and underrepresented populations by adapting instructional methods to students' cultural and socioeconomic contexts (Bernacki et al., 2021; Gay, 2002).

Differentiation. An instructional strategy in which teachers modify content, processes, and products to meet the diverse needs of students, including those identified as gifted. Differentiation involves adjusting the level of challenge to match students' abilities and providing advanced opportunities for gifted learners (Tomlinson, 2014).

Enrichment. Educational activities that extend beyond the standard curriculum and allow students to explore their in-depth knowledge, skills, and interests. Enrichment can include projects, problem-based learning, and independent studies, offering gifted students' opportunities for exploration and advanced learning (Renzulli & Reis, 1985).

Flexible Grouping. An instructional practice in which students are grouped and regrouped based on their learning needs, interests, and abilities. Flexible grouping allows for dynamic classroom structures, enabling gifted students to work with peers who have similar or advanced capabilities in specific areas (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Formative Assessment. Ongoing assessments that provide immediate feedback to inform and guide instructional practices. In gifted education, formative assessment helps teachers adjust strategies to appropriately challenge students within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and ensure that instruction remains engaging and rigorous (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Gifted Education. Educational programs and instructional practices designed to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of students who demonstrate high levels of ability or potential compared to their peers.

Gifted Education in Georgia for K–3 Students. Specialized instructional programs designed to serve the academic, social, and emotional needs of students identified as gifted in Georgia. For K–3 students, gifted education includes advanced learning opportunities, differentiation, and enrichment activities that go beyond the general curriculum. Students are identified using multiple criteria, such as cognitive ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation, and may receive services through pull-out

programs or within the general education classroom, where teachers implement NAGC-aligned strategies (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE], 2024).

NAGC-Aligned Practices. Research-based instructional strategies for gifted education as defined by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), including differentiation, acceleration, formative assessment, and flexible grouping (NAGC, 2019.).

Professional Development. Training and educational programs designed to enhance teachers' knowledge and instructional skills. In gifted education, professional development focuses on equipping teachers to better support gifted learners (Hertberg-Davis, 2009).

Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). A regional agency in Georgia that provides professional development, instructional support, and other services to school districts within a defined geographic area.

Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM). A model developed by Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis (1985) that broadens the concept of giftedness beyond IQ scores and promotes enriched learning experiences for all students to explore and develop their interests and talents. SEM includes practices such as cluster grouping, enrichment clusters, and individualized learning plans (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Twice-Exceptional (2E) Students. Students who demonstrate significant abilities or giftedness in one or more areas while also having a diagnosed disability.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). A concept developed by Vygotsky (1978) that describes the range between what a learner can do independently and what they can do with guidance from a more knowledgeable other. In gifted education, the ZPD guides

differentiation by ensuring instruction appropriately challenges students beyond their current level of mastery.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the context, purpose, and rationale for examining K–3 teachers' perceptions and implementation of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices within a rural South Georgia RESA. Grounded in the challenges general educators may face when supporting gifted learners, particularly in early grades where specialized services are limited, the study focused on how teachers perceive, apply, and encounter barriers to research-based instructional strategies.

Four guiding research questions explored the perceived effectiveness of NAGC-aligned practices, their frequency of use, the degree of alignment between belief and practice, and the barriers or outcomes teachers reported. These questions were examined using a quantitative survey design adapted from Johnsen and Kaul (2019), tailored to reflect the Georgia context and aligned with the 2024 NAGC standards.

The study was framed by Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model, and the Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning framework, emphasizing the importance of scaffolded, enriched, and equitable learning experiences. This chapter also outlined the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations guiding the study and described its significance for practice, policy, and future research in gifted education.

Outline of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study by presenting the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, theoretical

framework, and significance. Chapter II provides a comprehensive review of literature related to gifted education, including national and state-level policies, research-based instructional practices, teacher preparation, and implementation challenges in early elementary general education classrooms.

Chapter III outlines the methodology, including the descriptive, cross-sectional survey design; setting and participants; survey instrument; procedures for data collection; and analytic strategies. Chapter IV presents the results of the study, organized by research question and supported by descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and limited inferential analysis using Pearson correlations to examine relationships among implementation frequencies across strategies. Chapter V offers a discussion of key findings, interprets the results, and provides implications for classroom practice, policy, and future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Building on the foundational context and research questions outlined in Chapter I, this chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature relevant to the study of gifted education in early elementary settings. Gifted education has long been recognized as a critical element of an equitable educational system, designed to provide students with exceptional abilities the challenges and supports necessary to realize their full potential (Reis & Renzulli, 2016). As Dixson et al. (2021) assert, "If all students are not learning and developing, then the school has failed its mission" (p. 22).

Despite increased awareness of the importance of serving gifted learners, the effective implementation of gifted education practices often depends on general education teachers' perceptions of these practices, how frequently they are applied, and the degree of institutional support available (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Swanson et al., 2022). These considerations are particularly relevant in K–3 classrooms, where teachers are typically the sole providers of instruction for gifted students.

This chapter is organized into several key sections. It begins with a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that shape gifted education, including Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), and the framework of Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL). The chapter then reviews literature related to defining and identifying giftedness, with a specific focus on national and Georgia state policies. Following that, it

explores the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards and the research base for eight core instructional practices. The chapter also examines teacher beliefs, implementation barriers, and outcomes associated with gifted education strategies. The review concludes by identifying key gaps in existing research that this study seeks to address.

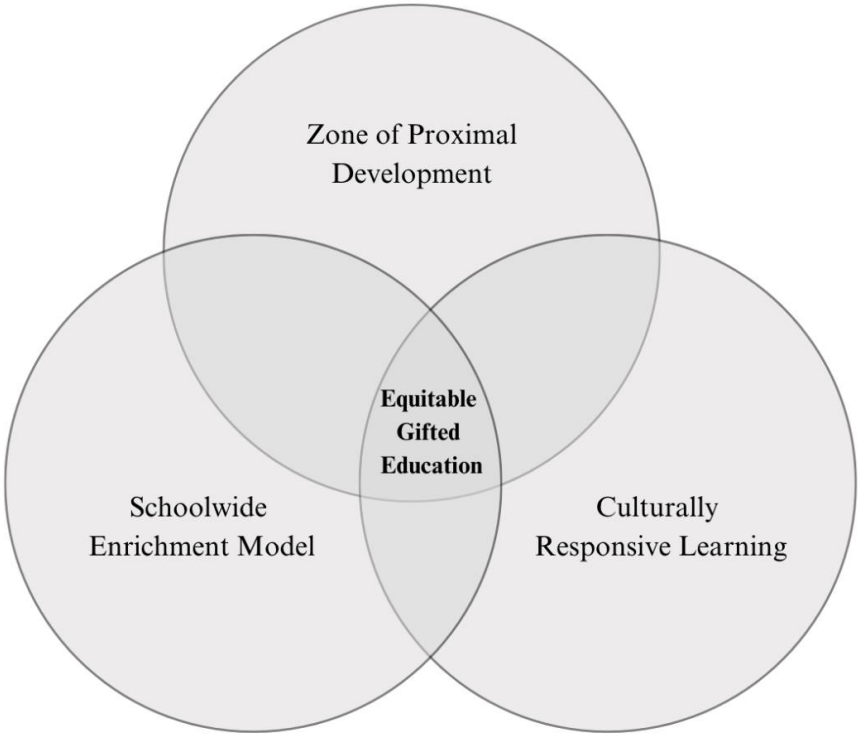
Theoretical Framework

The examination of K–3 teachers' beliefs about research-based practices in gifted education is grounded in three interrelated theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), and the framework of Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL). Collectively, these frameworks offer a comprehensive foundation for understanding how teachers' beliefs shape the implementation of gifted education practices in early elementary settings (Gay, 2002). Rather than functioning in isolation, these models intersect to support an integrated approach to meeting the diverse needs of gifted learners.

Each framework—ZPD, SEM, and CRPL—contributes uniquely to how teachers perceive and implement instructional strategies for gifted students. However, their strength lies in their interconnected application. Effective gifted education requires differentiation within a learner's ZPD, enrichment opportunities aligned with the SEM, and culturally responsive pedagogy as emphasized in CRPL to ensure equitable access to challenging and meaningful content. This conceptual integration is represented in Figure 1, which illustrates how these theoretical models collectively inform equitable and responsive gifted education.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Concept Map



Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and its Intersection with SEM and CRPL

Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) serves as a foundational framework for differentiating instruction for gifted learners. ZPD refers to the range between what a student can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with appropriate guidance and support. Rather than functioning as a fixed benchmark, ZPD is dynamic and evolves as students acquire new skills and engage with increasingly complex material. Importantly, ZPD is domain-specific; a student may demonstrate advanced capabilities in mathematics while requiring additional support in reading comprehension (Bodrova & Leong, 2024). This fluidity is especially relevant in gifted education, where instruction must be adaptable to students' ongoing intellectual growth (Tomlinson, 2014).

Teachers' beliefs in their capacity to scaffold learning within a student's ZPD strongly influence their implementation of differentiation strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Swanson et al., 2022). Research suggests that educators who feel confident applying ZPD concepts are more likely to engage gifted learners effectively, extend learning opportunities, and move beyond grade-level curriculum (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Reis & Renzulli, 2016). Effective differentiation within the ZPD not only requires instructional confidence, but also integration of enrichment opportunities to maintain engagement and foster challenge.

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) complements ZPD by offering a structure through which enrichment can be tailored to a student's evolving strengths and interests. Since ZPD varies across content areas and shifts over time, SEM's emphasis on enrichment clusters and personalized learning ensures that instructional planning remains responsive and developmentally aligned (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL) further extends ZPD by recognizing how students' cultural identities shape their engagement with challenging material (Bernacki et al., 2021; Gay, 2002). Background experiences, language, and prior knowledge all influence a student's ZPD within a given domain. CRPL-informed instruction equips educators to provide differentiated and enriched experiences that reflect the full range of gifted students' academic, cultural, and personal assets (Comstock et al., 2023; Ober et al., 2023).

By integrating ZPD, SEM, and CRPL, educators can design learning environments that are not only academically rigorous but also developmentally responsive and culturally inclusive—key components of equitable gifted education.

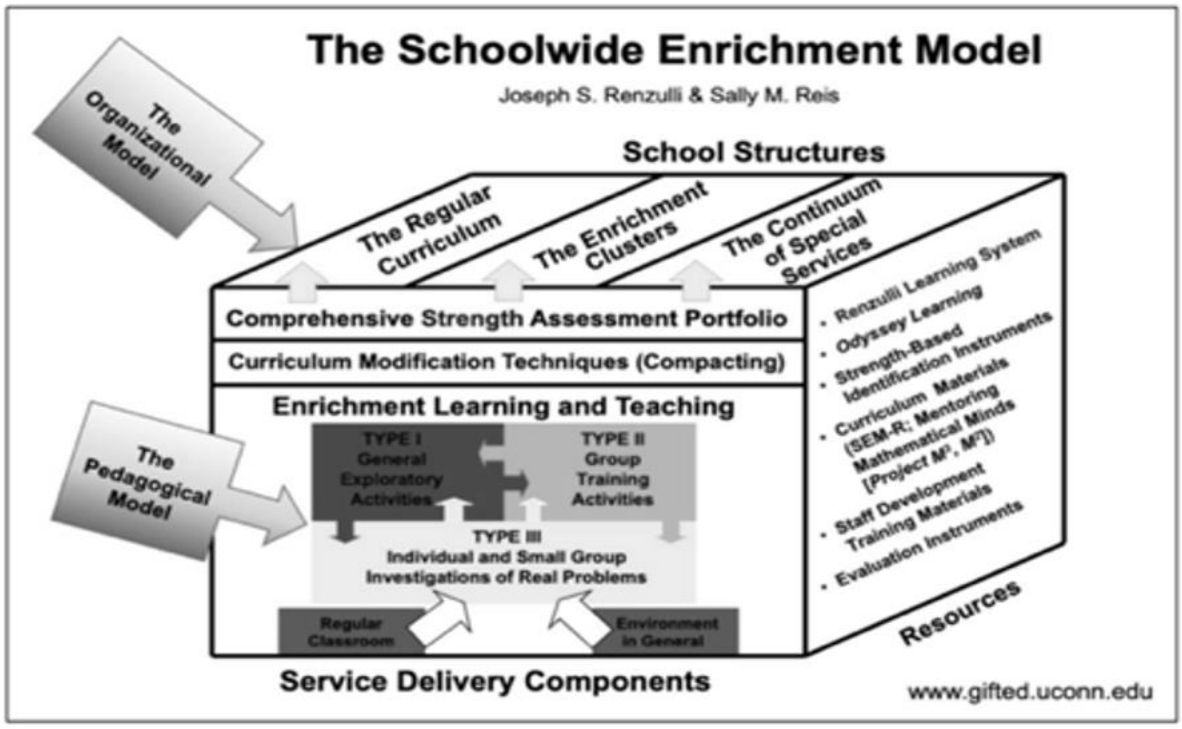
Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) as a Bridge Between ZPD and CRPL

Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) expands the definition of giftedness beyond traditional IQ-based criteria by emphasizing creativity, task commitment, and above-average ability. The model promotes talent development through enrichment clusters, curriculum compacting, and student-driven investigations. It encourages teachers to provide enriched learning opportunities that stimulate both intellectual and creative growth—particularly relevant in early elementary classrooms where gifted learners often remain in general education settings (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

As illustrated in Figure 2, SEM is composed of three interrelated components: the Organizational Model, the Pedagogical Model, and the Service Delivery Components. The Organizational Model ensures integration of core content with enrichment opportunities, including a continuum of services for differentiated instruction. The Pedagogical Model includes curriculum compacting, strength-based portfolios, and three types of enrichment: Type I (general exploratory activities), Type II (group training activities), and Type III (independent investigations of real-world problems). The Service Delivery Components extend learning beyond the general classroom, allowing for more personalized and meaningful academic experiences (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Figure 2

The SEM Model



Note. Adapted from *The Schoolwide Enrichment Model,* by Reis & Renzulli, 2016.

Teachers' beliefs about their ability to implement SEM-aligned strategies are critical to their success. Educators who perceive enrichment as integral to gifted education are more likely to embed student-driven projects, cluster grouping, and mentorship into their classroom practice (Reis & Peters, 2021; Swanson et al., 2022). Research supports that professional learning focused on SEM principles improves teacher confidence and consistency in delivering differentiated, enrichment-based instruction (Peters & Carter, 2022).

SEM aligns closely with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD in that both frameworks emphasize developmentally appropriate challenges. Enrichment experiences within SEM function as scaffolds, allowing students to explore complex ideas with increasing independence. Moreover, when SEM practices are informed by the principles of Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL), enrichment becomes a vehicle for

equity. CRPL ensures that students' cultural identities and lived experiences are integrated into the enrichment process, making learning more inclusive and relevant (Comstock et al., 2023; Gay, 2002).

Thus, SEM serves as both a framework for talent development and a practical model for implementing differentiated and culturally responsive instruction. When applied alongside ZPD and CRPL, SEM equips educators to design flexible, enriching, and equitable gifted education experiences for diverse learners in K–3 classrooms.

Integrating Culturally Responsive Learning (CRPL) with ZPD and SEM

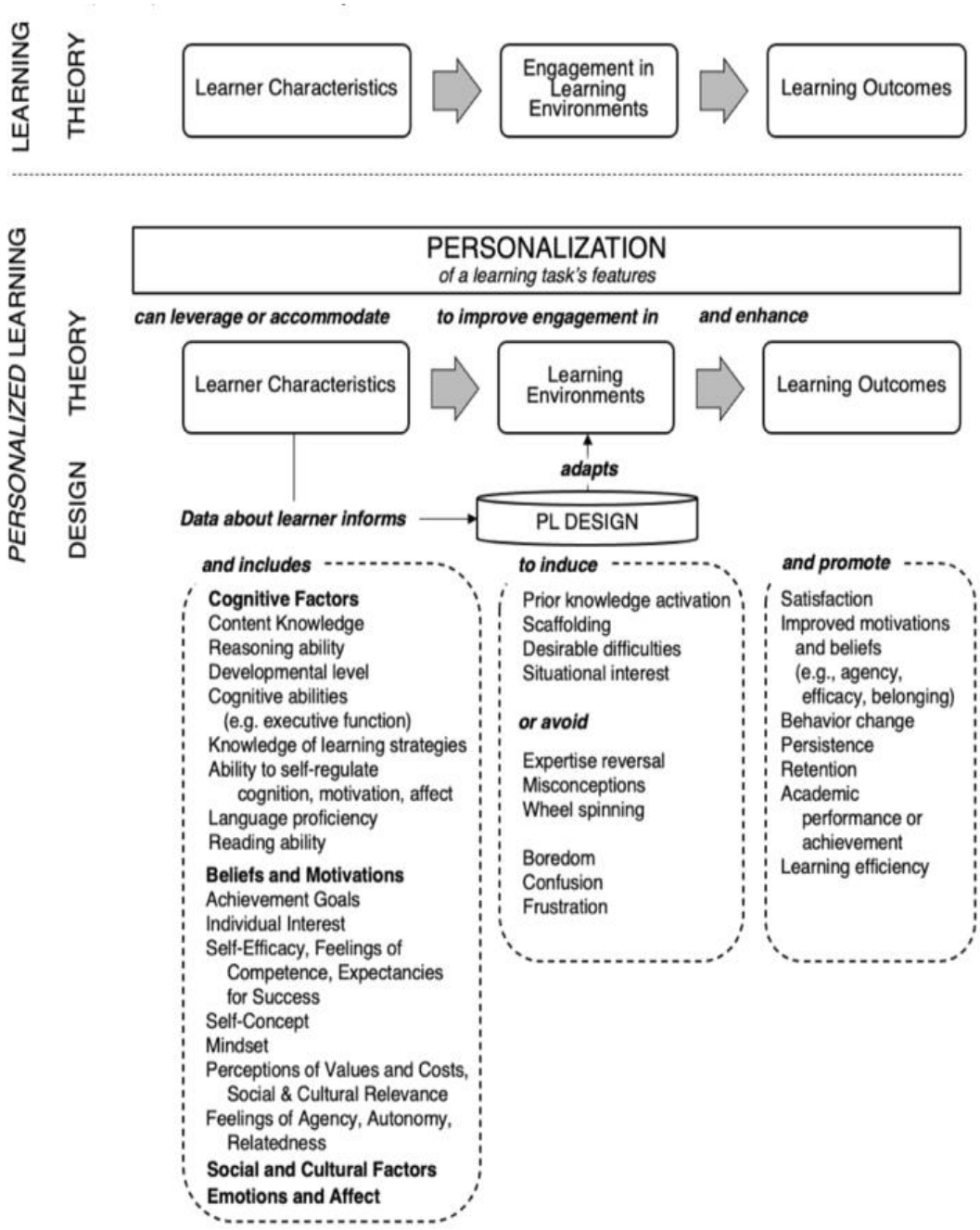
Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL) builds upon the foundational principles of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Renzulli & Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) by ensuring that differentiation and enrichment are not only developmentally appropriate but also equitable and culturally affirming (Gay, 2002; Walkington & Bernacki, 2020). While ZPD emphasizes the need for scaffolded learning experiences tailored to students' current capabilities (Bodrova & Leong, 2024; Vygotsky, 1978) and SEM promotes talent development through enrichment opportunities (Reis & Renzulli, 2016), CRPL ensures these instructional strategies are grounded in an awareness of students' cultural, social, and personal contexts (Comstock et al., 2023; Ober et al., 2023).

As illustrated in Figure 3, CRPL highlights the dynamic interaction between learner characteristics—such as cognitive strengths, motivation, self-regulation, and emotional factors—and the instructional environment. This interaction informs instructional decisions, guiding educators in designing experiences that are both personalized and responsive to students' lived experiences (Walkington & Bernacki,

2020). By embedding students' identities and values into the curriculum, CRPL enhances engagement, promotes a sense of belonging, and fosters increased agency and academic self-efficacy among gifted learners.

Figure 3

Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning Model



Note. From *Appraising Research on Personalized Learning: Definitions, Theoretical Alignment,* Adapted from *Advancements, and Future Directions,* by C. W. Walkington and M. L. Bernacki, 2020.

CRPL also strengthens differentiation within the ZPD by ensuring that learning tasks are optimally challenging while being sensitive to students' diverse cultural

backgrounds and prior knowledge (Swanson et al., 2022; Tomlinson, 2014). For instance, personalized learning tasks aligned with CRPL might draw on students' home languages, community experiences, or sociocultural narratives to make enrichment opportunities more meaningful. This personalization increases the likelihood that learners will persist through rigorous tasks and develop resilience in academic settings.

In tandem with SEM, CRPL supports the design of enrichment activities that are not only rigorous but also culturally relevant. Teachers using CRPL-informed enrichment strategies can help students explore complex content through projects that reflect their interests, experiences, and cultural heritage. This approach aligns with Type III enrichment in SEM, which emphasizes student-driven investigations of real-world problems—now contextualized through a culturally responsive lens (Peters & Carter, 2022; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

In essence, CRPL serves as the connective thread between ZPD and SEM, ensuring that scaffolded instruction and enrichment are both accessible and culturally valid. This integrated framework supports a more holistic model of gifted education, one that acknowledges students' identities, values, and strengths while providing them with the advanced challenges necessary for continued growth (Hernandez-Torrano & Saranli, 2015). When implemented cohesively, ZPD, SEM, and CRPL equip educators to meet the diverse and evolving needs of gifted learners in inclusive early elementary settings.

Together, these three frameworks—ZPD, SEM, and CRPL—form the foundation for how this study conceptualizes effective gifted education and the instructional behaviors of K–3 teachers. To clarify how these frameworks connect to the specific practices examined in this study, Table 1 outlines the relationship between each NAGC-

aligned strategy, its theoretical roots, and the corresponding survey items that measure teacher beliefs and reported implementation. This mapping strengthens the alignment between theory, research design, and data interpretation.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework Alignment

NAGC-Aligned Practice	Theoretical Framework(s)	Theoretical Concept	Survey Items
Flexible Grouping	SEM, CRPL	Peer collaboration and cultural responsiveness	Q4 (GroupingBelief) / Q5 (GroupingImplementation)
Formative Assessment	ZPD	Feedback to support development within the ZPD	Q8 (AssessmentBeliefs) / Q8 (AssessmentImplementation)
Differentiation	ZPD, SEM	Scaffolded challenge tailored to readiness	Q16 (DifferentiationBeliefs) / Q17 (DifferentiationImplementation)
Pacing Adjustments	ZPD	Adjusting content flow to learner readiness	Q20 (PacingBeliefs) / Q21 (PacingImplementation)
Enrichment	SEM, CRPL, ZPD	Engagement through interest- and culture-based activities	Q24 (EnrichmentBeliefs) / Q25 (EnrichmentImplementation)
Content Acceleration	ZPD, SEM	Acceleration aligned with developmental readiness	Q28 (AccelerationBeliefs) / Q29 (AccelerationImplementation)
Grade-Level Acceleration	ZPD, SEM	Whole-grade advancement for appropriate learners	Q33 (GradeAccelerationBelief) / Q34 (GradeAccelerationImplementation)
Family Involvement	CRPL	Integration of home culture and context in gifted support	Q37 (FamilyBeliefs) / Q38 (FamilyImplementation)
Professional Development	SEM, CRPL	Ongoing educator learning for gifted strategies	Q41 (PDBeliefs) / Q42 (PDImplementation)

In summary, the integration of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, Renzulli and Reis' (1985) Schoolwide Enrichment Model, and the framework of Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning provides a multifaceted lens through which to examine teacher beliefs and practices in gifted education. Each framework addresses a critical dimension of effective instruction—developmental readiness, enrichment for talent development, and cultural responsiveness. Together, they establish a solid theoretical foundation for investigating how K–3 teachers perceive and implement research-based strategies aligned with national gifted education standards. With this conceptual grounding in place, it is essential to next define what constitutes giftedness, both nationally and within the state of Georgia, to contextualize the instructional practices and beliefs examined in this study.

Defining Giftedness

Establishing a clear, research-based definition of giftedness is foundational to implementing effective and equitable gifted education practices. Over time, conceptions of giftedness have evolved significantly, moving beyond narrow definitions based solely on intelligence quotient (IQ) scores toward more inclusive models that acknowledge a broad range of cognitive, creative, academic, and leadership abilities.

Historically, the identification of giftedness was rooted in psychometric testing, beginning with the work of Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon in 1905 and later expanded by Lewis Terman through the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Binet, 1980; Terman, 1925). These early approaches emphasized fixed cognitive ability as the primary criterion for giftedness, often resulting in exclusionary practices that overlooked diverse expressions of talent.

Modern theories have reshaped this perspective by emphasizing the multidimensional nature of giftedness. Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences broadened the understanding of intelligence to include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic domains. Similarly, Renzulli's (2005) Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness emphasized the interaction of above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment, shifting the focus from static metrics to dynamic traits.

These inclusive frameworks have informed efforts to improve access to gifted education for historically underserved populations. For example, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1987 (U.S. Congress, 1987) has supported initiatives to identify and serve gifted students from economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse backgrounds (U.S. Congress, 1987). Additionally, contemporary scholarship has called for improved support for twice-exceptional (2E) students—those who are gifted and have a coexisting disability—to ensure equitable service provision (Alsamani et al., 2023; Reis & McCoach, 2019).

Despite this progress, definitions and identification procedures vary widely across the United States. Jolly (2005) found significant inconsistencies among state policies, with some states adopting comprehensive definitions aligned with modern research, while others continue to rely heavily on traditional IQ-based criteria. This variability has contributed to unequal access to gifted services and has highlighted the need for systemic reforms in identification and programming.

In Georgia, the definition of giftedness, as outlined in the *2024–2025 Gifted Resource Manual* (Georgia Department of Education, 2024), reflects a more holistic

understanding. The state defines a gifted student as one who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability, exceptional motivation, and superior academic performance compared to peers. Identification in Georgia is based on multiple criteria, including cognitive ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation assessments, ensuring a more comprehensive and inclusive evaluation process (Georgia Department of Education, 2024).

By recognizing giftedness as a multifaceted construct that extends beyond academic performance alone, Georgia's approach aligns with recommendations from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019). This broader definition supports the development of gifted education programs that are more responsive to the diverse ways in which giftedness manifests in young learners. As educational equity becomes an increasingly prominent concern, such inclusive conceptions of giftedness are essential to ensuring that all students with advanced potential are identified and supported. Grounded in this integrated conceptual framework, the following sections explore how giftedness is defined, identified, and supported in educational policy and practice—both nationally and within Georgia.

Identifying Gifted Students

Early identification of gifted students is essential to providing the appropriate academic, social, and emotional support necessary for advanced learners to thrive. Without timely recognition and intervention, gifted students may experience boredom, underachievement, or disengagement from school (Subotnik et al., 2011). Early identification enables educators to implement enrichment, differentiation, and

acceleration strategies that align with students' advanced cognitive profiles, thereby promoting sustained academic motivation and achievement (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008).

However, the identification process remains complex and often inequitable. Traditional identification methods that rely heavily on standardized testing may fail to recognize students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, low-income families, or those with co-occurring disabilities (Peters & Carter, 2022). Research consistently supports the use of multiple criteria to broaden access and reduce bias, including assessments of intellectual ability, creativity, motivation, and academic performance (Renzulli, 2011). The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) emphasizes that identification systems should reflect the diverse ways giftedness is expressed and should be ongoing, dynamic, and inclusive (NAGC, 2019).

When applied appropriately, comprehensive identification procedures can help schools provide timely services and create educational trajectories that support gifted students' long-term success. However, challenges remain. Uneven developmental patterns in young children may complicate accurate identification, and gifted traits may be masked by language barriers, disabilities, or trauma (Jawabreh et al., 2022; Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). Additionally, twice-exceptional (2E) students—those who are both gifted and have disabilities—often go unrecognized because their strengths and challenges may obscure one another (Alsamani et al., 2023; Reis & McCoach, 2019).

Efforts to improve early identification must also address the need for more inclusive referral processes, teacher training, and access to nonverbal or culturally responsive assessment tools. When teachers are trained to recognize advanced potential—particularly in students from underserved groups—they are better equipped to

refer students who may not meet traditional identification benchmarks but still demonstrate gifted traits (Karabulut & Ömeroğlu, 2021).

Ultimately, the early years of schooling are a critical window for recognizing and responding to giftedness. Accurate and equitable identification during K–3 ensures that students are not only academically challenged but also supported in their holistic development. Schools that adopt multidimensional, research-based identification models are more likely to create learning environments in which gifted students can thrive.

Federal Perspective and State Variability

Unlike students with disabilities, who are supported by federally mandated protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1990), gifted students are not guaranteed services at the national level. This absence of federal oversight has led to significant variability in how states define, identify, and serve gifted students (Rinn et al., 2022). While some states, such as Colorado, adopt comprehensive definitions that include intellectual, creative, artistic, and leadership abilities—as well as accommodations for twice-exceptional learners—others, including South Dakota, lack formal definitions or guidance, resulting in minimal or inconsistent services (Colorado Department of Education, n.d.; Rinn et al., 2022).

Peters and Carter (2022) highlighted that schools in 19 states reported having no formally identified gifted students, even in states with existing mandates. This inconsistency underscores how state- and district-level discretion contributes to unequal access to gifted programming. Moreover, the decentralization of gifted policy often results in districts within the same state adopting divergent identification criteria, thereby

reinforcing disparities in how advanced learners are recognized and served (Lockhart et al., 2022).

This lack of standardization presents challenges for ensuring equity and accountability in gifted education. In contrast, Georgia's statewide definition and identification protocol represent a more structured model, which may help reduce variability and promote more consistent service delivery—particularly in rural districts. The following section outlines Georgia's specific policies for identifying and serving K–3 gifted students.

Georgia's Identification Process

In contrast to states with less formalized approaches, Georgia has established a comprehensive and systematic process for identifying gifted students. As outlined in the 2024–*2025 Gifted Education Resource Manual*, the state employs a multiple-criteria model that promotes a holistic evaluation of student potential (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE], 2024). Under this model, students must meet qualifications in at least three of four categories: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.

Mental ability is assessed through standardized measures such as the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) or the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), which evaluate reasoning and problem-solving capacity. Achievement is measured via standardized assessments like the Iowa Assessments or locally approved curriculum-based measures. Creativity may be evaluated using tools such as the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking or portfolio reviews that capture originality and divergent thinking. Motivation is typically assessed through teacher rating scales, student interviews, or documented indicators of task commitment and persistence.

This multi-criteria approach is designed to reduce identification bias and increase access for underrepresented populations. By looking beyond traditional IQ and achievement scores, Georgia's process reflects a more inclusive understanding of giftedness as a multidimensional construct. This framework aligns with best practices promoted by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019), particularly in its attention to cultural, linguistic, and motivational factors.

Although identification may begin in kindergarten, formal eligibility determinations typically occur later in the academic year, after schools have collected sufficient data across the required domains. Once identified, students are served through models tailored to their specific strengths and profiles, supporting a more equitable and responsive approach to gifted education statewide.

NAGC Programming Standards: Best Practices in Gifted Education

While defining giftedness establishes the foundation for identifying advanced learners, delivering effective instruction requires the use of evidence-based gifted education practices. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Programming Standards provide a comprehensive framework for designing and implementing high-quality services for gifted students. These standards emphasize six interconnected domains: learning and development, assessment, curriculum and instruction, learning environments, programming, and professional development (NAGC, 2019). Together, they promote practices that address the academic, cognitive, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners.

The NAGC standards advocate for instructional strategies such as differentiation, flexible grouping, curriculum compacting, and acceleration—each of which supports

appropriately rigorous and individualized learning. These practices are not intended as one-size-fits-all interventions but rather as adaptable tools that can be tailored to students' strengths, interests, and developmental trajectories. For example, a student might benefit from subject-specific acceleration in mathematics while remaining on grade level in other content areas, underscoring the importance of personalized approaches in gifted education.

Implementation of these strategies is especially impactful during early elementary years, when foundational learning habits and attitudes toward school are formed (Callahan et al., 2017a). However, consistent application depends heavily on teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and capacity to support advanced learners. Educators with strong beliefs in their efficacy are more likely to implement research-based practices with fidelity, whereas those facing perceived barriers—such as inadequate training, limited time, or lack of administrative support—may struggle to integrate these approaches effectively (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Monsen et al., 2014; Swanson et al., 2022).

The following sections examine several core instructional practices promoted by the NAGC standards, with a particular focus on their relevance in K–3 settings. Each strategy is explored in terms of its classroom implementation, the conditions that support or hinder its use, and the potential outcomes for gifted students.

Differentiation: Individualizing Instruction for Gifted Learners

Differentiation refers to the intentional adaptation of instructional content, process, products, and learning environments to accommodate students' varying readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Within gifted education, it frequently

involves strategies such as curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, and independent study projects that extend beyond grade-level expectations and provide appropriate academic challenge (Tomlinson, 2014). Differentiation is widely considered a preventive measure against underachievement and disengagement among gifted students, particularly in the early elementary years when academic foundations and school attitudes are developing (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008).

Research supports the use of differentiation to increase student motivation, engagement, and achievement, while also promoting creativity, critical thinking, and self-regulation—skills essential for long-term success (Prast et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2022). Gifted students who experience differentiated instruction are less likely to report boredom and more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward learning (Callahan et al., 2017a). Additionally, targeted strategies such as compacting and subject-specific extensions have been shown to improve retention of advanced concepts and support deeper learning (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Despite these benefits, general education teachers often face barriers to consistent implementation. Commonly reported challenges include insufficient planning time, inadequate training, and the complexity of addressing diverse needs in a single classroom (Aftab, 2015; Bogen et al., 2019; Hertberg-Davis, 2009). These obstacles may reduce the fidelity or frequency with which differentiation is applied, particularly in settings where support for gifted education is limited.

Professional learning opportunities appear to play a key role in mitigating these challenges. Meutstege et al. (2023) found that teachers with targeted training in differentiation were more confident and effective in applying the practice. Still, teacher

perceptions of both the value and feasibility of differentiation significantly influence implementation decisions, highlighting the importance of understanding how these beliefs shape instructional behavior.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) emphasizes differentiation as a foundational best practice and includes it prominently in its programming standards. These standards call for curriculum modifications tailored to individual student needs, supported by ongoing assessment and flexible pacing. As a result, examining how frequently K–3 teachers implement differentiation—and how they perceive its effectiveness—is essential to evaluating the accessibility and quality of gifted education in inclusive classrooms.

Differentiation allows educators to adapt instruction within grade-level frameworks, but when gifted students demonstrate sustained mastery or readiness beyond that framework, acceleration becomes necessary to maintain appropriate academic challenge and motivation.

Acceleration: Advancing Learning Opportunities for Gifted Students

Acceleration allows gifted learners to move through academic content at a pace aligned with their advanced cognitive and achievement levels. This practice includes a range of models such as grade skipping, subject-specific acceleration, early entrance to kindergarten or college, and dual enrollment programs—each offering tailored opportunities for students who require more advanced instruction than is typically available at their grade level (Assouline et al., 2015). When applied appropriately, acceleration addresses the need for intellectual challenge while also promoting academic motivation and achievement.

Empirical research consistently supports the effectiveness of acceleration in enhancing academic performance, fostering deeper engagement, and improving long-term educational and career outcomes for gifted students (Wai, 2015). Accelerated students tend to exhibit stronger problem-solving abilities and higher levels of self-regulation—demonstrated by elevated self-confidence, self-esteem, and social adjustment—enabling them to meet complex academic demands more effectively (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). Moreover, those who experience acceleration early in their academic careers often maintain higher levels of motivation and sustained interest in learning throughout their schooling (Assouline et al., 2015).

Despite robust research evidence, acceleration remains underutilized in many educational settings. A significant barrier is the persistence of misconceptions about the potential negative impact of acceleration on students' social-emotional development (Croft & Wood, 2015). Some educators and parents express concerns about students' social adjustment or peer relationships, particularly when acceleration involves placing younger students in older cohorts (Colangelo et al., 2010). However, studies consistently indicate that accelerated students adapt well, report high levels of satisfaction, and experience positive social-emotional outcomes comparable to or better than their non-accelerated peers (Southern & Jones, 2015).

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) endorses acceleration as a research-based strategy for meeting the academic needs of high-ability learners. The NAGC programming standards advocate for its implementation within a broader framework of personalized, developmentally appropriate instruction. Schools that establish clear policies, provide structured support systems, and offer professional

development on best practices in acceleration are more likely to implement it successfully (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

When used strategically and supported by administrative policies and teacher training, acceleration provides a valuable and equitable path for gifted students to engage with appropriately challenging material. The following section explores flexible grouping as another essential approach for addressing the diverse academic needs of gifted learners.

Flexible Grouping: Supporting Students in Dynamic Learning Environments

Flexible grouping allows educators to organize students based on their readiness levels, learning preferences, or interests, rather than maintaining static ability groups. For gifted learners, this approach offers access to peers who share similar academic strengths, thereby fostering both cognitive and social development. Research supports flexible grouping as a powerful method for promoting academic challenge, intellectual engagement, and collaborative learning among gifted students (Gentry & Cress, 2020).

Common flexible grouping strategies include cluster grouping, ability grouping, and cross-grade grouping. These structures enable dynamic classroom arrangements that are responsive to students' individual needs, ensuring that instruction remains appropriately challenging for high-ability learners (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005). When implemented effectively, these groupings can increase access to enriched content, stimulate peer interaction, and enhance differentiated instruction within inclusive classrooms.

Studies have shown that flexible grouping supports gifted students' problem-solving skills, encourages collaboration, and promotes sustained academic engagement

(Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). Gifted learners placed in thoughtfully structured groupings report higher levels of motivation and lower incidences of boredom, which are critical to maintaining positive academic attitudes (Swanson et al., 2022). Moreover, grouping with peers who exhibit similar or advanced abilities can foster intellectual discourse, self-efficacy, and academic confidence.

Despite its benefits, the implementation of flexible grouping faces several challenges. Educators may express concern about the potential stigmatization of students placed in visibly differentiated groups or fear that grouping may inadvertently reinforce inequities if not monitored carefully (McCoach & Siegle, 2007). Additional barriers include scheduling difficulties, limited planning time, and a lack of training in how to implement grouping strategies effectively (Swanson et al., 2022). These concerns often contribute to hesitation or inconsistent application of the strategy across classrooms and schools.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) identifies flexible grouping as a cornerstone of effective gifted education. As outlined in the NAGC programming standards, dynamic grouping should be used regularly to provide gifted students with access to advanced content, intellectual peers, and appropriately challenging learning experiences. Schools that establish clear policies and provide professional development in flexible grouping techniques are more likely to observe meaningful and sustained implementation (Swanson et al., 2022).

In summary, flexible grouping is a research-supported, responsive strategy that promotes equitable access to advanced instruction for gifted learners. When used

alongside differentiation and acceleration, it contributes to a comprehensive instructional approach that maximizes student growth and engagement.

Enrichment: Expanding Learning Opportunities Beyond Core Curriculum

Enrichment programs offer gifted students the opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth, often beyond the scope of the standard curriculum. These experiences can include independent study projects, inquiry-based learning, and extracurricular opportunities tailored to students' interests and abilities (Renzulli, 2005). Enrichment plays a critical role in gifted education by nurturing creativity, fostering advanced problem-solving skills, and stimulating intellectual curiosity (Kim, 2016).

Research consistently demonstrates that enrichment activities enhance student engagement, promote cognitive flexibility, and help develop higher-order thinking skills, particularly among gifted learners in early elementary grades (Reis & Renzulli, 2016). When students are provided with meaningful opportunities to pursue their passions or extend their learning beyond grade-level expectations, they are more likely to stay motivated and develop lifelong learning habits.

Despite its benefits, enrichment is not consistently implemented across schools. Barriers include limited instructional time, insufficient funding, lack of access to resources, and inadequate teacher training in how to design or facilitate enrichment activities (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). These constraints are especially prevalent in under-resourced or rural settings, where teachers may struggle to balance enrichment with the demands of a standardized curriculum.

Schools that adopt personalized learning models, as described by Bernacki et al. (2021), are often better positioned to offer meaningful enrichment experiences. These

models allow for differentiation that is not only academically appropriate but also responsive to students' individual strengths, interests, and cultural backgrounds. When enrichment is embedded within a culturally responsive and student-centered framework, it becomes a powerful tool for advancing both academic achievement and student agency.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) identifies enrichment as a cornerstone of effective gifted programming. The NAGC programming standards emphasize the integration of enrichment opportunities across subject areas, ensuring that gifted learners are consistently challenged through exposure to advanced concepts, authentic tasks, and open-ended inquiry. Schools that prioritize enrichment often observe increased student engagement and a broader development of skills beyond rote academic knowledge.

Incorporating enrichment into the regular school day—and not solely through pull-out programs or after-school activities—helps ensure equitable access for all gifted students, regardless of background or setting. When paired with strategies such as differentiation and acceleration, enrichment fosters a holistic approach to gifted education that supports both academic growth and personal development.

To ensure that enrichment and other instructional strategies remain effective, the next section will explore the critical role of formative assessment in monitoring progress and guiding instructional decisions.

Formative Assessment: Monitoring Progress to Optimize Learning

Formative assessment is a critical tool in gifted education, enabling educators to monitor student progress and adapt instruction in real time to meet evolving academic needs (Rubenstein et al., 2015). Unlike summative assessments, which evaluate learning

outcomes at the end of an instructional unit, formative assessments provide ongoing, actionable feedback. This continuous feedback loop allows teachers to adjust instructional strategies, identify students in need of further enrichment or acceleration, and maintain appropriately challenging learning environments (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008; Swanson et al., 2022).

When implemented effectively, formative assessment fosters significant academic gains, enhances student motivation, and supports the development of self-regulated learning behaviors. Hattie and Timperley (2007) noted that high-quality formative feedback strengthens metacognition and goal setting, while Johnsen and Kaul (2019) found that formative assessment in gifted classrooms correlates with higher achievement and greater alignment between instructional content and student readiness. By tailoring instruction based on frequent formative insights, educators can ensure that gifted learners remain engaged and intellectually stimulated (Swanson et al., 2022).

Despite these benefits, formative assessment is not consistently applied across general education classrooms. Many teachers cite limited time, insufficient training, and difficulty interpreting assessment data as barriers to full implementation (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Urhahne, 2011). In particular, the competing demands of standards-based instruction and pacing guides may limit teachers' capacity to embed formative assessment strategies in daily practice. Swanson et al. (2022) emphasized that without adequate support, even well-intentioned teachers may struggle to translate formative insights into effective instructional adjustments.

Schools that establish structured assessment protocols and invest in professional development focused on data-driven instruction tend to report greater fidelity in the use

of formative assessments (Callahan et al., 2017a). These supports empower educators to not only collect meaningful data, but also to use it effectively in guiding decisions about differentiation, enrichment, and acceleration for gifted learners.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2019) underscores the role of formative assessment in gifted programming standards, advocating for its use to ensure instruction remains responsive, challenging, and personalized. When integrated into a broader instructional approach that includes flexible grouping, curriculum compacting, and individualized learning paths, formative assessment enhances the overall quality and effectiveness of gifted education.

The next section explores how Georgia's state-level requirements align with national gifted programming standards and how these mandates are implemented in practice.

Georgia's Gifted Programming Standards

The Georgia Board of Education mandates gifted services that closely align with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Programming Standards, helping ensure that best practices—such as differentiation, acceleration, and ability grouping—are implemented consistently across the state. These mandates provide a structured and research-based foundation for gifted education and promote instructional equity for advanced learners across a variety of settings.

Per Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.38, all public school districts are required to offer gifted education services to eligible students (Georgia Department of Education, 2024). Districts must implement at least one of several approved delivery models: resource classes, cluster grouping, or advanced content instruction. Resource

classes provide pull-out instruction in a specialized setting, while cluster grouping places identified gifted students together in a general education classroom with differentiated instruction. Advanced content models allow students to access curriculum beyond their current grade level. Georgia's policy also supports real-world learning opportunities through internship and mentorship programs. These delivery options are guided by specific performance and reassessment criteria to ensure ongoing eligibility and appropriate academic challenge for gifted learners.

Research supports that when NAGC-aligned practices are implemented with fidelity, student outcomes include increased engagement, improved problem-solving skills, and heightened academic motivation (Reis & Renzulli, 2016). Conversely, when systemic or instructional barriers limit the full implementation of these practices, gifted learners may experience frustration, boredom, or academic disengagement (Hébert, 2021). Georgia's alignment with NAGC standards increases the likelihood that students will receive consistent and developmentally appropriate instruction, particularly when policy is implemented effectively at the district level.

To support the delivery of these services, Georgia requires that educators who directly teach gifted students obtain a gifted endorsement. This credential includes coursework on gifted education theory, instructional strategies, curriculum design, and the social-emotional needs of advanced learners (GDOE, 2024). Teachers earning the endorsement complete practicum experiences and receive targeted training in differentiation, enrichment, and acceleration practices. However, this requirement applies only to educators providing formal gifted instruction. K–3 general education teachers,

who often serve gifted students in cluster models, are not required to hold this endorsement unless specified by their district.

While some districts encourage general education teachers to pursue training in gifted education, others may lack the resources or structures to support this effort. This variability can lead to inconsistent implementation of gifted services—particularly in rural areas, where geographic isolation, limited funding, and staffing shortages pose additional challenges (Azano et al., 2020). Teachers in these contexts may have fewer opportunities for professional development or collaboration with gifted specialists, which can affect their ability to consistently apply NAGC-aligned practices in early elementary classrooms.

Ultimately, while Georgia provides a strong policy foundation for gifted education through its alignment with NAGC standards, local implementation determines how effectively these mandates serve students. Ensuring that general education teachers—especially those in K–3 settings—receive sufficient training, resources, and support is essential for realizing the full potential of the state's gifted education framework.

Gifted Education in Rural Schools

Rural schools face distinctive challenges in delivering high-quality gifted education due to geographic isolation, limited funding, and shortages of trained personnel (Azano et al, 2020). Although best practices such as differentiation, acceleration, and ability grouping are well supported in the literature, their implementation in rural contexts often varies due to systemic constraints and inconsistent access to professional development (Azano et al., 2014). Gifted students in rural settings are especially

vulnerable to reduced access to enrichment programs and advanced academic opportunities, which may negatively impact long-term achievement and academic engagement (Gentry & Fugate, 2013).

One of the most critical barriers to effective gifted education in rural areas is the scarcity of trained educators. Many rural districts lack dedicated gifted specialists and instead rely on general education teachers who may not have received formal training in gifted education (Azano et al., 2014). Research indicates that teachers without targeted preparation in differentiation and acceleration often struggle to meet the advanced needs of gifted learners, leading to under-identification and inconsistent instructional support (Swanson, 2016). These challenges are compounded by the limited availability of professional development in rural regions, where geographic distance and funding constraints restrict access to high-quality training opportunities (Azano & Stewart, 2016).

Service delivery models also present unique challenges. Due to smaller student populations, many rural schools cannot sustain full-time gifted programs and instead rely on inclusion models such as cluster grouping or embedded differentiation within general education classrooms (McBee, 2010). While these models can be effective when implemented with fidelity, they depend on teachers' ability to deliver appropriately challenging and individualized instruction. Without structured support, gifted students in rural settings may experience academic stagnation, disengagement, or frustration due to insufficient intellectual challenge (Swanson, 2016).

Despite these obstacles, rural schools offer several unique opportunities that can support gifted education. Close-knit community relationships often enable mentorship programs, independent study projects, and locally driven enrichment initiatives (Azano &

Stewart, 2016). Strategic partnerships with businesses, higher education institutions, and local organizations can provide real-world learning experiences that enhance traditional instruction (Gentry & Fugate, 2013). Furthermore, technological advancements have improved access to gifted services in rural schools, including online courses, virtual mentorship, and remote enrichment options that may otherwise be unavailable (Gentry & Cress, 2020).

To strengthen gifted education in rural areas, targeted policy interventions are needed. These include increased funding for educator training, expanded access to technology-based services, and flexible models that consider the constraints of rural educational environments (Plucker & Callahan, 2020). Research supports that when rural schools invest in structured differentiation strategies, sustained professional development, and community-based enrichment, outcomes improve for gifted learners (Azano et al., 2014). Addressing these systemic challenges is critical to ensuring that rural gifted students receive equitable access to rigorous, developmentally appropriate instruction and support.

Teacher Beliefs and Perceptions About Gifted Students

Teachers play a pivotal role in identifying and nurturing gifted students, and their beliefs about gifted education significantly influence the fidelity with which research-based strategies are implemented (Reis-Jorge et al., 2021). The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) promotes practices such as differentiation, acceleration, ability grouping, and formative assessment. However, how consistently these practices are applied often hinges on individual teacher perceptions (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Johnsen and Kaul (2019) found that while teachers generally acknowledge the importance of these strategies, their application remains inconsistent due to time limitations, inadequate training, and resource constraints. This gap between endorsement and execution highlights the influential role of teacher perceptions in determining whether best practices are fully realized in the classroom.

Educators' conceptualization of giftedness directly shapes how they recognize and instruct gifted students (Peters & Carter, 2022). When teachers equate giftedness narrowly with high academic performance, they may fail to identify students who excel in creativity, leadership, or problem-solving—contributing to the persistent underrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in gifted programs (Ford, 2013; Matthews & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2016).

The successful implementation of best practices is closely tied to teachers' access to professional development. Those who receive targeted training in differentiation, enrichment, and acceleration are more likely to feel competent applying these strategies (Swanson et al., 2022). Conversely, teachers without formal preparation often express uncertainty and are less likely to modify instruction appropriately (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Many general education teachers do not receive ongoing training in gifted education. One-off workshops often fail to produce lasting change, while sustained professional learning communities and mentorship programs have been shown to increase confidence and capacity (Azano & Stewart, 2016; Callahan et al., 2017a). Teachers who engage in collaborative professional learning are more likely to refine their differentiation strategies and feel supported in their instructional decision-making.

School and district policies also shape teacher efficacy. Schools that establish clear gifted education frameworks, provide structured expectations for differentiation, and allocate time and funding for teacher training foster environments where educators feel equipped to support advanced learners (Hébert, 2021; Swanson et al., 2022). In contrast, when gifted education lacks institutional emphasis, teachers often receive limited guidance, contributing to sporadic or ineffective practice (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Possible Barriers to Implementation of NAGC Best Practices

Even with growing awareness of best practices, educators report persistent challenges that hinder their ability to implement gifted strategies with consistency (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). Common barriers include:

- Time Constraints: Many teachers report that the demands of whole-class instruction, standardized testing, and curriculum pacing guides limit their ability to provide individualized instruction for gifted students (Callahan et al., 2017b; Hertberg-Davis, 2009) Differentiation, in particular, requires additional planning, resource development, and assessment adjustments, which may be difficult for teachers managing a diverse classroom.
- Lack of Administrative Support: Teachers who perceive limited support from school leadership may feel discouraged from deviating from standardized instructional approaches, resulting in reduced implementation of differentiation and acceleration strategies (Swanson et al., 2022).
- Limited Resources: Access to above-grade-level assessments, advanced curriculum materials, and enrichment opportunities varies widely across districts,

directly influencing teachers' ability to modify instruction to challenge gifted learners (Callahan et al., 2017b).

- Insufficient Training in Gifted Education: Research indicates that many teachers lack formal coursework in gifted education during their teacher preparation programs, leading to uncertainty about how to modify instruction (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006; McNeill & Polly, 2021; Starko, 2008).

Collectively, these barriers contribute to inequities in access to gifted services. Without adequate training and structural support, even well-intentioned educators may struggle to identify and appropriately serve gifted learners (Johnsen et al., 2020; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Teacher Perceptions of Student Outcomes

When teachers do implement research-based gifted education strategies, they generally perceive positive student outcomes, including higher engagement, increased academic motivation, and greater self-advocacy (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). The student outcomes found include:

- Improved Engagement and Collaboration: Ability grouping promotes academic interaction with intellectual peers, fostering motivation and cooperative learning (Brulles et al., 2010; Rogers, 2007).
- Reduced Underachievement: Enrichment and curriculum compacting help sustain challenge and prevent boredom, maintaining student interest (Reis & Renzulli, 2016).
- Enhanced Long-Term Achievement: Acceleration is linked to greater academic confidence and long-term career benefits (Colangelo et al., 2010).

However, these outcomes are not universally experienced. The inconsistent implementation of best practices—often due to the aforementioned barriers—limits equitable access to rigorous gifted instruction. Closing this gap will require coordinated efforts in professional development, administrative advocacy, and policy reform (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Swanson et al., 2022).

Implications for Gifted Education Practices in K-3 Classrooms

The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that teachers' beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping the implementation of gifted education practices. Research underscores the importance of providing general education teachers with structured, sustained professional development to support the consistent use of differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment strategies (Callahan et al., 2017b; Prast et al., 2018). When these practices are applied with fidelity, they foster academic growth, motivation, and long-term engagement among gifted learners.

Programs that combine theoretical knowledge with practical applications have proven especially effective in building teacher capacity (Swanson et al., 2022). Such approaches help bridge the gap between awareness of best practices and their implementation in mixed-ability classrooms, which is particularly critical in early elementary settings where teachers may not hold specialized gifted endorsements. As Westberg and Archambault (1997) emphasized, ongoing professional learning empowers teachers to tailor instruction to meet the advanced learning needs of gifted students.

This dissertation study contributes to this body of research by investigating how K–3 teachers in a rural South Georgia RESA perceive the effectiveness and implementation of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices. Specifically, it explores teacher beliefs about

differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment, the frequency with which these strategies are implemented, and the perceived barriers or observed student outcomes associated with them. By examining how early elementary teachers in rural public schools' experience and apply research-based gifted practices, this study identifies areas where additional instructional support, policy attention, or professional learning may be warranted.

The Importance of Implementing Best Practices

The implementation of research-based best practices in gifted education—such as differentiation, acceleration, flexible grouping, enrichment, and formative assessment—remains essential for ensuring that gifted students in K–3 classrooms receive appropriate cognitive stimulation and instructional support (García-Martínez et al., 2021). These learners require intentionally designed strategies that challenge their intellectual capacity while promoting motivation, creativity, and engagement (Assouline et al., 2015; Reis & Renzulli, 2016). When these needs are not met, the risk of underachievement, boredom, and long-term disengagement increases, underscoring the need for quality programming beginning in the earliest years of schooling.

Research highlights that the early recognition of gifted traits, coupled with targeted instruction, has a lasting impact on academic and socioemotional development (Pfeiffer & Petscher, 2008). Students exposed to rigor and challenge early in their schooling are more likely to develop strong learning habits and positive academic self-concepts (Lubinski & Benbow, 2006). In contrast, a lack of academic challenge may lead to stagnation and frustration, particularly when acceleration and enrichment opportunities are delayed or withheld (Assouline et al., 2015; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

This study has further demonstrated that the successful implementation of these strategies often depends on teachers' beliefs about their professional responsibilities and their confidence in their ability to support advanced learners. Educators who feel adequately prepared and institutionally supported report greater consistency in their application of practices such as differentiation and formative assessment (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). In contrast, those who lack training or time tend to implement such strategies less frequently, particularly in the early grades where instructional demands can limit flexibility (Swanson et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the consistent application of NAGC-aligned best practices is central to maximizing the potential of gifted learners. Differentiation, acceleration, flexible grouping, enrichment, and formative assessment each contribute to the development of higher-order thinking skills and intellectual independence (Callahan et al., 2017b). For these practices to be sustained, institutional support, targeted professional learning, and a commitment to gifted education across systems are essential (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2020). When these elements are in place, early elementary classrooms are better positioned to provide all students—including those with exceptional potential—with the opportunities they need to thrive.

Gaps in Research

While the benefits of research-based strategies in gifted education are well-documented, the degree to which these practices are consistently implemented in early elementary general education classrooms remains uncertain. Although prior studies have investigated the barriers to implementing gifted education, much of the existing literature has concentrated on gifted specialists or teachers in upper elementary and secondary

settings. This has left a gap in understanding how K–3 general education teachers in mixed-ability classrooms perceive and apply practices such as differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment (Swanson et al., 2022).

Given that many gifted students spend the majority of their instructional time in general education settings, particularly in the early grades, it is critical to examine how general education teachers perceive and implement NAGC-aligned best practices (NAGC, 2019). Research suggests that instructional effectiveness in gifted education varies depending on teachers' preparation, access to targeted professional development, and the degree of district-level support (Swanson et al., 2022). Investigating these factors may offer insight into potential gaps in teacher support, instructional equity, and the contextual variables that shape implementation practices in early childhood settings.

Moreover, while earlier studies have identified general barriers to the implementation of gifted education (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Swanson et al., 2022), limited research has focused on how these barriers present specifically in K–3 classrooms within rural school districts. Rural settings may pose distinct challenges, including geographic isolation, limited funding, and staffing shortages that affect both identification and service delivery for gifted students (Azano et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2020). These contextual limitations may hinder professional development opportunities and reduce access to specialized gifted education resources (Azano et al., 2014; Gentry & Fugate, 2013).

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the perceptions of K–3 general education teachers within a rural Georgia RESA regarding the implementation and effectiveness of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices. Specifically, it

investigates how these educators understand and apply differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment strategies and identifies the barriers they perceive in applying them consistently. By examining the lived experiences of early elementary teachers in rural schools, this study contributes to the broader conversation around equitable access to gifted services and offers insights that may inform teacher training, district policies, and future research in similar contexts.

Chapter Summary

The literature on gifted education underscores the pivotal role of teacher perceptions in shaping the implementation of NAGC-aligned best practices in K–3 classrooms (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Swanson et al., 2022). Because early elementary years are critical for both cognitive and socio-emotional development, it is essential that teachers are equipped with the training, resources, and institutional support needed to effectively serve gifted learners (Matthews & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2016). Theoretical frameworks such as Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Renzulli's and Reis' Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) (Reis & Renzulli, 2016), and Culturally Responsive Personalized Learning (CRPL) (Bernacki et al., 2021; Gay, 2002) provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how differentiation, acceleration, enrichment, flexible grouping, and formative assessment can be implemented to support gifted students.

Despite wide support in the literature for these strategies, their implementation remains uneven. Barriers such as limited teacher preparation, inadequate access to professional development, and insufficient instructional resources are well documented and may be especially pronounced in rural schools (Azano et al., 2020; Johnsen & Kaul,

2019; Swanson et al., 2022). Rural educators often face unique challenges related to staffing limitations, geographic isolation, and inconsistent access to enrichment programs; all of which may affect the quality and equity of gifted instruction (Graham et al., 2020).

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how K–3 general education teachers within a rural Georgia RESA perceive and apply NAGC-aligned practices. Specifically, it investigates how teachers implement differentiation, acceleration, and enrichment, what barriers they face, and what outcomes they observe in their classrooms. By highlighting the perceptions and practices of early elementary educators in rural settings, the study aims to inform efforts to improve instructional support, professional development, and policy related to equitable access to gifted education.

Building on the theoretical perspectives and evidence-based practices discussed in this chapter, Chapter 3 presents the methodology for this quantitative study. It outlines the research design, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analysis plan used to investigate how teacher beliefs influence the implementation of gifted education strategies in early elementary classrooms.

Chapter III

Methodology

Following the conceptual and empirical foundations outlined in Chapter II, this chapter presents the methodological approach used to investigate the perceptions and instructional practices of K–3 general education teachers in a rural Southern Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). The purpose of the study was to examine how teachers perceive the effectiveness of National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned best practices and how frequently these practices are implemented in early elementary classrooms, where foundational academic and social-emotional development is established (Matthews & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2016; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

The study specifically explored teacher-reported use of nine key strategies: differentiation, content acceleration, grade-level acceleration, flexible grouping, pacing, enrichment and formative assessment, family involvement, and professional development and examined the barriers that may hinder their consistent application. Guided by four research questions, the investigation focused on: (a) teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned strategies; (b) the reported frequency of implementation of each practice; (c) the extent of alignment between belief and classroom practice; and (d) perceived barriers and observed student outcomes associated with implementation. This research addresses a persistent gap in the literature related to early elementary gifted education, particularly in rural contexts where general education teachers often serve as

the sole providers of gifted instruction while managing diverse student needs (Azano et al., 2020; Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

The remainder of this chapter outlines the study's research design, participant selection criteria, data collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis methods. Ethical considerations and strategies to ensure trustworthiness are also discussed to support the transparency and replicability of the research process.

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design using survey methodology to examine the perceptions and practices of K–3 general education teachers in a rural Southern Georgia RESA regarding NAGC-aligned gifted education strategies. A cross-sectional approach was selected because it allows the researcher to capture a snapshot of beliefs and instructional practices at a single point in time, which is ideal for assessing variation across teacher populations without the time or resource demands of longitudinal methods.

This design was particularly appropriate for the study's purpose: exploring teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of strategies such as differentiation, acceleration, enrichment, flexible grouping, and formative assessment, as well as the frequency with which those strategies are implemented in early childhood classrooms. The cross-sectional format supported the collection of measurable, standardized data from a broad population, enabling the researcher to examine patterns of alignment between beliefs and instructional practices and to identify perceived barriers to implementation.

The study replicated and adapted the *GT Teacher Beliefs Survey* (see Appendix B) developed by Johnsen and Kaul (2019). With permission from the original authors, the researcher received the original instrument, proposed modifications, and received confirmation that the revisions were appropriate. Modifications focused primarily on adapting demographic categories for the Georgia RESA context, consolidating similar strategy-based items to streamline the instrument, and aligning content with the 2024 NAGC Initial Gifted Educator Preparation Standards. These changes preserved the integrity and theoretical foundation of the original survey while increasing its contextual relevance and usability for the intended K–3 population in Georgia (see Appendix C).

To further demonstrate content validity, Table 2 provides a crosswalk between the NAGC-aligned practices measured in the survey and the corresponding indicators from both the 2019 *NAGC Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards* and the 2024 *CEC Initial Practice-Based Preparation Standards for Gifted Educators*. These national frameworks provide a research-informed foundation for gifted education and support the relevance and alignment of the instructional strategies explored in this study. For further detail on how these strategies also align with Georgia Gifted Standards, see Appendix D.

Table 2

NAGC Best Practices Aligned with 2019 and 2024 Standards

NAGC-Aligned Practice	2019 Programming Standard(s)	2024 Preparation Standard(s)
Differentiation	Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction	Standard 3: Subject Matter Content & Curriculum (3.2, 3.3)
Flexible Grouping	Standard 5: Programming	Standard 5: Effective Environments & Instruction (5.3)
Enrichment	Standard 5: Programming; Standard 3: Curriculum	Standard 5: Effective Environments & Instruction (5.1, 5.2)
Formative Assessment	Standard 2: Assessment	Standard 4: Assessment (4.3)
Pacing Adjustments	Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction	Standard 3: Subject Matter Content & Curriculum (3.2)
Content Acceleration	Standard 5: Programming; Standard 3: Curriculum	Standard 5: Effective Environments & Instruction (5.1)
Grade-Level Acceleration	Standard 5: Programming	Standard 5: Effective Environments & Instruction (5.3)
Family Involvement	Standard 4: Learning Environments; Standard 5: Programming	Standard 7: Collaboration (7.2)
Professional Development	Standard 6: Professional Learning	Standard 1: Professional Learning & Ethical Practice (1.1)

Note. Adapted from *National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Programming Standards* (2019) and *NAGC Preparation Standards* (2024).

Quantitative methods were selected due to their ability to yield consistent, statistically analyzable data across a large sample. Unlike qualitative approaches that offer in-depth, individualized perspectives, quantitative survey design allows for broad generalization and efficient comparison across subgroups. The structured nature of the instrument ensured internal consistency, while the inclusion of skip logic in Qualtrics tailored the questions to individual respondents based on their experience with gifted students. Because implementation questions were shown only to respondents who

endorsed a belief in the strategy's effectiveness, the study focused on descriptive alignment trends rather than inferential correlations between belief and practice.

Following IRB approval from Valdosta State University (IRB-04585-2025; see Appendices E and F), the researcher obtained permission from the RESA superintendent, who contacted each district superintendent on the researcher's behalf. Upon district-level approval, the researcher collaborated with RESA personnel and district contacts to obtain current lists of eligible K–3 general education teacher email addresses. A total of 556 teachers were identified and emailed the survey over a four-week period.

This design allowed for timely and secure data collection. All responses were collected anonymously via Qualtrics, stored in a password-protected database, and accessible only to the researcher and authorized university personnel. This approach safeguarded participant confidentiality and aligned with IRB protocols.

The following sections detail the site and participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and analysis in further depth, building upon this research design foundation.

Site and Participant Selection

The research setting for this study was within a designated Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) region in Georgia, focused specifically on K–3 teachers who work in general education classrooms. This setting was appropriate, as it enabled the study to target educators directly responsible for implementing gifted education practices in early elementary education. The selection of a RESA provided access to a diverse population of teachers across multiple public-school districts, offering a broader understanding of the beliefs and practices of educators working with gifted students in

rural Georgia. The focus on K–3 teachers was deliberate, as early intervention and support are critical for gifted students in these formative years and understanding how teachers implement gifted practices at this stage is essential.

Initially, the study's target population was defined as all 556 K–3 general education teachers within the RESA. A power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) was conducted based on this total, yielding a minimum sample size estimate of 129 teachers using a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.35$), alpha level of .05, and power of .80. Applying the finite population correction (FPC) for the population of 556 yielded a revised target of 104 participants.

However, as the study progressed, the researcher determined that only a subset of those 556 teachers, specifically, the 128 teachers who currently had at least one student formally identified as gifted, would be eligible for inclusion in the final analytic sample. This decision was made to ensure that all participants had direct, recent instructional experience with identified gifted students, thereby enhancing the reliability and relevance of the findings.

Ultimately, of the 128 eligible teachers, 60 elected to complete the survey and met all inclusion criteria. While this final sample size is below the initial power estimate based on the full teacher population, it reflects nearly 47% of the eligible group and represents a strong, targeted subsample for the study's purpose. Furthermore, this narrower focus enhances the precision of the findings by limiting responses to those with the most direct insight into gifted instructional practices.

Participants were screened using skip logic in Qualtrics to ensure eligibility. Teachers without an identified gifted student in their current K–3 classroom were exited

from the survey to maintain analytic consistency. All but one district within the RESA chose to participate, allowing for broad geographic representation. At the time of survey distribution, the RESA served approximately 10,655 students in grades K–3, of which 584 (5.5%) were formally identified as gifted—a figure slightly below national prevalence estimates of 6–10% (NAGC, 2025.).

Following survey administration, responses were screened for informed consent and eligibility. Teachers who did not report having a formally identified gifted student in their current K–3 classroom were excluded. Chapter IV provides additional details regarding the final analytic sample.

Data Collection

The instrument for data collection in this study was a modified version of the *GT Teacher Beliefs Survey*, originally developed by Johnsen and Kaul (2019). With permission from the authors, the researcher adapted the instrument to align with the Georgia RESA context and the 2024 National Association for Gifted Children Initial Gifted Educator Preparation Standards. These revisions preserved the survey's intent and structure while enhancing its contextual relevance, reliability, and validity.

Modifications included updates to the demographic section to reflect Georgia-specific grade levels and district names, as well as the consolidation of strategy-specific questions for clarity and brevity. These changes followed direct guidance from Johnsen, who noted that the original survey was perceived as lengthy (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019). The revised instrument remained comprehensive yet accessible and aligned with evolving NAGC standards.

To ensure that only teachers with relevant experience completed the survey, a preliminary screening item asked whether the respondent currently had a formally identified gifted student in their classroom. If they responded "no," a follow-up item asked whether any students in their classroom were being monitored or screened for giftedness. Only those answering "yes" to either item were allowed to proceed. Embedded skip logic also ensured that teachers were only shown questions aligned with their responses. For example, teachers who did not perceive a strategy as effective were not shown questions about its frequency, observed outcomes, or barriers to implementation.

Each of the nine instructional strategies (e.g., acceleration, enrichment, grouping) followed a consistent structure: teachers first indicated agreement with a belief statement, then answered a frequency question if applicable. Depending on their frequency response, they were either shown a checklist of barriers (for low use) or a checklist of observed outcomes (for moderate to high use). This design allowed the researcher to capture detailed and scalable data aligned with all four research questions.

- Acceleration:
    - I perceive gifted and advanced students benefit from being allowed to accelerate in content based on their individual progress and abilities, including working above grade level when appropriate. (Agreement: Yes or No)
    - During this past year, how often were gifted and advanced students in your classroom accelerated in above-level content based on their

individual progress? (Frequency scale: Never, Less than 1 time a month, 1-3 times a month, 1-3 times a week, 4-5 times a week)

- Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing acceleration opportunities for your gifted and advanced students? (Please check all that apply.)
  - lack of confidence in implementing this strategy
  - lack of support from team teachers
  - lack of support from administrators
  - district curriculum constraints
  - insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.)
  - other
- As a result of above-level work, gifted and advanced students have: (Please check all that apply.)
  - Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
  - Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
  - Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
  - Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
  - Engaged more actively in the classroom.
  - Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
  - Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
  - Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.

This sample question demonstrates the alignment of the survey with NAGC-aligned standards and its focus on key gifted education strategies, including differentiation, acceleration, professional development, and assessment. The utilization of closed-ended questions ensured that responses were quantifiable and suitable for descriptive and exploratory analysis.

A pilot test was conducted with eight K–3 general education teachers from a school outside the RESA region who met the inclusion criteria. The pilot helped verify the clarity of survey items, functionality of skip logic, and overall usability. A minor display issue was identified by the first participant and immediately corrected. Feedback confirmed that the instrument was clear and relevant for the target population.

Following university IRB guidance, "force response" settings were not enabled in Qualtrics. Instead, all items used the "request response" option to ethically encourage full completion while preserving the participant's right to skip questions. This ensured that the instrument complied with IRB standards while still supporting robust data collection. Pilot responses were excluded from the final analysis.

The full survey was distributed electronically using Qualtrics to all eligible K–3 teachers in the designated RESA region. Survey distribution followed approval from the Institutional Review Board at Valdosta State University (IRB-04585-2025). After the RESA director secured participation approvals from district superintendents, teacher email addresses were obtained and used to contact teachers directly. The survey remained open from April 29 to May 27, 2025, with three reminder emails sent during that period (see Appendices G, H, and I). Responses were anonymous, stored securely, and

accessible only to the researcher and authorized university personnel in accordance with IRB confidentiality guidelines.

Through strategic adaptations, thorough pilot testing, and strong ethical oversight, the final survey instrument was methodologically sound and contextually aligned, enabling the collection of valid data to address the study's research questions.

Data Analysis

A structured data analysis plan was implemented to align with the study's descriptive and exploratory focus. All analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel. All given responses were first screened for informed consent and eligibility (see Appendix J). Only those who confirmed having at least one formally identified gifted student in their current K–3 classroom were included in the final analytic sample. This yielded a total of 60 teachers out of the 128 verified to be currently serving a gifted student in the RESA (see Appendix K).

Because participants could skip items due to IRB regulations, response totals varied across questions. Skip logic further refined item visibility: teachers who did not endorse a practice's effectiveness were not shown implementation, outcome, or barrier items for that strategy. As a result, analysis was conducted using the maximum valid responses for each item to ensure completeness without inflating totals.

Descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percentages were used to examine teacher perceptions of effectiveness (RQ1) and reported implementation frequency (RQ2). Alignment patterns between beliefs and implementation (RQ3) were analyzed descriptively by comparing weekly implementation rates to belief endorsement

percentages. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for frequency variables to explore relationships among practices.

For RQ4, teachers reporting infrequent use of a strategy (less than once per month) were shown a checklist of barriers; those reporting use at least monthly were asked to select observed student outcomes. Frequencies were calculated for both barriers and outcomes across all applicable strategies.

This analytic approach ensured robust use of available data, maintained alignment with ethical guidelines, and prioritized the real-world classroom experiences of K–3 teachers in a rural RESA context.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring the trustworthiness of this quantitative study involved a structured, ethically sound, and replicable research process. The study received formal approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Valdosta State University (IRB Protocol #IRB-04585-2025) prior to the initiation of data collection (see Appendix F). All procedures were developed to align with the ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, participant anonymity, and data security.

Following IRB approval, the researcher coordinated with the superintendent of the Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA). On April 2, 2025, the RESA superintendent formally approved the study and contacted superintendents across the region on the researcher's behalf (see Appendix L). In the weeks that followed, the researcher sent personalized follow-up emails to each district to request permission to contact their teachers directly and to obtain K–3 teacher email addresses.

Survey distribution was conducted in carefully timed waves between April 29 and May 27, 2025. Teachers received four contacts: an initial invitation followed by three reminders spaced throughout the four-week period (see Appendices C, G, H & I). All communications emphasized the voluntary and anonymous nature of the study, highlighted IRB approval, and provided an embedded link to the survey hosted on Qualtrics. As an incentive for participation, all teachers emailed were entered into the drawing for a $100 Amazon gift card. Entry into the raffle did not compromise anonymity, as all possible participants were automatically included.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher adhered to all IRB data management protocols. Responses were stored securely in a password-protected Qualtrics account accessible only to the researcher and approved university personnel. No personally identifiable information was collected within the survey itself. All files were backed up regularly and encrypted to safeguard participant confidentiality.

By carefully documenting each procedural step, including district outreach, sampling verification, and data security protocols, the researcher ensured the study was both replicable and ethically sound. These measures strengthened the study's credibility and ensured that all findings were grounded in rigorous and transparent research practices.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Valdosta State University to ensure the protection, confidentiality, and rights of all participants. IRB approval (Protocol #IRB-04585-2025)

was obtained prior to any data collection, confirming that the study met all institutional standards for research involving human subjects.

As part of the IRB-approved protocol, the researcher implemented a systematic approach to obtain informed consent, protect participant confidentiality, and minimize potential risks. All participants were provided with a digital informed consent form embedded at the beginning of the Qualtrics survey. The form outlined the purpose of the study, its significance, expected time commitment, voluntary nature of participation, and the absence of foreseeable risks beyond those encountered in everyday life. Participants were required to indicate their agreement to proceed by selecting yes when asked for consent before the data collection began. If consent was not granted, the survey automatically closed, ensuring that no data were collected without explicit permission.

The researcher completed required training in the protection of human subjects and earned certification through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). A copy of the CITI certificate is provided in Appendix M to document completion of these ethical training requirements.

To maintain confidentiality, the survey was conducted anonymously through a secure online platform configured to prevent the collection of any personally identifiable information (PII), including IP addresses. The survey instrument was carefully designed to exclude any items that could reveal the identity of respondents or their specific schools. The platform's settings and survey design were reviewed multiple times to verify compliance with data anonymity standards.

All data were stored in a password-protected Qualtrics account accessible only to the primary researcher and authorized personnel affiliated with Valdosta State University.

Regular encrypted backups were maintained to protect data integrity in the event of technical failure. Data encryption and role-based access protocols were implemented to further safeguard the confidentiality of participant information.

In accordance with the principle of data minimization, the study collected only the information necessary to address the research questions. Data were anonymized prior to analysis, and results were reported in aggregate form. No individual participant or school district is identifiable in any tables, narrative summaries, or published findings resulting from this research.

To ethically encourage participation, all eligible teachers who received the survey were automatically entered into a $100 Amazon gift card raffle, regardless of whether they completed the survey. This ensured that participation remained voluntary and anonymous. The raffle winner was randomly selected using a randomized Excel list and notified after the survey closed. The winner provided an electronic signature on the IRB-approved monetary log to document prize distribution in accordance with university procedures (see Appendix N).

Participants were provided with the contact information for both the researcher and the Valdosta State IRB office in the initial recruitment email and on the consent page. These details allowed participants to ask questions, raise concerns, or withdraw from the study at any time. Throughout the research process, the researcher remained alert to the potential for unanticipated issues or participant discomfort. In the event of concerns, the researcher was prepared to consult with the IRB and amend the protocol or instrument as necessary to preserve participant welfare.

Upon completion of the study, the anonymized dataset was securely archived in accordance with the University's data retention policies. Data will be retained for a minimum of three years to allow for verification or follow-up analyses, after which all digital files will be permanently deleted.

All findings will be disseminated in ways that preserve participant confidentiality. Whether in academic publications, conference presentations, or reports to stakeholders, only aggregate trends and patterns will be shared. The study's ethical integrity was prioritized at every stage to ensure that the rights, dignity, and privacy of all participants were fully protected while contributing meaningful insights to the field of gifted education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the structured methodology used to investigate K–3 general education teachers' perceptions and implementation of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices within a rural Southern Georgia RESA. This chapter introduced the specific survey instrumentation and data analysis strategies that were foundational to the study's design.

A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed using a modified version of the *GT Teacher Beliefs Survey*. Revisions to the original instrument, with permission from the developers, tailored the tool for Georgia's RESA context and aligned it with the updated 2024 NAGC standards. Notably, skip logic was embedded to ensure participants only responded to questions relevant to their beliefs and instructional experiences, supporting a more precise exploration of strategy-specific beliefs, implementation frequency, observed outcomes, and perceived barriers.

The study ultimately included 60 participants from a verified pool of 128 eligible teachers who currently taught a gifted student. While the original power analysis was based on the full population of 556 teachers, this refined sampling increased the relevance and contextual precision of the findings. Data were collected through Qualtrics over a four-week window and analyzed in Excel using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and pairwise Pearson correlation coefficients.

Chapter III also outlined the careful steps taken to ensure IRB compliance, informed consent, and participant confidentiality. The pilot study with eight teachers helped confirm the clarity of the instrument and allowed for technical refinements before full distribution. Together, these procedures ensured that the data collection was ethically sound, contextually aligned, and methodologically rigorous.

Chapter IV will present the study's findings organized by research question, including descriptive statistics and narrative summaries that highlight patterns in teacher beliefs, implementation frequency, and perceived barriers and outcomes related to NAGC-aligned gifted education practices.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of a quantitative study exploring K–3 general education teachers' perceptions and classroom implementation of NAGC-aligned best practices for gifted education within a rural South Georgia RESA. This analysis focused on the 60 teachers who indicated they had at least one formally identified gifted student currently in their classroom. These teachers were drawn from the 128 total K–3 teachers verified by the RESA as serving gifted learners during the 2024–2025 academic year.

The chapter is organized around the four research questions, each targeting a specific aspect of teacher beliefs and instructional practices associated with NAGC-recommended strategies, including differentiation, acceleration, flexible grouping, enrichment, and formative assessment. Data were gathered using a modified version of the *GT Teacher Beliefs Survey* (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019), which employed closed-ended items and embedded skip logic to streamline responses and ensure alignment with the study's goals. While not every teacher answered every item due to the design of the survey, all 60 respondents completed the core components and were retained in the analysis.

Following an overview of respondent demographics, results are presented by research question. Research Question 1 addressed teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned practices, summarized using descriptive statistics.

Research Question 2 examined how frequently these practices were implemented, also reported through frequency distributions. For Research Question 3, belief-to-practice alignment was analyzed descriptively by comparing the percentage of teachers who agreed a strategy was effective with the percentage who reported implementing it at least weekly. In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore relationships among implementation frequencies across strategies. Research Question 4 summarized perceived barriers to implementation, reported descriptively across structural, instructional, and contextual domains. All analyses were conducted using descriptive and correlational methods appropriate to the scale and distribution of the data.

Twenty teachers who reported working with potentially gifted students also completed the survey. However, because the final analytic sample was refined to include only the 128 teachers in the RESA region with formally identified gifted students, their responses were excluded from the primary analysis. This subgroup included a higher proportion of kindergarten teachers, and their insights may offer valuable perspectives for future research on early recognition and support of giftedness prior to formal identification, which is noted in Chapter V.

Participant Demographics

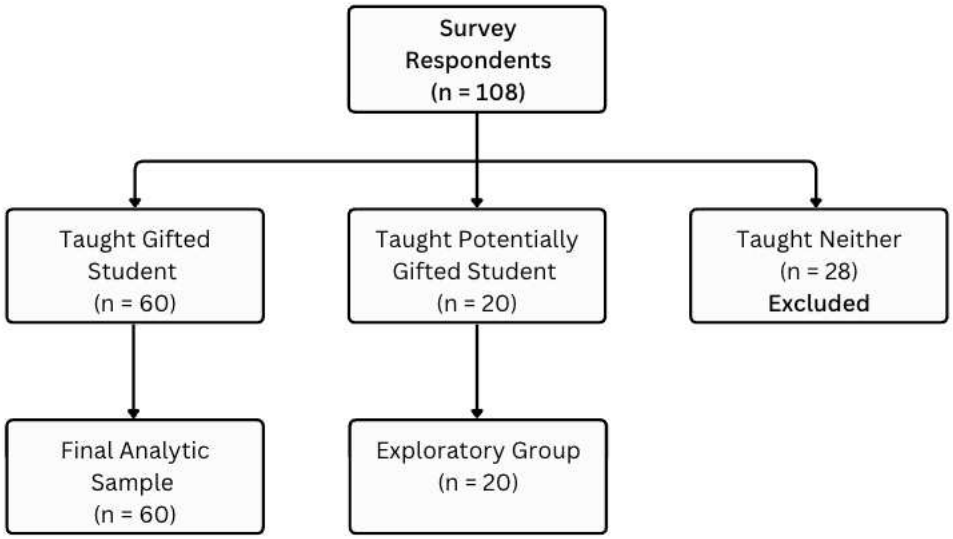
A total of 108 K–3 general education teachers from a rural South Georgia RESA responded to the survey and provided informed consent. Based on records provided by the RESA, 128 teachers were identified as having taught at least one formally identified gifted student during the 2024–2025 school year. Of those, 60 teachers submitted valid responses indicating they were currently teaching at least one identified gifted student. These 60 teachers comprise the final analytic sample for the study (see Figure 4).

An additional 20 teachers reported teaching at least one student they were monitoring as potentially gifted but were not formally identified. Due to the inability to determine the population total of such teachers, their data were analyzed separately in exploratory sections. Another 28 respondents who indicated teaching neither identified nor potentially gifted students were excluded from all analyses.

The final sample of 60 represents approximately 46.9% of the total population of 128 K–3 teachers in the region confirmed to have formally identified gifted students in their classrooms. Surveys were distributed to eight approved districts within the RESA, and responses were obtained from teachers in six of the nine public school districts.

Figure 4

Survey Responses and Data Cleaning Flow Diagram



The final analytic sample included 60 K–3 general education teachers from a rural South Georgia RESA who reported currently teaching at least one formally identified gifted student. These teachers represented a range of professional backgrounds, grade levels, and experiences. While a separate group of 20 teachers reported working with

students, they believed to be potentially gifted, demographic analysis for this group was not the focus of this study and is therefore not presented.

In the final analytic sample, participants reported teaching across all K–3 grade levels. The largest number taught third grade (n = 24), followed by second grade (n = 9), first grade (n = 8), and kindergarten (n = 5). Some participants did not indicate a specific grade level.

In terms of educational attainment, 19 respondents reported holding a master's degree, 17 held a specialist degree, and 10 held a bachelor's degree. No participants reported holding a doctoral degree, and 14 did not report their degree level.

Teaching experience varied among the sample. The majority (n = 27) reported more than 10 years of overall teaching experience. Additionally, 21 teachers reported more than 10 years of experience specifically within K–3 classrooms.

Eighteen participants reported holding a Georgia Gifted Endorsement. Another eleven described having formal training through professional development or coursework. Twenty-two teachers reported having no formal background but experience teaching gifted students. These categories reflect overlapping self-reported responses, as participants could select more than one option.

This demographically diverse and regionally representative group provides a strong foundation for examining general education teachers' perceptions and practices related to gifted learners. A summary of demographic characteristics is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	N
Highest Degree Earned	
Bachelor's Degree	10
Master's Degree	19
Specialist Degree	17
Doctoral Degree	0
Grade Level Taught	
Kindergarten	5
1st Grade	8
2nd Grade	9
3rd Grade	24
Years Taught (Overall)	
1–3 Years	6
4–10 Years	13
11+ Years	27
Years Taught (K–3)	
1–3 Years	10
4–10 Years	14
11+ Years	21
Gifted Education Background	
GA Gifted Endorsement	18
Graduate course(s) in gifted education	5
GACE Gifted Certification	3
No formal background but experience teaching gifted students	22
Participation in professional development specially designed for gifted education	6
Undergraduate course(s) in gifted education	5

Note. Categories reflect self-reported responses. Totals may not equal 60 due to item nonresponse or participants selecting more than one option.

Research Question 1: Teacher Perceptions of Effectiveness

The first research question asked: *What are K–3 teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned best practices for gifted education in a RESA region in rural South Georgia?*

To address this question, teachers who reported currently teaching at least one formally identified gifted student (n = 60) were asked to indicate whether they believed each of nine instructional strategies aligned with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) best practices was effective for supporting gifted learners. While 60 teachers were eligible to respond, the valid sample size (n) for each strategy varied slightly depending on whether teachers provided a belief response for that item, with most n values ranging from 47 to 59. These strategies included: differentiation, content acceleration, grade-level acceleration, flexible grouping, pacing, formative assessment, enrichment, family involvement, and professional development. Response options were dichotomous ("Yes" or "No") and adapted from the *GT Teacher Beliefs Survey* (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019).

As shown in Figure 5, teachers reported overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices. The highest agreement was observed for differentiation, content acceleration, and family involvement, with 100% of respondents endorsing these practices as effective. High levels of agreement were also found for pacing (98.0%), flexible grouping (96.6%), enrichment (95.8%), professional development (95.7%), and formative assessment (92.3%). The only practice with notably lower agreement was grade-level acceleration, with 77.1% of respondents indicating it was effective.

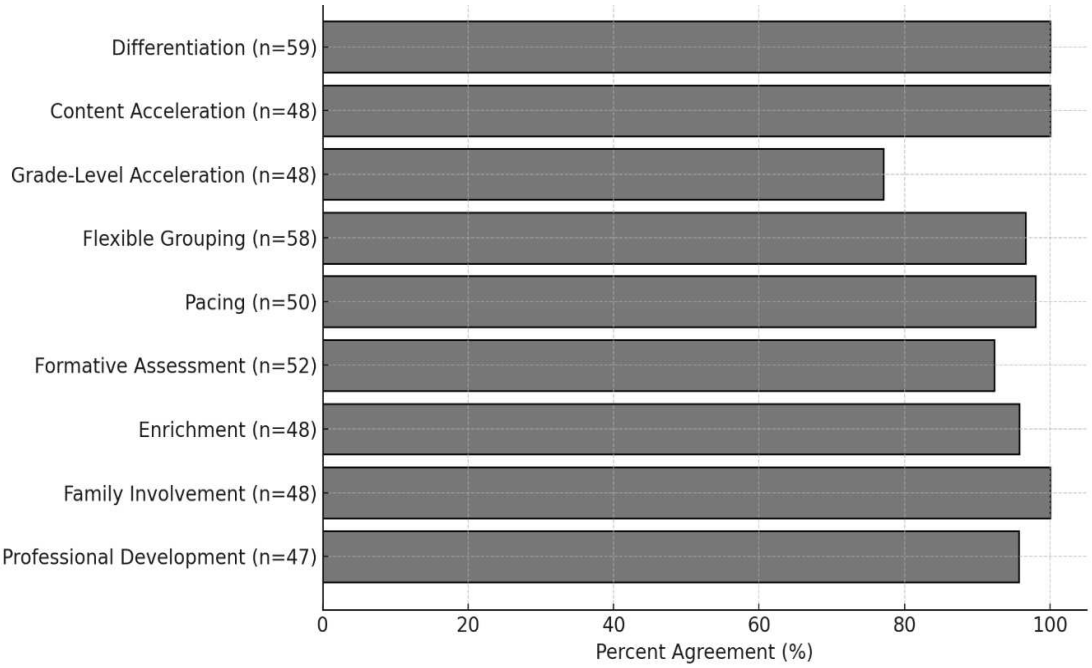
These results suggest that general education teachers working with identified gifted students in this rural Georgia RESA are broadly supportive of a wide range of NAGC-aligned instructional strategies. The consistently high levels of belief in these

practices—particularly those related to content differentiation, enrichment, and acceleration.

To further illustrate the strength of teacher agreement, participants' total belief scores across all nine NAGC-aligned practices were calculated. Only respondents who completed all nine belief items (n = 47) were included in this analysis.

Figure 5

Teacher Perceptions of Effectiveness of NAGC Best Practice

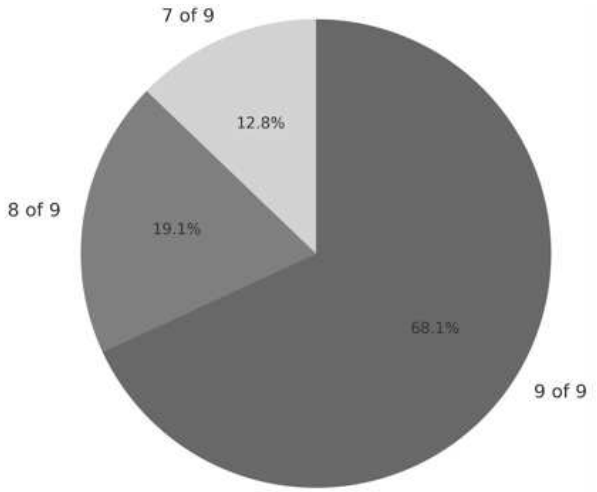


Note. Percent agreement reflects the proportion of participants who indicated 'Yes' when asked if each practice was effective for supporting gifted learners.

As shown in Figure 6, the majority of teachers (68.1%) agreed with the effectiveness of all nine instructional strategies. An additional 19.1% agreed with eight out of nine, while 12.8% endorsed seven out of nine. No respondents selected fewer than seven practices as effective. These data reflect a high level of overall agreement with NAGC-aligned practices among respondents who completed the full set of belief items.

Figure 6

Distribution of Teacher Perceptions of Effectiveness of NAGC Best Practice



Note. This figure represents the percentage of participants who agreed with 7, 8, or all 9 of the instructional practices included in the survey. Only responses with complete data across all nine items were included.

The findings for Research Question 1 indicate that K–3 general education teachers in this rural RESA overall endorsed the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned instructional strategies for gifted learners. All respondents agreed with the effectiveness of differentiation, content acceleration, and family involvement, and over 90% endorsed the remaining practices with the exception of grade-level acceleration, which received 77.1% agreement. Among those who completed all belief items, more than two-thirds endorsed all nine practices. These results reflect broad support for NAGC-aligned best practices across the sample.

Research Question 2: Frequency of Implementation

The second research question asked: *How frequently do K–3 teachers in a rural South Georgia RESA implement each specific NAGC-aligned best practice?* This explored how frequently K–3 general education teachers in a rural South Georgia RESA

reported implementing specific NAGC-aligned practices for gifted students. To answer this question, teachers who reported teaching at least one identified gifted student (n = 60) were asked to indicate how often they implemented nine specific instructional strategies aligned with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) best practices. While 60 teachers were eligible to respond, the valid sample size (n) for each strategy varied slightly depending on whether teachers provided a belief response for that item, with most n values ranging from 37 to 53. The strategies included: flexible grouping, differentiation, content acceleration, grade-level acceleration, pacing, enrichment, formative assessment, family involvement, and professional development.

Eight of the strategies were measured using this five-point frequency scale: Never, Less than once per month, 1–3 times per month, 1–3 times per week, and 4–5 times per week. The ninth strategy, participation in gifted-related professional development, used a year-based scale: Never, 1 time this year, 2 times this year, 3 times this year, or 4 or more times this year. Because of this difference in measurement structure, professional development participation is reported separately in its own frequency table and is excluded from the aggregate reliability and mean comparisons.

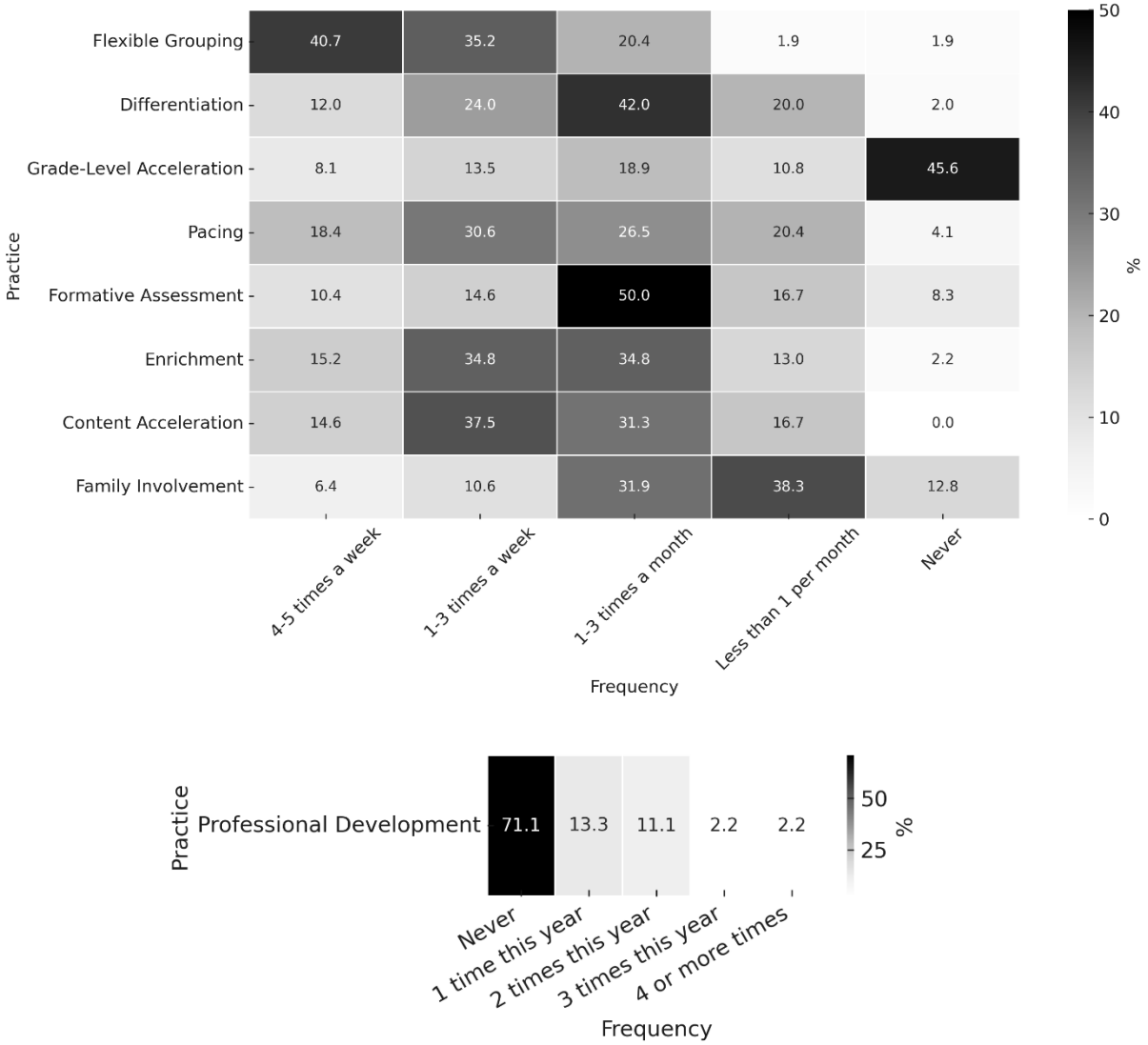
To assess the internal consistency of the eight implementation items measured on a weekly frequency scale, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. Each frequency response was converted to a numerical value ranging from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("4–5 times a week"), and only respondents who provided complete data for all eight items (n = 32) were included in the analysis. Cronbach's alpha was .85, indicating strong internal consistency. While 32 teachers completed all eight weekly-scaled items,

individual implementation items had higher response counts and were analyzed separately in subsequent sections to maximize the use of available data.

As shown in Figure 7, the frequency of implementation varied across the eight NAGC-aligned practices. Flexible grouping (n = 53) was reported as the most frequently implemented strategy, with 40.7% of teachers indicating use 4–5 times per week and 35.2% selecting 1–3 times per week. Content acceleration (n = 48) followed closely, with 14.6% implementing it 4–5 times per week and 37.5% using it 1–3 times per week.

Figure 7

Teacher Implementation Frequency of NAGC Best Practice



Note. Values represent the percentage of teachers who reported implementing each practice at the specified frequency. Professional development was measured on an annual scale. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding or item nonresponse.

Enrichment (n = 46) was also commonly used, with 15.2% of teachers reporting 4–5 weekly uses, 34.8% selecting 1–3 times weekly, and another 34.8% indicating use 1–3 times per month. Pacing (n = 49) was reported by 18.4% of respondents as being used 4–5 times per week, while 30.6% used it 1–3 times weekly and 26.5% used it 1–3 times monthly.

Differentiation (n = 50) showed a different pattern, with fewer teachers reporting frequent use. Only 12.0% implemented it 4–5 times per week, and 24.0% selected 1–3 times per week. The most commonly selected response was 1–3 times per month (42.0%), with an additional 20.0% reporting use less than once per month.

Formative assessment (n = 48) was used by 10.4% of teachers 4–5 times per week, 14.6% 1–3 times per week, and 50.0% 1–3 times per month. A smaller portion used it less than monthly (16.7%), and 8.3% of teachers reported never implementing it.

Family involvement (n = 48) had lower reported frequency overall. Only 6.4% of teachers reported using it 4–5 times per week, and 10.6% selected 1–3 times per week. The majority reported using it either less than once per month (38.3%) or never (12.8%).

Grade-level acceleration (n = 37) was the least frequently implemented practice. Only 8.1% reported using it 4–5 times per week, and 13.5% used it 1–3 times per week; 45.6% of respondents indicated they had never used this strategy, the highest "never" rate among all practices.

The ninth practice, professional development (n = 45), was measured on a different annual scale and is shown in the lower portion of Figure 7. The majority of respondents (71.1%) reported receiving no gifted-related professional development during the current school year. Smaller proportions reported attending one session (13.3%), two sessions (11.1%), three sessions (2.2%), or four or more sessions (2.2%).

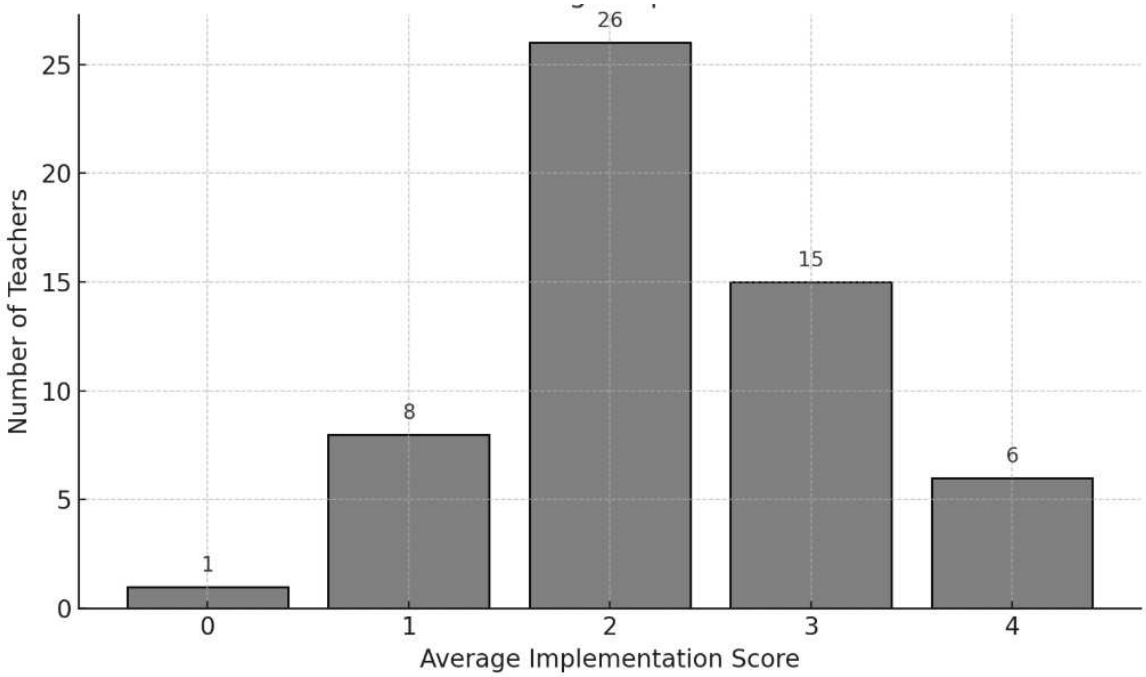
These results suggest that while strategies such as flexible grouping, enrichment, and content acceleration are relatively common in classrooms, other practices, particularly grade-level acceleration, family involvement, and professional development, are implemented less frequently.

To provide a broader view of implementation trends, each teacher's average implementation score was calculated by converting frequency responses to a numerical scale from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("4–5 times per week") and averaging across only the implementation items that each teacher answered (maximum of 8). Blank responses were excluded from individual averages, so the denominator for each teacher varied depending on how many items they completed.

Figure 8 shows the most common average score was 2, representing moderate monthly use (1–3 times per month), reported by 26 teachers. Another 15 teachers had an average score of 3, indicating weekly implementation of most strategies. Eight teachers averaged 1, reflecting less consistent or minimal monthly use. Six teachers reported an average of 4, suggesting nearly daily implementation across the practices they responded to. Only 1 teacher had an average score of 0, indicating they did not report using any of the eight classroom-based gifted instructional practices.

Figure 8

Distribution of Average Implementation Scores



Note. Average implementation scores were calculated by converting each frequency response to a numerical value from 0 (“Never”) to 4 (“4–5 times per week”) and averaging only the non-blank responses for each teacher. As such, the number of practices included in each teacher's average varied based on response completeness.

This distribution underscores the variability in how consistently NAGC-aligned practices are embedded across classrooms. While some teachers report frequent, high-level implementation, others indicate limited engagement. These patterns offer essential context for examining how teacher beliefs may correspond with implementation trends, as explored in the next section.

Research Question 3: Relationship Between Perceptions and Implementation

The third research question asked: *What is the relationship between K–3 teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned best practices and their frequency of implementation?* This question examined whether teachers who viewed a strategy as effective were more likely to integrate it regularly into their classroom instruction. To

explore this relationship, the survey included paired items for each of nine NAGC-aligned gifted education strategies: flexible grouping, formative assessment, differentiation, pacing, enrichment, content acceleration, grade-level acceleration, family involvement, and professional development. Teachers first indicated whether they believed a strategy was effective. Those who responded "Yes" were then presented with a follow-up question asking how frequently they implemented that strategy.

Implementation frequency was reported on a five-point scale ranging from "Never" to "4–5 times per week," with a modified annual scale for professional development (ranging from "Never" to "4 or more times this year"). Because only participants who believed a strategy was effective were asked about implementation, analyses were conducted on subgroups for each strategy. Table 4 displays the percentage of teachers who endorsed the effectiveness of each strategy, along with the distribution of reported implementation frequencies among those respondents.

Table 4

Teacher Belief Agreement and Frequency of Implementation of Best Practices

Practice	Belief Agreement (%)	High Freq (4–5x/wk or 4+/yr) (%)	Moderate Freq (1–3x/wk or 2–3x/yr) (%)	Monthly Freq (1–3x/mo or 1/yr) (%)	Rarely/Never (%)
Flexible Grouping	96.6	40.7	35.2	20.4	3.8
Formative Assessment	92.3	12.5	17.5	60.0	10.0
Differentiation	100.0	15.0	30.0	52.5	2.5
Pacing	81.7	23.1	38.5	33.3	5.1
Enrichment	95.8	17.5	40.0	40.0	2.5
Content Acceleration	100.0	17.5	45.0	37.5	0.0
Grade-Level Acceleration	77.1	9.1	15.2	21.2	54.5
Family Involvement	100.0	10.3	17.2	51.7	20.7
Professional Development	95.7	2.2	13.3	11.1	71.1

Note. Values reflect the percentage of teachers who agreed each practice was effective (Belief Agreement), followed by the frequency of use among those who endorsed the practice, so the sample size (n) varies slightly by strategy. Frequency categories were collapsed into four bands for clarity: high (4–5x/week or 4+/yr), moderate (1–3x/week or 2–3x/yr), monthly (1–3x/month or 1x/yr), and rarely/never.

As shown in Table 4, belief in the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned practices was consistently high among participating teachers. Belief agreement reached 100.0% for differentiation, content acceleration, and family involvement, while flexible grouping (96.6%), enrichment (95.8%), professional development (95.7%), and formative assessment (92.3%) also received strong support. Pacing was endorsed by 81.7% of respondents, and grade-level acceleration received the lowest level of agreement at 77.1%.

Implementation frequency varied across strategies, even among those who expressed belief in their effectiveness. For flexible grouping, 40.7% of teachers used it 4–5 times per week, 35.2% 1–3 times per week, 20.4% 1–3 times per month, and only 3.8% used it rarely or never. Content acceleration was used 4–5 times weekly by 17.5%, 1–3 times weekly by 45.0%, and 1–3 times monthly by 37.5%; no respondents reported rarely or never using it.

Enrichment was implemented 4–5 times per week by 17.5%, 1–3 times per week by 40.0%, and 1–3 times per month by another 40.0%, with 2.5% reporting rare or no use. For pacing, 23.1% of teachers used it at high frequency, 38.5% at moderate frequency, 33.3% monthly, and 5.1% rarely or never.

While differentiation had full belief agreement, its implementation was spread across categories: 15.0% reported high-frequency use, 30.0% moderate use, and 52.5% used it monthly. Only 2.5% reported rarely or never implementing it.

Formative assessment showed a concentration in monthly use (60.0%), with 12.5% reporting high-frequency use, 17.5% moderate use, and 10.0% rarely or never using it. Family involvement was implemented frequently by a smaller group, with 10.3% using it 4–5 times per week and 17.2% 1–3 times per week. Over half of respondents (51.7%) reported using it monthly, and 20.7% indicated rare or no use.

Grade-level acceleration was used 4–5 times weekly by 9.1%, 1–3 times weekly by 15.2%, and 1–3 times monthly by 21.2%, while 54.5% of respondents reported rarely or never using the strategy.

Professional development was the least frequently implemented strategy despite high belief agreement. Only 2.2% of respondents reported participating in four or more

sessions, 13.3% attended two to three sessions, 11.1% participated once during the year, and 71.1% reported no participation.

To further examine instructional patterns, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using teacher-reported frequencies of implementing the eight NAGC-aligned strategies measured on a weekly scale. Professional development was excluded from this analysis, as it was assessed using an annual frequency scale and was not directly comparable to the weekly implementation items.

Correlation coefficients were calculated based on teachers who both endorsed the effectiveness of each strategy and provided valid implementation responses. Frequency data were converted to a 5-point ordinal scale to allow for statistical analysis, where higher values represented more frequent implementation:

- 4 = 4–5 times per week
- 3 = 1–3 times per week
- 2 = 1–3 times per month
- 1 = less than once per month
- 0 = never

Pairwise deletion was used to maximize the use of available data, as only 32 teachers provided complete responses for all eight belief and implementation items. This approach allowed each correlation to be calculated using the maximum number of valid responses available for that pair of practices, with sample sizes ranging from 45 to 47. While this method results in varying n values across comparisons, it increases statistical power and inclusivity, which is especially important in studies with moderate sample

sizes. All correlations should be interpreted descriptively, as the analysis was exploratory in nature.

As shown in Table 5, several pairs of practices demonstrated statistically significant moderate to strong positive correlations based on teacher-reported implementation frequency. The strongest relationships were observed between differentiation and pacing ($r = .87$, $p < .001$), enrichment and content acceleration ($r = .82$, $p < .001$), and differentiation and content acceleration ($r = .82$, $p < .001$). Other notable correlations included pacing and content acceleration ($r = .81$, $p < .001$), enrichment and pacing ($r = .76$, $p < .001$), and family involvement and grade-level acceleration ($r = .71$, $p < .001$). All observed correlations were positive, indicating that teachers who reported implementing one NAGC-aligned strategy more frequently also tended to implement others more frequently. This clustering may reflect consistent instructional habits or a broader commitment to gifted education strategies. Because pairwise deletion was used to maximize inclusion, sample sizes for each correlation varied ($n = 44$ to 48), and results are best interpreted descriptively rather than inferentially.

Table 5

Pairwise Correlations Among Implementation of NAGC Best Practices

Practice Pair	r	p-value	n
Differentiation & Family Involvement	0.30	0.0427	46
Pacing & Enrichment	0.53	0.0002	45
Pacing & Content Acceleration	0.48	0.0007	47
Pacing & Grade-Level Acceleration	0.50	0.0021	46
Flexible Grouping & Formative Assessment	0.48	0.0002	47
Flexible Grouping & Differentiation	0.63	0.0000	47

Note. All correlations reflect pairwise comparisons based on teacher-reported frequency of implementation on a 0–4 ordinal scale. Sample sizes (*n*) vary due to pairwise deletion. Professional development was excluded due to its use of an annual frequency scale. Results are descriptive.

To explore whether teachers who perceive NAGC-aligned practices as effective were more likely to implement them in their classrooms, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. This analysis aimed to examine the relationship between belief and behavior using aggregate scores for each respondent. Each teacher's average belief score was calculated by coding "Yes" responses to the nine NAGC-aligned strategies as 1 and "No" responses as 0, then averaging across all available belief items. Each teacher's average implementation score was computed by assigning a value from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("4–5 times per week") to the eight instructional practices measured on a weekly basis, then averaging across available responses. The professional development item was excluded due to its annual frequency scale.

Teachers were included in this analysis if they provided at least one valid belief response and one valid implementation response. Using this partial-response method, n = 56 teachers were included in the final analysis. The Pearson correlation coefficient between average belief and average implementation scores was r = .06, indicating virtually no linear relationship between how strongly teachers believed in the NAGC-aligned practices and how frequently they reported implementing them.

This result suggests that, within this sample, teachers' endorsement of NAGC-aligned strategies as effective did not strongly predict the frequency with which they used those strategies in their classrooms. While belief scores were generally high across participants, implementation scores varied more widely. The weak correlation underscores that agreement with a strategy's value does not consistently translate into regular classroom use. These results reinforce earlier analyses in this chapter, emphasizing the disconnect between teacher belief and actual implementation.

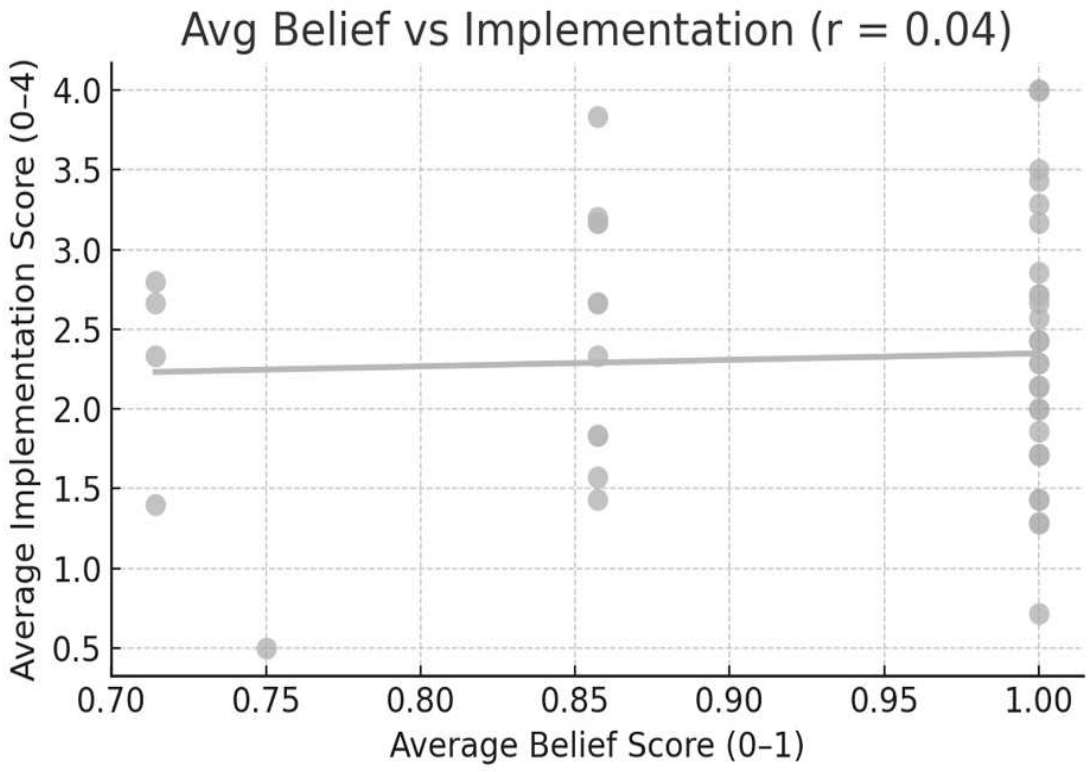
Figure 9 displays the scatterplot of average belief and implementation scores for the 54 teachers included in the correlation analysis. These participants were selected using a partial-response approach to maximize inclusion: teachers were retained if they provided at least one valid response on the nine belief items and one valid response on the eight weekly-measured implementation items. Belief scores were calculated by coding each “Yes” response as 1 and each “No” as 0, then averaging across available items for each participant. Implementation scores were calculated by assigning values from 0 (“Never”) to 4 (“4–5 times per week”) and averaging across the eight weekly practices. The professional development item was excluded from the implementation average due to its distinct annual frequency scale.

Each point on the scatterplot represents a single teacher's composite belief and implementation scores. As shown, belief scores were generally high, indicating widespread endorsement of the NAGC-aligned strategies. In contrast, implementation scores were more dispersed, ranging from infrequent to near-daily use of the practices. The scatterplot (Figure 9) reveals no discernible linear pattern, which aligns with the Pearson correlation result (r = .06), suggesting virtually no relationship between teachers' endorsement of gifted strategies and how often they implement them. These findings further support the notion that believing a strategy is effective does not necessarily lead to consistent classroom use.

Figure 9

Relationship Between Average Teacher Beliefs and Average Implementation

.06



To further assess the relationship between teachers' beliefs and implementation patterns, a Spearman rank-order correlation was conducted using each teacher's average belief score (based on the eight NAGC-aligned practices with frequency scales) and their average implementation score. The resulting Spearman correlation was $rs = -.03$, $p = .83$, no monotonic relationship between teachers' beliefs and their frequency of implementation, consistent with the weak Pearson correlation earlier.

This result suggests that belief rankings and implementation rankings did not meaningfully align within the sample. Some teachers with high belief scores reported low implementation frequency, while others with lower belief scores reported more frequent implementation. The lack of a statistically significant relationship provides descriptive evidence that belief and practice levels varied independently among teachers in this sample.

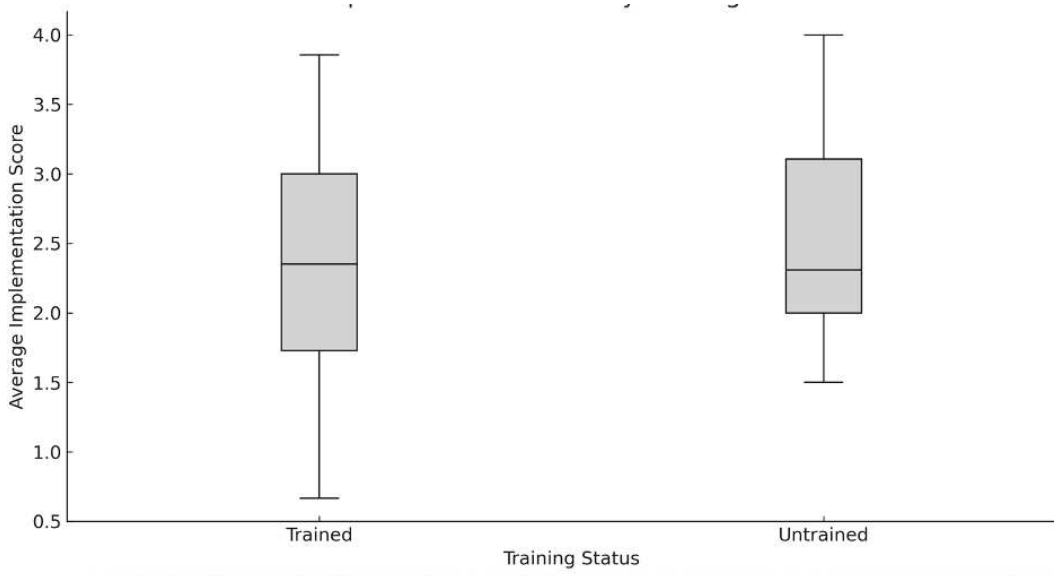
To examine whether gifted education training was associated with higher implementation of NAGC-aligned strategies, an inde*p*endent-samples *t*-test was conducted using the subset of 54 teachers who provided valid responses for at least one belief item and one implementation item. Teachers were categorized based on their response to the background item on gifted education experience. Those who indicated any formal preparation—such as completing the Georgia Gifted Endorsement, passing the Georgia Assessment for the Certification of Educators (GACE) gifted education assessment, completing undergraduate or graduate coursework in gifted education, or participating in professional development related to gifted education—were classified as trained ($n = 24$). Teachers who selected only "No formal background but experience teaching gifted students" were classified as untrained ($n = 22$).

Each teacher's implementation score was calculated as the average of their responses to eight NAGC-aligned strategies measured on a weekly frequency scale ranging from 0 ("Never") to 4 ("4–5 times per week"). The item on professional development was excluded from this analysis due to its annual scale, which was not comparable to the weekly-use items.

Results revealed no statistically significant difference in implementation scores between trained ($M = 2.15$) and untrained ($M = 2.28$) teachers, $t\ (44) = –0.54$, $p = .589$. The effect size was small (Cohen's $d = –0.16$), indicating minimal practical difference between the groups. A boxplot of average implementation scores by training status is presented in Figure 10. The boxplot shows considerable overlap in scores between trained and untrained teachers, consistent with the results of the independent-samples *t*-test indicating no statistically significant difference in implementation frequency based on training background.

Figure 10

Implementation Scores by Gifted Training Status



The boxplot in Figure 10 highlights several visual patterns in implementation behavior by training status. The interquartile range was slightly wider among trained teachers, suggesting greater variability in their reported implementation levels. The untrained group showed a slightly higher median but a more compact distribution. Both groups included individual outliers, and there was a substantial overlap in the overall spread of values. These visual features reinforce that teachers across both categories reported a range of implementation frequencies, and that no clear separation between groups was evident based on the distribution alone.

While the patterns above provide descriptive insight into teacher training and implementation, the results should be interpreted in view of the study's statistical power. Based on a G*Power analysis, the available sample size ($n = 46$) was sufficient to detect moderate to large effects (Cohen's $d = 0.65$) with 80% power but was underpowered to identify small effects (e.g., $d = 0.20–0.40$). Therefore, while the observed non-significant result suggests minimal group differences, the small effect size should be interpreted as exploratory rather than conclusive. Additional research with a larger sample would be needed to determine whether formal gifted education training meaningfully influences implementation of NAGC-aligned strategies.

More broadly, teachers in this sample reported strong agreement with the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned practices, with several strategies receiving unanimous support. However, implementation frequency varied, and both the Pearson ($r = .04$) and Spearman ($rs = –.03$) correlations revealed no statistically significant relationship between beliefs and usage. Similarly, the difference in implementation scores between trained and untrained teachers was not statistically significant ($t\ (44) = –0.54$, $p = .589$),

with a small effect size (Cohen's $d = -0.16$). These findings suggest that while teachers generally value gifted education practices, other factors may influence whether those practices are regularly applied in classrooms. These potential influences, including confidence, access to resources, and administrative support, are explored further in the barriers analysis presented in Research Question 4.

Research Question 4: Barriers to Implementation and Perceived Student Outcomes

The fourth research question asked: *What barriers, if any, do K-3 teachers in rural South Georgia RESA perceive as preventing the implementation of NAGC-aligned best practices, or what student outcomes do they perceive when these practices are implemented*? To address this question, the study first examined which barriers teachers reported when using specific practices infrequently, followed by the perceived student outcomes when those practices were implemented more regularly. To answer this question, survey respondents were first asked how frequently they implemented each of eight NAGC-aligned instructional practices. Teachers who reported using a strategy "less than once per month" or "never" were presented with a follow-up item listing potential barriers to implementation. This skip logic ensured that barrier data reflected teachers with limited or no usage of a given practice.

For Practices 1 through 8—Flexible Grouping, Formative Assessment, Differentiation, Enrichment, Content Acceleration, Grade-Level Acceleration, Family Involvement, and Pacing—teachers selected from a set list of barrier options such as these:

- lack of confidence in implementing this strategy
- lack of support from team teachers

- lack of support from administrators
- district curriculum constraints
- insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.)
- other

For the ninth practice—Professional Development—an alternate set of barrier options was presented to those who reported never participating in gifted-focused PD during the past year. These included:

- professional development opportunities in gifted education were not offered at my school or district
- lack of relevance of available opportunities to my teaching needs
- the cost of participating in professional development was prohibitive
- my workload or teaching schedule made it difficult to participate
- I did not feel professional development in gifted education was necessary for my role
- other

Table 6 summarizes the number of teachers who identified a barrier for each practice and the top three most frequently reported barriers.

Table 6

Top Three Barriers Preventing Implementation of Best Practices

Practice	N	Barrier 1	Barrier 2	Barrier 3
Flexible Grouping	2	Insufficient resources (50%)	Lack of admin support (50%)	NA
Formative Assessment	12	Insufficient resources (83.3%)	Curriculum constraints (25%)	Other (25%)
Differentiation	11	Insufficient resources (100%)	Curriculum constraints (18.2%)	Lack of confidence (18.2%) Lack of admin support (18.2%)
Pacing	12	Insufficient resources (83.3%)	Curriculum constraints (41.7%)	Lack of confidence (16.7%)
Enrichment	7	Insufficient resources (100%)	Lack of confidence (42.9%)	Curriculum constraints (28.6%)
Content Acceleration	8	Insufficient resources (87.5%)	Lack of admin support (25%)	Curriculum constraints (12.5%) Lack of confidence (12.5%)
Grade-Level Acceleration	22	Insufficient resources (81.8%)	Curriculum constraints (31.8%)	Lack of confidence (27.3%)
Family Involvement	23	Insufficient resources (65.2%)	Other (34.8%)	Lack of confidence (13%)
Professional Development	32	Not offered at school/district (59.4%)	Existing workload (18.8%)	Not relevant (18.8%)

Note. Table presents the three most frequently cited barriers for each NAGC-aligned best practice among teachers who reported implementing the practice less than once per week. Percentages reflect the proportion of respondents selecting each barrier for the given practice.

Table 6 presents the three most frequently selected barriers for each of the nine NAGC-aligned practices. Percentages were calculated based on the number of

respondents who answered each barrier item. Across all practices, insufficient resources emerged as the most commonly reported barrier. This was cited as the top barrier for all eight classroom-based instructional strategies. It was selected by 100% of respondents for both differentiation (11 of 11 teachers) and enrichment (7 of 7), and by over 80% for pacing (83.3%), formative assessment (83.3%), content acceleration (87.5%), and grade-level acceleration (81.8%).

Curriculum constraints appeared frequently as a second or third barrier, cited by 41.7% of teachers implementing pacing, 31.8% of those using grade-level acceleration, and to a lesser extent for content acceleration and enrichment. Lack of confidence was also a recurring barrier, particularly for enrichment (42.9%), grade-level acceleration (27.3%), and pacing (16.7%). A few practices, such as flexible grouping and content acceleration, also had teachers report lack of administrative support as a top barrier.

Family involvement showed a slightly different pattern, with 65.2% of respondents citing insufficient resources and 34.8% selecting “other” as a primary barrier. Compared to instructional practices, this suggests a more diverse range of obstacles in engaging families.

The most distinct barrier profile was found in professional development, which used a different set of barrier options. Among the 32 respondents to this item, 59.4% indicated that gifted PD was not offered at their school or district. Additionally, 18.8% reported that their workload prevented participation, and another 18.8% found available offerings not relevant. These responses suggest that for many teachers, barriers to professional development are rooted in systemic availability rather than personal resistance or disinterest.

In addition to identifying barriers, Research Question 4 also explored the perceived outcomes of implementing NAGC-aligned gifted education strategies. Teachers who reported using each strategy at least once per month were presented with a follow-up item asking them to select benefits they had observed because of implementation. This approach ensured that outcome data reflected the experiences of educators with direct, regular use of the practice.

For Practices 1 through 8—Flexible Grouping, Formative Assessment, Differentiation, Enrichment, Content Acceleration, Grade-Level Acceleration, Family Involvement, and Pacing—teachers selected from the following outcome options such as these:

- developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs
- demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning
- produced higher-quality or more advanced work
- demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems
- engaged more actively in the classroom
- demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills
- gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment
- achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks
- other

For Professional Development, respondents selected from a parallel list of teacher-centered outcomes:

- increased my confidence in implementing gifted education strategies
- improved my ability to differentiate curriculum and instruction

- enhanced my ability to assess effectively
- gained skills to address the social-emotional needs of gifted students
- gained strategies to advocate for equity in gifted education
- other

Table 7 below summarizes the number of respondents (n) for each practice and the three most frequently endorsed outcomes:

Table 7

Top Three Student Outcomes Perceived from Implementation of Best Practices

Practice	n	Top Outcome 1	Top Outcome 2	Top Outcome 3
Flexible Grouping	49	Higher quality work (77.6%)	Persistence (73.5%)	Deeper understanding (69.4%)
Formative Assessment	35	Deeper understanding (74.3%)	Higher assessment performance (65.7%)	Persistence (62.9%)
Differentiation	38	Persistence (68.4%)	Active engagement (65.8%)	Passion for learning (65.8%) Higher quality work (65.8%)
Pacing	37	Higher quality work (81.1%)	Active engagement (73%)	Deeper understanding (70.3%)
Enrichment	39	Deeper understanding (71.8%)	Passion for learning (69.2%)	Higher quality work (64.1%) Persistence (64.1%)
Content Acceleration	33	Higher quality work (72.7%)	Deeper understanding (72.7%)	Higher assessment performance (66.7%)
Grade-Level Acceleration	15	Higher quality work (93.3%)	Deeper understanding (86.7%)	Higher assessment performance (73.3%) Active engagement (73.3%)
Family Involvement	23	Higher quality work (100%)	Parent-student-teacher support (87%)	Deeper understanding (65.2%) Active engagement (65.2%) Self-advocacy skills (65.2%)
Professional Development	13	Confidence in implementation (76.9%)	Assess effectively (76.9%)	Improved differentiation (61.5%)

Note. Table presents the three most frequently cited outcomes for each practice among teachers who reported using the practice at least once per month. If third outcomes were tied, all were reported. Percentages reflect the proportion of respondents selecting each outcome.

Across nearly all practices, “higher quality work” was among the most frequently cited outcomes. It was reported by 77.6% of teachers using flexible grouping, 81.1% for pacing, 72.7% for content acceleration, and 100% of those implementing family involvement. It was also cited by over 90% of teachers who used grade-level acceleration (93.3%). This outcome appeared consistently across strategies, suggesting a pattern in perceived student performance gains.

“Deeper understanding” also emerged frequently as a top outcome, particularly for formative assessment (74.3%), enrichment (71.8%), pacing (70.3%), and content acceleration (72.7%). It was reported by over 85% of respondents using grade-level acceleration (86.7%) and by 65.2% of those engaging in family involvement.

“Persistence” appeared as a common outcome for differentiation (68.4%), flexible grouping (73.5%), and formative assessment (62.9%). Similarly, “active engagement” was among the top three outcomes for pacing (73%), differentiation (65.8%), and grade-level acceleration (73.3%).

Several practices also reflected outcomes related to “passion for learning”—particularly enrichment (69.2%) and differentiation (65.8%). Additionally, for family involvement, teachers most frequently reported parent-student-teacher support (87.0%), and they also cited self-advocacy skills and active engagement (both 65.2%).

For professional development, outcomes differed in nature. Among the 13 teachers who responded, the most frequently reported impacts included increased confidence in implementation (76.9%), improved ability to assess effectively (76.9%), and enhanced differentiation practices (61.5%).

Taken together, these findings suggest that when NAGC-aligned practices are implemented, teachers observe a range of academic and affective outcomes in gifted learners. Across most practices, “higher quality work” and “deeper understanding” were among the most frequently reported outcomes. For example, 93.3% of teachers implementing grade-level acceleration and 81.1% using pacing reported higher quality work, while deeper understanding was noted by over 70% of teachers using enrichment (71.8%), content acceleration (72.7%), and formative assessment (74.3%).

Engagement-related outcomes were also reported frequently. “Active engagement” was identified by 73.3% of grade-level acceleration respondents and over 65% of those using pacing and differentiation. “Passion for learning” appeared most commonly in enrichment and differentiation. Persistence was another notable outcome, especially for flexible grouping (73.5%) and differentiation (68.4%).

In addition to instructional practices, outcomes tied to family involvement included both academic and social-emotional growth. Every respondent (100%) who selected family involvement reported higher quality work, and over 85% reported increased parent-student-teacher support. Teachers also cited development of self-advocacy skills and deeper understanding as prominent results of family engagement.

Reported outcomes from professional development reflected internal teacher growth, with 76.9% of respondents citing increased confidence and improved assessment ability. Overall, these patterns show that teachers who implement NAGC-aligned strategies associate them with a range of positive outcomes, both academic and affective, across instructional and support-based contexts.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV presents the findings of a quantitative study examining K–3 general education teachers' perceptions and classroom implementation of NAGC-aligned best practices for gifted education within a rural South Georgia RESA. The analysis focused on 60 teachers who confirmed having at least one formally identified gifted student during the 2024–2025 academic year.

Findings are structured around the study's four research questions. Descriptive statistics indicated overwhelmingly positive teacher perceptions regarding the effectiveness of nine NAGC-aligned strategies. Differentiation, content acceleration, and family involvement were universally endorsed, while grade-level acceleration received the least agreement (77.1%).

Implementation frequency varied by strategy. Flexible grouping, enrichment, and content acceleration were most frequently used, while grade-level acceleration, family involvement, and participation in gifted-related professional development were implemented less often. Cronbach's alpha (.85) supported strong internal consistency across implementation items, yet average implementation scores revealed substantial variability in usage among respondents.

Analysis of belief-to-practice alignment revealed a weak correlation between perceived effectiveness and implementation frequency (r = .06, rs = –.03). Additionally, no significant difference was found in implementation between teachers with and without formal gifted education training, suggesting belief in effectiveness does not necessarily predict practice.

Barriers to implementation were most commonly attributed to insufficient resources across all strategies. Other barriers included curriculum constraints, lack of confidence, and limited administrative support. Teachers also reported student outcomes associated with the implementation of NAGC-aligned practices. “Higher-quality work,” “deeper understanding,” and “persistence” were the most frequently cited benefits, while professional development yielded increased teacher confidence and improved assessment skills.

Taken together, the results suggest that while K–3 teachers in this rural RESA strongly value NAGC-aligned gifted education practices and observe positive outcomes when these strategies are implemented, actual classroom use is often limited by constraints such as time, resources, and access to targeted professional development. These contextual barriers appear to significantly influence whether teachers are able to act on their beliefs. Chapter V will further interpret these findings and explore their implications for educational policy, school-level support systems, and professional learning opportunities for early elementary educators.

Chapter V

Discussion and Implications

This chapter presents an interpretation of the study's key findings in the context of existing literature on gifted education. Building on the survey data collected from K–3 general education teachers within a rural South Georgia RESA, the chapter explores how teacher beliefs, implementation patterns, and perceived barriers align with previous research on NAGC-aligned best practices. The purpose is to move beyond reporting results and examine what the data suggest about classroom realities for K-3 teachers who serve gifted students. Major themes are discussed in relation to their practical significance, followed by an overview of the study's limitations, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research. The goal of this chapter is to provide a thoughtful synthesis that can inform ongoing efforts to strengthen gifted services in general education classrooms.

Themes

Gaps Between Agreement with Best Practices and Implementation

While teacher belief in the effectiveness of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices was overwhelmingly strong, the frequency of implementation was markedly lower across most strategies. As detailed in Chapter 4, 100% of surveyed teachers agreed that differentiation, content acceleration, and family involvement were effective practices for supporting gifted learners. Similarly high endorsement rates were found for pacing (98.0%), flexible grouping (96.6%), enrichment (95.8%), professional development

(95.7%), and formative assessment (92.3%). Grade-level acceleration received the lowest belief rating, though still supported by 77.1% of respondents. These results reflect a philosophical alignment with the National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC, 2019) position that multiple instructional strategies are necessary to meet the diverse academic and social-emotional needs of gifted students.

Despite this broad agreement, the reported frequency of classroom use suggested significant implementation gaps. Flexible grouping, while the most frequently applied strategy, was used at least weekly by only 75.9% of respondents. Content acceleration and enrichment were each implemented weekly by approximately half of the teachers surveyed (52.1% and 50.0%, respectively). Differentiation, though universally endorsed, was used weekly by only 36.0% of respondents. Pacing (49.0%) and formative assessment (25.0%) also showed limited weekly implementation. The most pronounced discrepancy was seen in grade-level acceleration: although over three-fourths of teachers agreed with its effectiveness, only 21.6% reported implementing it weekly, and 54.5% indicated they rarely or never used it. Family involvement, also endorsed by 100% of respondents, was implemented weekly by just 17.0% of participants. Professional development showed the largest overall gap, with 95.7% of teachers affirming its importance yet 71.1% reporting no engagement in gifted-related professional development during the academic year.

This disconnect between belief and practice mirrors earlier research by Johnsen and Kaul (2019), who found that teachers frequently express support for gifted education strategies but implement them inconsistently. These findings are further supported by VanTassel-Baska and Hubbard (2016), who noted that even when teachers demonstrate

philosophical agreement with differentiation and acceleration, they often face challenges translating that agreement into daily instruction. Several factors may contribute to this implementation lag, including resource limitations, curricular pacing pressures, and lack of administrative support—barriers confirmed in this study's data and elaborated in the next section.

Moreover, this pattern aligns with Swanson et al. (2022), who emphasized that without access to targeted training and systemic support, teachers may struggle to consistently integrate best practices, even when they believe in their effectiveness. The present findings suggest that belief alone is not sufficient to drive instructional change. Teachers in this rural South Georgia RESA appear eager to support their gifted learners, but practical constraints must be addressed before that intent can be fully realized in classroom practice. While this gap between belief and implementation was evident across nearly all NAGC-aligned strategies, further insights emerged when examining the types of student outcomes teachers observed—and how those outcomes related to their patterns of implementation.

Teachers' Perceived Outcomes Reinforced the Value of Implementation

These findings expand on Research Question 4 by illustrating the academic and affective outcomes K–3 teachers perceived as resulting from their implementation of NAGC-aligned gifted education strategies. Although implementation frequency varied, teachers who reported regular use of these practices consistently identified meaningful benefits for their gifted students. These outcomes offer compelling support for the practical value of NAGC-recommended approaches and reinforce the importance of moving beyond theoretical agreement toward sustained classroom application.

The most commonly reported outcomes were increased engagement, improved persistence, deeper understanding, and higher-quality academic work. Differentiation, in particular, was frequently associated with enhanced responsiveness to student needs, motivation, and achievement. Teachers described how tailoring instruction helped gifted students remain challenged and focused during core instruction—a finding consistent with NAGC's (2019) position that curriculum modifications are essential for gifted learners to thrive. These benefits were also frequently reported for flexible grouping and pacing strategies, which were linked to improved engagement and cognitive growth.

Enrichment opportunities emerged as another critical driver of positive student outcomes. Teachers cited greater curiosity, passion for learning, and intellectual depth when students were offered project-based extensions, choice-based tasks, or opportunities to explore advanced content. This aligns with research by Reis and Renzulli (2016), who emphasized that enrichment promotes cognitive stimulation and intrinsic motivation among gifted learners.

Importantly, affective outcomes were emphasized alongside academic growth. Teachers described students as more confident, more self-directed, and more socially engaged when NAGC-aligned practices were consistently implemented. This is particularly notable given concerns that gifted students may experience social-emotional challenges such as underachievement, isolation, or disengagement in general education settings (Speirs Neumeister, 2007). Family involvement—although less frequently implemented—was associated with several affective gains, including increased self-advocacy skills and stronger parent-student-teacher connections. Similarly, teachers who

had engaged in gifted-related professional development cited greater confidence in their own instructional practices and improved differentiation and assessment skills.

While these outcomes cannot be empirically verified through this study's design, the consistency of such observations across participants adds qualitative weight to the quantitative results. The alignment between teachers perceived benefits and their reported use of specific strategies strengthens the case for promoting broader implementation of NAGC-aligned practices in early elementary classrooms.

However, the absence of reported outcomes for certain practices—particularly grade-level acceleration—may point to gaps in use, understanding, or institutional support. Although over three-fourths of teachers viewed grade-level acceleration as effective, fewer than one in five reported implementing it weekly, and the strategy was rarely linked to observed student outcomes. This pattern may reflect limited district guidance, hesitancy around promoting students, or lack of confidence in managing accelerated placements (Colangelo et al., 2004).

Overall, the findings suggest that when implemented, NAGC-aligned practices support both the academic development and emotional well-being of gifted learners in general education classrooms; this is consistent with research linking gifted instructional practices to improved academic and socio-emotional outcomes (Redding & Grissom, 2021). Despite these reported benefits, teachers frequently cited specific challenges that prevented consistent implementation across strategies—barriers that varied depending on the type of practice. These dual benefits highlight the need for school systems to address structural barriers, such as limited planning time, rigid curricula, and insufficient training opportunities, that currently limit implementation. Prior studies note that the early

elementary years are critical for gifted learners and that teachers need adequate training and resources to serve them effectively (Matthews & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2016; Reis & Renzulli, 2016).

Barriers to Implementation Tend to Vary by Practice

While teachers in this study overwhelmingly affirmed the value of NAGC-aligned best practices, their ability to consistently implement these strategies was constrained by a range of structural, instructional, and contextual barriers. Importantly, these barriers varied across practices, highlighting the need for differentiated and targeted support. Consistent with prior research (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; VanTassel-Baska & Hubbard, 2016), the data revealed that belief in a practice's effectiveness does not guarantee its use in the classroom—particularly when teachers face systemic limitations.

Across nearly all eight classroom-based practices, insufficient resources emerged as the most commonly cited barrier. For example, 100% of respondents who used differentiation and enrichment frequently selected this barrier, along with 87.5% for content acceleration and 83.3% for both formative assessment and pacing. "Insufficient resources" encompassed lack of time, materials, and instructional flexibility, factors that, despite teacher motivation, made it difficult to consistently apply the strategies. Differentiation illustrates this tension clearly: although it received 100% belief endorsement, only 36.0% of respondents reported using it weekly, and 42.0% used it just 1–3 times per month. This reflects the reality that even when teachers feel capable and willing, external constraints like rigid pacing guides and limited planning time prevent regular implementation (Brighton et al., 2005; Reis et al., 2004).

Acceleration practices faced particularly steep barriers. While 100% of respondents agreed that content acceleration was effective, and 77.1% agreed about grade-level acceleration, only 52.1% and 21.6%, respectively, used these strategies weekly. Notably, grade-level acceleration had the highest "never used" rate of any strategy at 45.6%. For content acceleration, 87.5% of those who used it infrequently cited insufficient resources, 25.0% cited lack of administrative support, and 12.5% cited low confidence. For grade-level acceleration, 81.8% reported insufficient resources, 31.8% cited curriculum constraints, and 27.3% indicated lack of confidence. These findings support previous literature showing that acceleration remains underutilized due to perceived policy ambiguity, fear of parental resistance, and limited professional preparation (Colangelo et al., 2004).

Barriers to formative assessment were also notable. Among those who used it infrequently, 83.3% cited insufficient resources and 25.0% cited curriculum constraints. These structural challenges are likely compounded by the complex demands of classroom management and the difficulty of adjusting instruction in real time. While 92.3% of respondents believed formative assessment was effective, only 25.0% used it weekly. This gap suggests that even well-supported practices may require additional scaffolding to translate belief into action, particularly when they involve ongoing, adaptive teaching.

Professional development was the only practice where the barrier data came from all respondents who reported no use (n = 32). Of these, 59.4% indicated that gifted-focused professional learning was not offered at their school or district. An additional 18.8% cited workload conflicts, and 18.8% felt the available options were not relevant. This underscores the need not only for more accessible training opportunities but also for

professional development that is perceived as relevant, actionable, and timely (Swanson et al., 2022).

Family involvement presented a distinct barrier profile. Although it received 100% agreement as an effective strategy, only 17.0% of teachers reported weekly use, and 12.8% said they never used it. Among those who implemented it infrequently, 65.2% cited insufficient resources, 34.8% selected "other," and 13.0% reported low confidence. These barriers likely reflect broader contextual factors such as communication limitations, scheduling conflicts, or institutional structures that do not prioritize family partnerships. As emphasized by Cross (2016), engaging families in gifted education requires not just teacher initiative but systemic support from school leadership and policy.

These results reinforce that barriers to implementation are not one-size-fits-all. While time and resource limitations were widespread, practices like acceleration were more affected by policy and authority structures, whereas differentiation and enrichment were more sensitive to planning time and instructional flexibility. Family involvement, on the other hand, relied on broader school infrastructure. These nuances suggest that addressing the belief–practice gap requires tailored interventions: acceleration may benefit from clearer district policies and decision-making protocols; enrichment and differentiation call for dedicated time within the instructional day; formative assessment may require training embedded in daily routines; and family involvement efforts must be systemically supported rather than left solely to classroom teachers.

In summary, while teachers across this rural South Georgia RESA demonstrated strong belief in NAGC-aligned practices, the ability to implement them consistently was

shaped by specific and often practice-dependent barriers. These findings underscore the need for targeted professional development, strategic scheduling, and school-wide leadership support to reduce implementation obstacles and help general education teachers move from endorsement to execution in their gifted instruction.

Limitations

While this study yielded valuable insights into K–3 teachers' perceptions and use of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices in a rural South Georgia RESA, several limitations should be acknowledged to provide context for interpreting the findings.

Conceptual Clarity of Survey Items

One of the primary limitations concerns the potential variation in how participants interpreted key terminology used in the survey instrument. For instance, the term formative assessment may have been understood by some teachers in a narrow or traditional sense—such as paper-based or benchmark assessments—rather than encompassing informal, real-time instructional adjustments like monitoring student engagement or facial expressions. Similarly, professional development may have been conceptualized as only formal workshops provided by districts or the state, excluding informal learning opportunities, collaborative teacher planning, or self-directed inquiry. These interpretation discrepancies may have contributed to underreporting of practices that participants engage in but did not label as such.

Additionally, the term grade-level acceleration may have introduced ambiguity. Some teachers may have interpreted it as promoting a student to the next full grade level, which typically occurs only once per year and for a very small number of students, thereby leading them to report infrequent or no weekly implementation. Others may have

considered subject-specific acceleration (e.g., teaching a gifted second grader third-grade math), which occurs more fluidly. This lack of definitional clarity could partially explain the disparity between high belief ratings and low reported use for this practice.

This limitation aligns with concerns raised by the original researchers (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019), who also noted that survey-based research is vulnerable to variability in participants' conceptual understanding. Without a mechanism for clarifying definitions during the response process, the findings must be interpreted as reflecting participants' perceptions of the survey terms, which may differ from the definitions used in the literature or intended by the survey designers.

Self-Report and Response Patterns

All data in this study were collected through self-reported survey responses, which are inherently subject to limitations such as inaccurate recall and social desirability bias. While anonymity was preserved to encourage candor, it remains possible that participants overestimated or underestimated their use of specific practices or the outcomes observed in their students.

Additionally, although 128 teachers indicated they had at least one gifted student in their classroom, only 60 of those elected to take the survey. This low response rate limits the generalizability of findings and may introduce response bias. It is possible that those who chose to respond had stronger opinions, more experience with gifted students, or greater interest in gifted education than those who did not.

Although 60 teachers completed the survey overall, item-level response rates varied, with some participants skipping individual questions. This led to differing sample sizes across analyses and may have impacted the consistency and comparability of the

findings. Although pairwise deletion was used to preserve available data, this may affect the consistency and comparability of results across sections. Together, these factors suggest that the data may reflect general trends and perceptions rather than precise instructional frequencies or outcomes.

Limited Generalizability

The study was conducted within a single RESA region in rural South Georgia. Although this context provides valuable insight into underrepresented school communities, the findings may not be generalizable to other regions, particularly those with different demographics, resource levels, or policy structures related to gifted education. Additionally, the sample included only K–3 general education teachers who reported having at least one identified gifted student, which may limit the application of findings to other grade levels or to teachers of potentially gifted but not yet formally identified students. The distribution of participants across grade levels was also uneven, with the highest representation from third grade and lower participation from kindergarten, first, and second grades. This imbalance may affect how representative the findings are across the full K–3 spectrum.

Narrow Focus on NAGC-Aligned Practices

While the survey was designed to align with nine research-based gifted education practices recommended by the National Association for Gifted Children (n.d.), it did not capture all possible strategies used by teachers to support gifted learners. Other locally developed or teacher-initiated approaches may be in use but were not assessed. As such, the study may not reflect the full range of differentiated practices occurring in general education classrooms.

Implications

This study sought to better understand the beliefs and practices of K–3 general education teachers in a rural South Georgia RESA related to gifted education. While most participants agreed that NAGC-aligned practices are effective, implementation was often limited, particularly for strategies such as content and grade-level acceleration, enrichment, and family involvement. The data suggest that this implementation gap is not rooted in skepticism about the strategies themselves but more likely tied to contextual constraints such as time, resources, and curricular pressures (Johnsen & Kaul, 2019; Swanson et al., 2022).

Across nearly all instructional strategies, the most reported barrier was insufficient resources, including time, materials, and planning support. This barrier appeared for 100% of teachers who reported limited use of differentiation and enrichment and remained the most frequently selected barrier for content acceleration (87.5%), pacing (83.3%), and grade-level acceleration (81.8%). Curriculum constraints (e.g., pressure to follow pacing guides) and lack of confidence also emerged repeatedly, particularly for enrichment, pacing, and grade-level acceleration. These findings align with prior research identifying time, flexibility, and support as central to the effective delivery of gifted education practices (Brighton et al., 2005; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2005).

Given these findings, several implications can be cautiously offered for school leaders, RESA coordinators, and instructional support teams seeking to enhance gifted education in early elementary settings.

Teachers repeatedly cited insufficient materials (time, resources, etc.) as a key reason for not using gifted strategies more often. While the survey did not ask respondents to disaggregate this category, the phrasing suggests that a combination of planning time, access to resources, and structural flexibility may contribute to implementation challenges. One possible approach schools or districts might consider is offering opportunities for collaborative planning. For instance, teachers may benefit from time to meet with their school's gifted specialist (if one is available), collaborate with their grade-level team, or consult with teachers in the next grade level to gather ideas for content acceleration or enrichment. These types of collaborative structures could be especially helpful for practices like differentiation, enrichment, and pacing, where resource-related barriers were among the most commonly reported in this study. Research supports that peer collaboration and professional learning communities focused on gifted strategies may increase teacher confidence and implementation fidelity (Swanson et al., 2022). Because this barrier category was intentionally broad, it may be helpful for individual schools to reflect on what types of support are most needed by their teachers—whether that includes additional time, access to enrichment materials, or planning partnerships—in order to reduce implementation barriers in ways that are responsive to local context.

Several teachers in this study reported that curriculum constraints made it difficult to implement strategies such as pacing adjustments, grade-level acceleration, or content extension. This challenge may stem from uncertainty about whether and how such practices are permissible within the district's instructional framework. To address this, clearer communication around curriculum expectations could be beneficial. Targeted

professional learning may also help teachers better understand when and how to adjust instruction in ways that are both standards-aligned and responsive to student readiness. These include specific language related to NAGC-aligned gifted strategies in pacing guides or lesson planning templates which may provide teachers with both clarity and permission to adapt instruction. Encouraging flexibility for compacting or accelerating content when students demonstrate readiness and reinforcing how these practices align with, rather than oppose, standards-based instruction, could further empower teachers. Even minor adjustments in how curriculum expectations are framed may enhance teachers' confidence in applying these strategies effectively.

A notable percentage of teachers identified lack of confidence as a barrier to implementation, particularly for strategies like enrichment (42.9%), grade-level acceleration (27.3%), and pacing adjustments (16.7%). These findings suggest that professional learning focused on these areas could be especially beneficial if delivered in a way that fosters collaboration and support rather than pressure. For instance, peer observation cycles or professional learning community discussions centered on gifted strategies may help normalize their use and reduce hesitation. Research supports that embedded professional development, such as peer coaching and collaborative reflection, can increase teachers' confidence and willingness to implement gifted practices (Peters & Carter, 2022). Sample lesson demonstrations or planning walkthroughs could offer concrete examples and increase teacher comfort. Additionally, creating opportunities for teachers to experiment with these practices in low-stakes, supportive environments may gradually build confidence and lead to broader adoption. For example, teachers might be invited to pilot enrichment lessons, attempt pacing adjustments with a single unit, or co-

plan with a colleague using gifted strategies, without the pressure of formal evaluation. These informal, practice-oriented experiences allow teachers to try new approaches, reflect on outcomes, and refine their instruction based on what works for their students. These approaches emphasize teacher empowerment and professional growth by valuing educator autonomy and fostering a sense of ownership over the learning process.

Finally, the study's findings suggest that when NAGC-aligned strategies were used regularly, teachers observed a variety of positive student outcomes. These included reports of higher-quality work, deeper conceptual understanding, and increased engagement—benefits that were consistent across nearly all practices. For instance, 100% of teachers who implemented family involvement strategies reported higher-quality student work. Similarly, over 70% of those who used enrichment, formative assessment, or content acceleration observed improved student understanding. Teachers also frequently reported enhanced persistence and engagement among students when using practices such as differentiation and flexible grouping. These patterns reinforce the idea that when implementation is feasible, the instructional impact is both visible and meaningful, highlighting the importance of reducing barriers to enable broader adoption.

While this study was small in scale, these patterns may help school leaders and support personnel see where implementation is likely to yield visible student growth. Framing these practices as high-leverage strategies, based on teacher experience, could help guide future planning or support. By reducing the barriers most cited—such as insufficient resources, curriculum constraints, and lack of confidence—more teachers may be able to implement these strategies consistently. In doing so, they may also be more likely to observe the same student outcomes reported by their peers: higher-quality

work, deeper understanding, increased engagement, and stronger persistence. Implementation science research emphasizes that student outcomes depend not only on identifying effective practices but on how those practices are implemented in real-world settings; implementation outcomes must precede intervention outcomes (Blase et al., 2015). As more teachers experience these benefits firsthand, belief and practice may continue to align more closely, creating a reinforcing cycle of growth for both educators and gifted learners.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study offered a foundational look into how K–3 general education teachers within a rural South Georgia RESA perceive and implement NAGC-aligned gifted education practices. While it revealed several important trends, the findings also point to several opportunities for future exploration.

First, future research could expand the geographic scope beyond a single RESA region to examine whether similar belief–practice gaps and barrier patterns exist across other rural, suburban, or urban contexts. Comparative studies across regions or states may help determine which findings are context-specific and which are broadly applicable.

Second, researchers may consider including a larger and more balanced sample of teachers across grade levels. In this study, kindergarten teachers were underrepresented in the final sample due to Georgia's identification procedures, which often delay formal gifted designation until first grade (Georgia Department of Education, 2024). Including teachers of students considered "potentially gifted" could allow for a more inclusive understanding of early gifted education practices and how teacher perceptions form even before formal identification.

Third, future studies could use mixed-methods or qualitative designs to deepen the understanding of teacher beliefs and implementation. While this study relied on self-report survey data, interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations could provide richer insight into how teachers interpret and apply gifted education strategies in real-time. Supplementing them with in-depth interviews, teacher focus groups, or even classroom observations could reveal how teachers navigate competing demands, interpret best practices, and adapt strategies to meet student needs in real time. This combination of perspectives would offer a more layered picture of how beliefs align, or diverge, from instructional choices.

Fourth, longitudinal research could explore how professional learning interventions impact implementation over time. Studies that examine changes in practice following targeted professional development, coaching, or access to resources would be valuable in evaluating which supports most effectively bridge the gap between belief and implementation. Longitudinal data could also help identify when teachers are most receptive to change and how beliefs could evolve over time with the added support.

Finally, future researchers might explore student perspectives or outcomes more directly, particularly in relation to strategies that teachers perceive as effective. Gathering student voices or achievement data could offer a fuller picture of how gifted practices influence learning experiences and growth, especially for students in early elementary grades. For example, qualitative accounts from young learners about their engagement, challenge, or sense of belonging, alongside achievement measures, could help determine which strategies are most impactful. Exploring these outcomes, particularly in early

elementary grades, would extend the field's understanding from teacher-centered implementation to the ultimate goal of enhancing student growth and learning.

Beyond the context of K–3 gifted education, examining the relationship between teacher perceptions and implementation has broader implications for the field of education. Similar belief–practice dynamics could be relevant in areas such as literacy instruction, classroom management, and inclusive education, where teachers' attitudes and confidence strongly influence the fidelity of research-based practices. Because teacher perceptions provide a window into what is actually happening in classrooms, rather than only what is intended by curriculum or policy, insights from this study could inform professional learning and policy efforts across multiple domains. This underscores the importance of addressing teacher perceptions when promoting meaningful and sustainable instructional change.

By building on these recommendations, future research can contribute to a stronger, more actionable knowledge base—one that not only identifies challenges in gifted education but also informs solutions tailored to the needs of general education teachers and the students they serve.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Chapter V provided a comprehensive interpretation of the study's findings, emphasizing the alignment—and frequent disconnect—between teacher beliefs and the actual implementation of NAGC-aligned gifted education practices in early elementary classrooms within a rural South Georgia RESA. While survey data revealed near-universal agreement on the effectiveness of strategies such as differentiation, content acceleration, enrichment, and family involvement, the frequency of classroom application

remained notably lower. This chapter examined those implementation gaps and contextualized them within the broader literature, reinforcing previous research that highlights structural and instructional barriers as persistent obstacles to gifted education in general education settings.

The chapter also detailed how teachers perceived meaningful academic and affective outcomes for gifted learners when these practices were used regularly. Teachers described gains such as increased engagement, deeper understanding, improved persistence, and higher-quality work—particularly associated with differentiation, enrichment, and flexible grouping. Affective benefits, such as increased student confidence and self-direction, were also noted, suggesting that gifted strategies impact more than academic achievement. However, practices like grade-level acceleration and family involvement, though widely endorsed, remained underutilized and infrequently linked to outcomes, indicating potential issues with clarity, policy support, or confidence.

In its discussion of barriers, the chapter emphasized that challenges were not uniform across practices. Insufficient resources—including time, planning tools, and materials—was the most frequently reported obstacle across all instructional strategies. However, additional barriers such as curriculum rigidity, limited administrative guidance, and teacher hesitancy were more pronounced for acceleration and formative assessment. The analysis encouraged school leaders to consider targeted solutions, such as protected planning time, collaboration with gifted specialists, flexible curriculum language, and differentiated professional development opportunities. These recommendations were framed not as mandates but as supportive suggestions responsive to local needs.

The limitations section acknowledged constraints in survey design, participant interpretation of terms (e.g., formative assessment, grade-level acceleration), and reliance on self-reported data. It also noted the limited generalizability of the findings, given the study's focus on one RESA region and a sample that excluded potentially gifted students not yet formally identified.

Finally, the chapter outlined several actionable implications and directions for future research. These included the need for regionally comparative studies, inclusion of early educators working with potentially gifted learners, and mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to assess professional learning impacts and student outcomes. Overall, Chapter V moved the study from data presentation to practical application, offering a nuanced, research-informed discussion of possible ways general education teachers may be supported in strengthening gifted services for their students.

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Appendix A:

Johnsen and Kaul Study (2019)

FEATURE

Assessing Teacher Beliefs Regarding Research-Based Practices to Improve Services for GT Students

Susan K. Johnsen, PhD[1] and Corina R. Kaul, PhD[1]

Abstract: This study examined teacher beliefs regarding research-based practices in gifted education and how these beliefs or other barriers influenced the implementation of practices in their classroom. An online survey was sent to gifted education teachers in a large suburban district. The teacher belief statements were developed based on the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards*. Although a majority of the teachers agreed with the research-based belief statements, fewer implemented the practice in their classrooms frequently. If they did implement the practice, they perceived positive student outcomes. Teachers did identify these obstacles related to implementation: limited resources, training, skill level, and the school system curriculum.

Keywords: gifted education, beliefs, research-based practices, evaluation

Research-Based Practices

Research-based practices in gifted education have been identified in the *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards* (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2010). These standards include current knowledge about empirically supported instructional practices that improve the performance of gifted and talented (GT) students. Prominent among these practices are ability grouping, assessment, differentiation, acceleration, and collaboration.

> "According to the teachers who agreed with the beliefs statement, the most implemented practice was ability grouping with 48% implementing this practice weekly."

Ability Grouping

The most frequently cited elementary gifted programming model is homogeneously grouping gifted students (NAGC & The Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted [CSDPG], 2015). Frequently, students identified as gifted are cluster grouped within a classroom, across classrooms during a specific time for instruction in a specific subject area, or within a section of a course (e.g., gifted section of an Advanced Placement [AP] or honors course). Positive effects of grouping like-ability students together, however, are enhanced when the curriculum and instruction are tailored to each student within the group because of individual differences related to readiness, interests, and pacing (Brulles, Saunders, & Cohn, 2010; Gentry & Fugate, 2013; Missett, Brunner, Callahan, Moon, & Azano, 2014; Rogers, 2007).

Assessment

Formative, ongoing, or summative assessments provide important information related to (a) student readiness, (b) flexible grouping, (c) curriculum differentiation, and (d) the overall effectiveness of instructional practices (Johnsen, 2014; Kaplan, 2014; Moon, 2009). For gifted students, these assessments often need to be above level to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and have the sensitivity to assess more sophisticated products and performances to show individual growth.

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Differentiation

National resources developed to differentiate math, science, and English language arts for GT students emphasize a variety of research-based practices: pacing according to individual rates of learning, adding depth and complexity to lessons, assigning student research in areas of interest, and providing different learning experiences (Adams, Cotabish, & Ricci, 2014; Hughes-Lynch, Kettler, Shaunessy-Dedrick, & VanTassel-Baska, 2014; Johnsen, Ryser, & Assouline, 2014; Johnsen & Sheffield, 2013; VanTassel-Baska, 2013). Implementation of these practices enhances student performance in both cognitive and affective areas.

Acceleration

Acceleration is defined as an instructional intervention based on "progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than conventional" (Pressey, 1949, p. 2). It may take many forms such as continuous progress, curriculum compacting, early entrance, AP, grade skipping (Southern & Jones, 2004) and may be used in all content areas (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, 2010). Meta-analytic studies show acceleration's positive effects on GT students' achievement and attitudes toward school (Kulik & Kulik, 1982, 1992). Most researchers agree that integrating accelerative strategies into the curriculum is essential for GT students (Colangelo et al., 2010; NAGC, 2010).

Collaboration With Others

Collaboration among teachers, parents, and mentors play a crucial role in the development of a student's gifts and talents (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Worrell, 2011). Teachers need to communicate with families regarding their gifted child's strengths and needs and to structure mentorships, so that students are exposed to the knowledge base and operations in a domain (Casey, 2000; Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Mentoring should begin early and continue throughout the school years. It is particularly critical for students who are underachievers (Hébert & Olenchak, 2000).

Effects of Beliefs on Implementing Research-Based Practices

All of these practices are important in building a gifted education program that serves gifted students with a wide range of individual differences. However, even if teachers are aware of these research-based practices in gifted education, they may not translate them into their classroom learning experiences. One of the reasons for the limited implementation of best practices is teachers' beliefs. Researchers have suggested that it is difficult to modify or change deeply held belief structures (Conley & Goldman, 1995; McIntrye & Kryle, 2006; Zimmerman, 2006). If there is incongruence between professional beliefs and the teaching strategy, the teacher will not incorporate the practice into their daily classroom practices (Moon & Brighton, 2008). For example, teachers begin their teaching career with preconceived beliefs based on their observations, how they were taught, and field experiences (Goree, 2011). All of these beliefs are difficult to modify. Moreover, teachers' beliefs about their own abilities to implement the practice (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014) and their beliefs about students' abilities (Missett et al., 2014) also affect implementation. For example, Dixon et al. (2014) reported that some teachers did not differentiate because they were not comfortable with their own knowledge of teaching particular content areas and could not be flexible in adjusting their lessons—they lacked self-efficacy or beliefs about their ability to differentiate. Teachers were also less likely to differentiate if they had an orientation toward the whole class rather than individual students in the class (Missett et al., 2014). It is clear that exploring educators' beliefs is essential to improving teaching practices because certain beliefs must be embraced for successful differentiation for GT students (VanTassel-Baska, 2010).

Other Barriers to Implementing Research-Based Practices

Other reasons for not implementing best practices in gifted education are teachers' knowledge and skills (Johnsen, 2014; NAGC & CSDPG, 2015), resources and administrator support (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006), and district curriculum and policies (Latz, Speirs Neumeister, Adams, & Pierce, 2009). Teachers may not be aware of the characteristics and needs of gifted students as well as research-based instructional practices as national reports indicate that the majority of general education teachers have not received any gifted education training as part of their undergraduate program or professional development (NAGC & CSDPG, 2015). In addition, teachers need resources and time to implement differentiation such as above-level curriculum, assessments, and other materials for personalizing their instruction. Swanson (2016) reported that a powerful curriculum can transform teaching and teachers. Finally, school district and administrator support are critical in implementing education programs and services (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006). Teachers in schools where principals provide time, support, and human and material resources are more likely to implement differentiation practices. However, school districts that require teachers to use the same curriculum with strict pacing guides and close monitoring by administrators limit the teachers' ability to provide for students who have needs for above-level curriculum and faster pacing.

Aside from our previous research (Johnsen & Kaul, 2016; Kaul & Johnsen, 2016), we are unaware of other research that has described the relationships between teacher beliefs, the frequency of implementation, perceived student outcomes, and perceived barriers to implementation. Our previous research, however, included participants recruited through a state gifted advocacy group newsletter. Arguably, those respondents may have represented a group of educators that was more knowledgeable about gifted education practices and had greater

vested interest. In contrast, this study examined the perspectives of teachers from a large school district and is, therefore, likely to be more representative of educator beliefs, perceptions, and practices.

Method

Purpose of the Study

This study examined teacher beliefs regarding research-based practices in gifted education and how these beliefs or other barriers influenced the implementation of practices in their classroom. Specifically, the research questions were as follows:

- **Research Question 1:** What percentage of gifted education teachers agree with research-based gifted education practices?
- **Research Question 2:** How often do gifted education teachers implement these research-based gifted education practices?
- **Research Question 3:** What student outcomes do they perceive as resulting from implementing these practices?
- **Research Question 4:** If practices are not implemented, what are the perceived barriers?

Context for the Study

This suburban Texas school district contacted the authors regarding a district-wide evaluation to examine its gifted education program. The District enrolls more than 35,000 students from diverse backgrounds: White (33%), African American (30%), Hispanic (26%), Asian (7%), and Other (4%). The District has 23 elementary schools (K-4), six intermediate schools (5-6), six middle schools (7-8), six high schools, and three campuses with alternative options. Learning opportunities for gifted students are provided in the four foundation curricular areas, the arts, leadership, and creativity. In Grades 1-4, identified gifted students are served in cluster classrooms. Intermediate and middle school gifted students are organized in cluster groups within Pre-AP classes/teams. In high school, gifted students are served through Pre-AP and AP classes for college advancement and concurrent college enrollment.

Respondent Characteristics

Initially, 839 teachers responded to the survey. After dropping all respondents who did not respond to a minimum of three questions or who did not have experience working with GT students, the remaining 682 teachers were included in this study. At least one teacher responded from every school in the District. Of those that responded to demographic questions, 35% were teachers in elementary schools, 22% from intermediate schools, 17% from middle schools, and 26% from high schools. The majority of the teachers (73%) had been employed by the school district for 4 or more years. Ninety-two percent of teachers had 4 or more years of teaching experience, with 67% having taught gifted students for 4 or more years.

Table 1. Gifted Program Models

Program models	Teachers teach in this model (n = 494; %)
General education	74
Pre-AP classes	35
AP classes	11
Cluster classroom	9
Multigrade classes	3
Pull-out	2
School-wide enrichment	2
Resource room	1
Gifted only classes	1
Other[a]	6

Note. AP = Advanced Placement; GT = gifted and talented; ESL = English as a second language; ELL = English language learners.
[a]Other included Friday GT Club, GT advisory, ESL, ELL, intervention, inclusion, library, self-contained, or previous GT experience. As respondents could check all responses that apply, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

Almost three fourths of the teachers taught gifted students in general education classes. More than one fourth of the teachers were teaching in Pre-AP classes (35%) followed by AP classes (11%), and cluster classrooms (9%; see Table 1). Eighty-six percent of teachers responded that they had completed the required 30-clock hours in gifted education, with 80% of teachers answering that they had received, at a minimum, their 6-hr annual update. Although 10% indicated they had an undergraduate course and 12% had a graduate course in gifted education, not one teacher indicated earning a graduate degree in gifted education.

Instrument

The online survey and teacher belief statements were developed based on the NAGC (2010) *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards*. The beliefs included statements related to grouping, assessments, differentiation, acceleration, and collaboration (see Table 2 for the alignment between the NAGC standards and the teacher beliefs). Each of the 13 question sets began with a belief statement. If the teachers reported that they agreed with the belief statement, they were then asked to indicate how frequently they used the practice. If teachers indicated a belief in the practice but applied the practice less than once a month, they reported barriers to implementation; if they used the practice one or more times a month, they were asked to indicate their perception of student

Table 2. Alignment of Teacher Beliefs With NAGC (2010) Pre-K-Grade 12 Programming Standards

I believe . . .	Related NAGC standard
Grouping	
Gifted and advanced students benefit from working together in small groups with other gifted or high-ability peers.	1.3.1, 4.2.2, 5.1.3
Assessments	
Above-level formative, ongoing, and summative assessments are useful for gifted and advanced students' knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.	2.4.1, 2.4.3, 3.1.5
Rubrics need to be used to assess gifted and advanced students' products and performances.	2.4.2
Differentiation	
Gifted and advanced students benefit from conducting independent research geared to their specific interests.	1.7.1, 3.3.3, 5.1.4
Gifted and advanced students should have different learning experiences than their non-GT peers.	1.2.1, 1.6.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.5, 5.1.2
Gifted and advanced students benefit from flexible pacing appropriate to their abilities, knowledge, and skills.	3.1.6
Gifted and advanced students benefit from curriculum content that has more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum.	3.1.3, 3.1.4
Gifted and advanced students benefit when they are asked to create products that are matched to their abilities and interests.	1.7.1, 3.3.3
Acceleration	
Gifted and advanced students benefit from doing above-level work.	1.6.1, 3.1.4, 5.1.1
Gifted and advanced students benefit when they are allowed to accelerate in above-grade level content based on their individual progress.	1.6.1, 3.1.5, 3.16, 5.1.1
Gifted and advanced students benefit when placed with students in higher-grade levels as needed for acceleration within their areas of talent.	1.6.1, 5.1.1
Collaboration with others	
Gifted and advanced students benefit when a mentor or tutor provides personalized instruction in their areas of talent.	1.4.1, 3.3.2, 4.1.2, 5.1.4
It is important for teachers and parents/guardians to work together, or collaborate, to address the strengths and needs of their gifted students.	1.5.1, 2.1.2, 2.4.5, 5.3.1

Note. NAGC = National Association for Gifted Children; GT = gifted and talented.

outcomes. These outcomes were derived from the NAGC programming standards (Johnsen, 2012). Participants who did not agree with a certain belief were automatically skipped to the next belief question. Participants also had opportunities to add comments following each of the 13 question sets. Prior to implementing the survey, the staff of the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented and over 10 educators serving gifted students piloted the instrument and provided feedback. Their comments were used in the revision of the final survey instrument (Johnsen & Kaul, 2016; Kaul & Johnsen, 2016).

Procedures

The school district's research department sent an email to teachers that described the purpose of the survey and included the survey link. If a responding teacher indicated that he or she did not have experience working with GT students, no further

data were collected. All of the survey questions were disseminated via Qualtrics using an anonymous online link that could not be traced back to any specific individual. The school district provided opportunities for participation over a 3-week period toward the end of the 2017 school year. Participants had an option of responding or not responding to each question on the survey and were not required to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

The data from the survey were summarized using descriptive statistics. Qualitative comments were examined by noting common themes across teachers using an inductive technique. With this technique, we began with factual elements as a base, interpreted the related facts, described generalizations based on these interpretations, and finally identified some possible relationships. These relationships were then used to explain similarities and differences.

Results

The results are organized around teachers' agreement with the belief statements, how often they implemented the education practices, and then, depending on their responses, their perceptions of student outcomes and perceived barriers.

Beliefs Regarding Gifted Education Practices

More than 90% of teachers agreed with eight of the beliefs: creating products that matched abilities and interests (97%), grouping gifted students together (96%), adding depth and complexity to the curriculum (95%), collaboration with parents/guardians (95%), above-level work (94%), acceleration in above-level content based on individual progress (93%), independent research related to interests (93%), and flexible pacing (90%). While still, a majority of the respondents, fewer teachers, agreed with statements related to the benefits of a mentor (88%), using above-level formative, ongoing, and summative assessments (88%); using rubrics for assessment of students' products and performances (84%); using different learning experiences for gifted and advanced students (80%); and placing students in higher-grade levels based on areas of talent (75%) (see Table 3).

Implementation Frequency of Gifted Education Practices

According to the teachers who agreed with the beliefs statement, the most implemented practice was ability grouping with 48% implementing this practice weekly (see Table 3). The next most frequently implemented research-based practices were adding depth and complexity to the curriculum (35%), having students do above-level work (32%), using flexible pacing (26%), providing different learning experiences (24%), and acceleration in above-level content based on individual progress (20%).

In spite of personally agreeing with the practices, less than 20% of the teachers implemented the remaining practices on a weekly basis. Those practices that were rarely or never used by teachers were implementing independent research geared to the student's interest (66%), collaborating with parents (71%), placing students in higher-grade levels to work within their areas of talent (77%), and providing mentors or tutors to personalize instruction (82%).

Beliefs Regarding Student Outcomes

Teachers who frequently implemented practices were asked to identify possible outcomes they observed in their students. For the most part, if teachers implemented the practice frequently, they believed it had positive student outcomes. For example, with the most highly implemented practice—ability grouping—60% to 83% of teachers who used the practice more than once per month perceived specific positive student benefits (see Table 4). However, variations existed in terms of the type of outcome and the percentage of teachers who perceived positive results. As an example, the second highest implemented practice—adding depth and complexity to the curriculum—had similar positive outcomes to ability grouping that related to student interest (73% vs. 67%) and higher quality products (66% vs. 69%) but also included different positive outcomes related to higher level questions (70%) and classroom engagement (78%; see Table 5). Moreover, teachers perceived all of the student outcomes that related to ability grouping more positively (60%-83%) than those related to depth and complexity (19%-78%). Perhaps, the differences in the ranges of teachers' perceptions toward these practices (i.e., ability grouping vs. depth and complexity) related to the degree of implementation and therefore observable effects on students. Cluster grouping may have been more consistently implemented, whereas depth and complexity was left to individual campuses and teachers who may or may not have had professional development in this specific area of curricular differentiation. Therefore, immediate effects on student performance might have been more observable with grouping like-ability peers than with the uneven implementation of a differentiation strategy. Interestingly, although very few teachers accelerated students to a higher grade level by subject (n = 72), they perceived the practice as having positive student outcomes (see Table 6). Given these and similar results with other practices, it would seem that when teachers implement research-based practices, they generally perceive positive student outcomes, especially, when the practice relates to ability grouping and acceleration.

Barriers to the Implementation of Best Practices

For teachers who rarely or never implemented practices, they were asked to identify barriers that may have prevented them from implementing best practices in their classrooms. Overall, the most frequently cited barriers were "lack of resources" (19%-52%) followed by "lack of training to implement" or "I did not know how to do this" (17%-31%).

At least 30% or more of the teachers cited a lack of resources as the greatest obstacle to using a mentor or tutor to personalize

Table 3. Beliefs Regarding Research-Based Practice and Frequency of Implementation of Practices

Practice	Teachers agree[a]	Practice: never (%)	Practice: rarely (%)	Practice: monthly (%)	Practice: weekly (%)
Ability grouping					
Ability grouping	96% (n = 428)	16	14	23	48
Assessments					
Above-level assessments	88% (n = 386)	32	25	30	13
Rubrics	84% (n = 371)	18	25	42	15
Differentiation					
Independent research geared to interests	93% (n = 405)	29	37	23	10
Different learning experiences	80% (n = 345)	22	25	28	24
Flexible pacing	90% (n = 398)	26	20	28	26
Curriculum with more depth and complexity	95% (n = 420)	18	17	31	35
Products matched to interests	97% (n = 423)	18	31	35	16
Acceleration					
Above-level work	94% (n = 416)	18	18	32	32
Acceleration based on individual progress	93% (n = 416)	29	20	30	20
Higher grade level by subject	75% (n = 325)	67	10	11	12
Collaboration with others					
Teacher/parent collaboration	95% (n = 430)	33	38	19	9
Mentor/tutor instruction	88% (n = 390)	67	15	9	9

[a]Only teachers who agreed with the practice were asked to indicate frequency of implementation in the classroom.

instruction (52%), different learning experiences (40%), above-level assessments (37%), above-level work (34%), independent research (33%), accelerating the content (32%), deeper or more complex curriculum (31%), and placing students in a higher-grade level in their area of talent (30%).

Teachers mentioned in their comments: "Teachers do not implement differentiation with fidelity across the district at the elementary level as it depends on what the cluster teacher develops individually" and, similarly, "As a GT/Cluster teacher at the elementary level, I see the need for more established

Table 4. Perceived Student Outcomes for Ability Grouping

As a result of ability grouping, GT/advanced students . . .	Teacher (n = 303)[a] (%)
Developed/strengthened peer relationships with other group members.	83
Produced group products of a higher quality.	69
Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.	67
Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems in ability groups.	65
Learned to advocate for themselves within the ability grouping.	61
Demonstrated greater leadership within their ability groups.	60
Became more aware of their strengths and needs.	60

Note. GT = gifted and talented.
[a]Teachers who reported specific practice more than one time per month. As respondents could check all responses that apply, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

Table 5. Perceived Student Outcomes for Adding Depth and Complexity to the Curriculum

As a result of providing deeper or more complex curriculum content, GT/advanced students . . .	Teacher (n = 274)[a] (%)
Became more engaged in the classroom.	78
Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning the subject.	73
Asked higher-level questions.	70
Produced more advanced or higher quality products.	66
Demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.	37
Demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests.	34
Earned a higher score on the state test than the previous year.	19

Note. GT = gifted and talented.
[a]Teachers who reported specific practice more than one time per month. As respondents could check all responses that apply, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

expectations and guidelines for the GT program as well as practical strategies and resources given from the district. Right now they are both the same, and differentiation is left to the teacher who, may or may not choose to do." This GT cluster teacher's perspective was supported by other teachers' comments: "I lack time to add these kinds of assignments"; "Too many gen ed students need support. I do not have resources or staff to help meet everyone's needs." In terms of accessing above-level resources, teachers commented, "I teach 4th grade, and we do not have 5th grade on our campus."

Approximately 30% of the teachers who rarely or never implemented above-level assessments or provided a mentor or tutor for GT also wanted more professional development to implement these practices. As one teacher commented, "I truly feel that our GT teachers on our campus need more training and resources provided to them especially K-2." Related to training of GT teachers, one teacher said, "The PD opportunities during the district curriculum conference never even have enough spaces for the amount of GT certified people in our district who are needing to get their updates." In their comments, some teachers showed a misunderstanding of the practice (e.g., "I only have kindergarten students so I don't do independent research geared to interests" and "we don't accelerate because we don't have a higher grade level at my school"). Others showed a lack of awareness of the practice (e.g., "mentors not available on the campus") and for acceleration (e.g., "it's simply something that hasn't been done").

Teachers also viewed some practices as "not supported by the district curriculum"; these were flexible pacing (27%), acceleration in above-level content based on individual progress (24%), above-level work (24%), deeper and more complex curriculum (21%), mentor instruction (21%), different learning experiences (20%), independent research geared to interests (19%), above-level assessments (17%), and products matched to interests and abilities (17%). In their comments, teachers noted the district's focus: "I need to work with intervention groups and focus on those with accommodations" and "As a teacher in [the district], I am required to spend 50 minutes per day on students performing below grade level and have no time for students performing on or above level. Intervention is geared toward lower performing students." Others mentioned how they adapted the required curriculum: "I prepared what (the) district required and matched to grade level [standard], then let students advance as possible."

Other comments identified barriers related to time (e.g., "I did not want to do the extra work" and "time constraints limit differentiation"), energy (e.g., "I never took the initiative"), and a more limited role (e.g., "homeroom teachers do parent communication").

Table 6. Perceived Student Outcomes for Acceleration to a Higher Grade Level by Subject

As a result of acceleration to higher grade by subject, GT/ advanced students . . .	Teacher (n = 72)[a] (%)
Became more engaged in the classroom.	79
Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning the subject.	71
Became more aware of their strengths and needs.	71
Produced more advanced or higher quality products.	69
Demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.	51
Demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests.	43
Earned a higher score on the state test than the previous year.	32

Note. GT = gifted and talented.
[a]Teachers who reported specific practice more than one time per month. As respondents could check all responses that apply, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

Discussion

We were pleasantly surprised that teachers' overwhelmingly affirmed their agreement with all 13 research-based practices for working with GT students (see Table 3). More than 90% of teachers agreed with the beliefs related to eight of the research-based practices. Of the remaining five, more than 75% of teachers agreed to statements related to benefits of a mentor, different learning experiences, use of assessments, including rubrics, and placing students in higher grade levels in their talent area. Although educators who were members of the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented (TAGT) also indicated very high levels of agreement for all the practices (84%-99%; Johnsen & Kaul, 2016), we hypothesized that perhaps these high levels of agreement may have reflected, at least in part, the views of educators who were active members in the state's professional organization and who were motivated to take the optional survey. It was, therefore, unexpected to find that teachers in this study responded similarly (within 5% of agreement) for 10 of the practices. Support for the remaining three practices differed only slightly from the previous sample: mentor/tutor instruction (88% vs. 95%), flexible pacing (90% vs. 98%), and placement with higher grade level students (75% vs. 84%). In other words, both groups agreed that these practices were important.

Beliefs, however, may not always lead to action. Although the district teachers reported similar levels of agreement with educators associated with the advocacy group (Johnsen & Kaul, 2016) for these best practices, we observed greater differences in the frequency of implementation of such practices between the samples. For example, the sample of educators who were members of the TAGT were nearly two to three times more likely to report weekly implementation of each practice. The respondents in this study were most likely to implement only ability grouping (48%) and add depth and complexity to the curriculum (35%) on a weekly basis. Teachers in this study were also more likely to report that they never implemented a practice, in spite of just indicating their agreement with the same practice. For example, district educators who reported never implementing practices ranged from 16% (ability grouping) to 67% (placement in a higher grade level by subject). It became more apparent from the survey that teachers who supported the practices also perceived significant barriers, which prevented their implementation. These barriers essentially related to three areas: lack of resources and time, district support, and limited professional learning opportunities.

Resources

Teachers tended to implement practices where they might be able to use the district's current curriculum that required fewer additional resources. For example, the general education curriculum could be adapted by using features related to depth and complexity (e.g., enhancing vocabulary of the learning experience, identifying unanswered questions, and so on). However, tailoring instruction to individual student's strengths and needs often requires above-level, formative and ongoing assessments. Teachers may not have the knowledge, skills, or time to develop their own assessments, which then decreases the likelihood that practices related to assessment information will be implemented (i.e., different learning experiences, acceleration based on individual progress). Teachers need to be provided with alternative assessments that are above level to determine what a gifted student knows and does not know within a domain. Once assessment information is available, teachers then need to have above-level materials, technology, and other resources to differentiate the curriculum in both general and gifted education classrooms. As one teacher noted, "I have never been given any enrichment or advanced academic material. I have a cluster of GT students in a pre-AP class who can't keep up with them. So, they do not get many opportunities for advanced academics due to the rest of the class [*sic*] pace." In terms of mentoring in areas of individual areas of talent, teachers appeared to be unaware of this option and did not have any knowledge of mentors that might be available. Resources would be needed at both the district and campus level for identifying and developing mentors.

District Support

In addition to needed resources, the teachers perceived that the school district created some barriers for providing services to GT students, particularly related to priorities, scheduling, and curriculum. For example, teachers felt that they needed to spend more of their time on underperforming students instead of gifted students. As one teacher commented,

> To be honest, they (gifted) [*sic*] students are pushed aside and forgotten about so that we can focus on the students that are struggling. I worry that the GT students get bored and tend to act out because of the fact that they are not challenged.

Another challenge appeared to be related to the district schedule. At least one school in the district appeared to follow a master schedule that incorporated a daily, 1-hour block of time when interventions occurred. As one teacher said, "Using this time as the only time for differentiated instruction does not provide instructors with ample time to differentiate for all 4 core content areas." Teachers also felt limited by the district curriculum. One teacher elaborated the limitations:

> Teachers are expected to follow district pacing guides at all times including elementary GT cluster classrooms. Administrators monitor lesson plans and conduct curriculum walks where all classes are expected to be learning the same [standards] at the same time. Some administrators require all teachers on the grade level to follow the exact same lesson plan, activities, etc. This is not best practice for individual GT students that may pre-test or compact out of content. Administrators and teachers of the gifted need training on the differences between a GT student's needs and the general population and what this may look like in a cluster elementary classroom.

Other respondents mentioned the lack of consistent curricular expectations and guidelines for the gifted program. In addition to more flexibility of curriculum, district-wide support for the GT program is needed to address individual student's talents and needs.

Professional Learning Opportunities

It is clear from the survey that more professional learning is needed for both teachers and administrators. Limited professional learning was selected as a barrier to implementation by 17% to 31% of the participants for each practice. Surprisingly, 11% to 19% of the participants indicated they did not feel confident in implementing any of the practices in their classrooms. One of the major areas where professional learning appears to be needed relates to the development and use of formative, ongoing, and summative assessments. This area is foundational to other practices related to acceleration, differentiation, grouping, monitoring individual progress, and development of each student's talents. In their comments, respondents also mentioned a need for professional learning in other areas, not only for teachers but also for administrators:

- Because of limited professional development, one teacher mentioned, "Students are not given the opportunity test out of curriculum in which they have already mastered. They are not provided with choices of GT activities to do in the classroom. They aren't even encouraged to complete an independent project suited for GT students."
- "I think extra training is needed for administration on most campuses. For example, my principal needs training on best practices for GT students and state requirements for GT students. She still insists all students must be doing the exact same assignment at the same time in all classes on that grade level. The only time we are allowed to provide any service to out GT students is during intervention time."
- "More training specific to fine arts courses (visual, music, etc.) is needed."

Because of the uneven implementation of practices, professional learning will need to be tailored to individual campuses and groups such as GT cluster teachers, AP and pre-AP teachers, general education and special education teachers, parents, and administrators.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The survey not only identified areas for improvement in the district's overall gifted program but was also used as a tool for communicating research-based practices and professional learning needs for teachers and administrators. In addition to improvements needed to address state guidelines, the following areas related to the beliefs survey were ultimately shared with the district's School Board.

The Curriculum Needs to Allow for Acceleration in a Student's Area of Talent

Teachers need to have access to above-level curriculum and use preassessments and other types of formative assessments to match the curriculum to an individual student's strengths and needs.

A Comprehensive, Sequenced, and Challenging Set of Services and Curriculum Need to be Offered in Each Student's Area of Talent

As each gifted student might exhibit a different talent, students who are gifted in one area such as math or the arts need to receive more personalized program services and a curriculum that consistently develops their abilities beginning in kindergarten through Grade 12.

The Curriculum Needs to Develop the Knowledge and Skills Necessary for Designing Sophisticated Products or Performances in the Student's Area of Talent

A learning progression that incorporates the various components of independent study (e.g., research questions/problem, methods, product/performance development) and related rubrics need to be developed from K-12. Mentors are particularly helpful in engaging students in authentic practices and in developing and/or evaluating products or performances.

Teachers and Staff Need to Receive Professional Development in Differentiation of the Curriculum

Given the qualitative comments by teachers, the Advanced Academics Department might want to not only provide professional development in specific differentiation practices but also design differentiated learning activities (K-12) that might serve as examples for teachers and be included in a bank of online resources. They also will need above-level and alternative assessments to use at each grade level and in each course.

Professional Learning Activities Need to be Ongoing and Tailored to Each Educator's Needs

If teachers are aware of best practices in gifted education, teachers are more likely to be able to identify their professional development needs, develop a plan to meet their needs, and evaluate whether or not the professional learning activity met their needs and affected student outcomes.

Professional Development Activities Need to be Evaluated to Determine Their Effectiveness in Improving Curriculum and Services to Gifted Students

Along with the NAGC's standards (see Johnsen & Clarenbach, 2017), the Learning Forward's seven Standards for Professional Learning might be used to guide these efforts and examine outcomes (Learning & Forward, 2011, 2015)

In a recent follow-up to this survey, the Director of the Advanced Academics program mentioned that they had created a timeline and were in the process of implementing changes in their district.

Limitations

As with any research, limitations are associated with the selected methodology. As teacher participation was voluntary, it is possible that participating teachers may not be representative of all the teachers in the district but may have a bias toward those with a greater personal investment in gifted education or who have stronger opinions. The length of the survey may have also contributed to teachers' not responding completely to the survey, with 35% answering some questions and then failing to complete the entire survey. Potentially the noncompleters would have a different pattern of responding. Moreover, with respect to the beliefs section, participants were provided different questions depending on their response. For example, if a participant indicated disagreement with a particular belief, he or she was not asked any further questions about the belief, so information including reasons for disagreement, frequency of implementation, obstacles to implementation, or potential student outcomes were not collected.

Conflict of Interest

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Bios

Susan K. Johnsen, PhD, is professor emerita of the Department of Educational Psychology at Baylor University. She has written three tests used in identifying gifted students and author of more than 250 publications related to gifted education. She is past president of The Association for the Gifted (TAG) and past president of the Texas Association for Gifted and Talented (TAGT). She has received awards for her work in the field of education, including NAGC's President's Award, CEC's Leadership Award, TAG's Leadership Award, TAGT's President's Award, and TAGT's Advocacy Award.

Corina R. Kaul, PhD, teaches in the Department of Educational Psychology at Baylor University. She received her BS degree from the University of Oregon and her master's and doctoral degrees from Baylor University. Her current research interests focus on 2e students, GT program evaluation, gifted English language learners, low-income gifted students, first-generation gifted students, teachers of gifted students, and the affective needs of gifted learners.

Appendix B:

Johnsen & Kaul (2019) Instrument

GT TEACHER BELIEFS SURVEY

Dear Gifted Educator,

The Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) is partnering with Baylor University in order to learn more about the beliefs and practices of teachers in gifted education.

Your answers are valuable and may be used to inform:

- *future professional development within your school district*
- *advocacy efforts on behalf of gifted and talented education in Texas*
- *future professional development at TAGT conferences*
- *and at the TAGT conferences to improve gifted education and services to gifted and advanced children.*

This survey is designed for individuals who have provided services to gifted and talented children in a classroom setting for at least one year.

Your participation is voluntary. Your personal responses will be kept confidential and will not be reported individually. Collective responses will only be reported to your school district gifted coordinator, upon request, if 10 or more teachers from your district participate.

-

Since your time is valuable, the questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. There are only 13 question sets addressing teacher beliefs and practices. We appreciate your willingness to participate. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please contact _____ at TAGT 512-499-8248 or ___@tagt.com

Thank you,
Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

Informed Consent Form

Introduction
This questionnaire is designed to collect information regarding the beliefs and practices of educators who teach gifted students. Completion of the survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Participation
Participation is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate entirely or withdraw at anytime.

Risks/Discomforts
This research meets the American Psychological Association's standards for "Minimal Risk," and poses no major risks or dangers for you as a participant

As you may be aware, electronic communication may be subject to interception, legally by your employer or illegally by another party, while the information is in transit. Therefore, it is possible that another party might see your information, and we cannot control whether that happens. If you are concerned about your data security, you may contact Corina Kaul at Corina_Kaul@baylor.edu to request a paper copy of the survey to be mailed to you.

Benefits
It is hoped that through your participation you and other educators will become informed regarding teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to gifted and advanced students and will have the opportunity to receive professional development aligned to your specific needs.

Confidentiality
Your personal responses will be kept confidential and will not be reported individually. Collective responses by school district will only be reported to gifted coordinators if 10 or more teachers from your district participate. All surveys will be concealed, and no one other than the primary investigator and associated researchers listed below will have access to them. The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics-secure database until the primary investigator has deleted it.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Corina Kaul at Corina_Kaul@baylor.edu or Dr. Susan Johnsen at Susan_Johnsen@baylor.edu or 254-710-6116.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants
If you have additional questions regarding your rights as a participant, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to you as a participant, please contact Baylor University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research, Dr. David Schlueter. Ph.D., Chair Baylor IRB, Baylor University, One Bear Place #97368 Waco, TX 76798-7368.

Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at David_Schlueter@baylor.edu or 254-710-6920 or 254-710-3708.

I have read and understood the consent form above and am willingly participating in this survey.

❍ Yes, I agree to participate in this survey research.
❍ No, I do not agree to participate in this survey.

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Question Set 1: *(GROUPING)*

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit from working together in small groups with other gifted or high-ability peers.

❍ Yes
❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom grouped together with gifted or other high-ability peers that had similar interests? ❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week	
Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from grouping your gifted and advanced students? *(Please check all that apply.)* ❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy. ❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice. ❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice. ❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice. ❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice. ❑ Other: _____ *(Fill in)*	As a result of ability grouping, most of my gifted and advanced students have: *(Please check all that apply.)* ❑ developed or strengthened peer relationships with other members in their ability groups. ❑ produced group products of a higher quality than those that were produced by those individuals working alone. ❑ learned to advocate for themselves within the ability grouping. ❑ demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems when in ability

	groups compared to working individually. ❑ demonstrated greater leadership within their ability groups as compared to mixed ability groups. ❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning subjects covered in their ability groups when in mixed ability groups. ❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs. ❑ other: _____ *(Fill in)*

Question Set 2: *(ASSESSMENTS)*

I believe above-level formative, ongoing, and summative assessments are useful in determining gifted and advanced students' knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you use above-level assessments in planning and implementing your lessons with gifted and advanced students?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from using above-level assessments with your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____
(Fill in)</td><td>As a result of above-level assessments, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ scored higher on post-tests compared to their pre-tests.
❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in the above-level subject.
❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the above-level subject.
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning the above-level subject.
❑ identified new knowledge and skills they may not have learned before.
❑ been more engaged in the learning activities.
❑ covered the curriculum at a faster pace.
❑ covered the subject with more depth and complexity.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 3: *(ASSESSMENTS)*

I believe rubrics need to be used to assess gifted and advanced students' products and/or performances.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you use rubrics to assess gifted and advanced students' products and/or performances in your classroom?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from using rubrics to assess gifted and advanced students' products and/or performances? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____ (Fill in)</td><td>As a result of using rubrics, most of my gifted and advanced students have: (Please check all that apply.)

❑ a clear understanding of the required components of a project.
❑ produced more advanced or higher quality products.
❑ been more confident in developing products and/or performing in front of an audience.
❑ been more involved in self-assessment.
❑ provided clear feedback to peers.
❑ other: _____ (Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 4: (*DIFFERENTIATION*)

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit from working on independent research projects geared to their specific interests.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did gifted and advanced students in your classroom work on independent research projects geared to their specific interests?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented gifted and advanced students in your classroom from working on independent projects?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____
(Fill in)</td><td>As a result of independent projects, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ learned how to access the resources they need to learn.
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ produced higher quality or more advanced independent products.
❑ demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ performed better on the TPSP product criteria.
❑ learned more about research methods.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 5: (*DIFFERENTIATION*)

I believe gifted and advanced students should have different learning experiences than their typically performing peers.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did gifted and advanced students in your classroom have different learning experience than their typically performing peers?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from having different learning experiences for your gifted and advanced students compared to their typically performing peers?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____ (Fill in)</td><td>As a result of a different learning experiences for gifted and advanced students, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ learned to advocate for their personal academic needs.
❑ participated in competitive events related to their talent.
❑ engaged in independent research more often.
❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
❑ demonstrated more higher-level thinking.
❑ Produced more complex, professional products.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 6: (*DIFFERENTIATION*)

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit from flexible pacing appropriate to their abilities, knowledge, and skills.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you provide flexible pacing appropriate to your gifted and advanced students' abilities, knowledge, and skills?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any may have prevented you from using flexible pacing with your gifted and advanced students.
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____ (Fill in)</td><td>As a result of flexible pacing, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ scored higher on post-tests compared to their pre-tests.
❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in applicable subject(s).
❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the in applicable subject(s).
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning the applicable subject.
❑ demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ covered the subject with more depth and complexity.
❑ covered the curriculum at a faster pace.
❑ progressed to above level content.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 7: (*DIFFERENTIATION*)

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit when teachers provide curriculum content that has more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom provided with curriculum containing more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum?

- ❍ Never
- ❍ Less than 1 time per month
- ❍ 1-3 times a month
- ❍ 1-3 times a week
- ❍ 4-5 times a week

Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing deeper or more complex curriculum content for your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
- ❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
- ❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
- ❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
- ❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
- ❑ Other: _____ *(Fill in)*

As a result of providing deeper or more complex content in the curriculum, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
- ❑ produced products of a higher quality.
- ❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in applicable subject(s).
- ❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the applicable subject(s).
- ❑ demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.
- ❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
- ❑ asked higher level questions.
- ❑ other: _____ *(Fill in)*

Question Set 8: (*DIFFERENTIATION*)

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit when they are asked to create products that are matched to their abilities and interests.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom asked to create products that were matched to their abilities and interests?

❍ Never	❍ Less than 1 time per month	❍ 1-3 times a month	❍ 1-3 times a week	❍ 4-5 times a week

Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing opportunities for gifted and advanced students to create products that were matched to their abilities and interests? *(Please check all that apply.)*

- ❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
- ❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
- ❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
- ❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
- ❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
- ❑ Other: _____ *(Fill in)*

As a result of providing opportunities for gifted and advanced students to create products that were matched to their abilities and interests, most of my gifted students have: *(Please check all that apply.)*

- ❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
- ❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in applicable subject(s).
- ❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the applicable subject(s).
- ❑ demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.
- ❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
- ❑ produced more advanced or higher quality products.
- ❑ were more engaged in the classroom.
- ❑ asked higher level questions.
- ❑ other: _____ *(Fill in)*

Question Set 9: *(ACCELERATION)*

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit from doing above-level work.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did gifted and advanced students in your classroom do above-level work?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, are factors that may have prevented you from providing above-level work to your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____
(Fill in)</td><td>As a result of above-level work, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ scored higher on post-tests compared to their pre-tests.
❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in the above-level subject.
❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the above-level subject.
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning the above-level subject.
❑ produced higher quality or more advanced products in above-level subject.
❑ demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 10: *(ACCELERATION)*

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit when they are allowed to accelerate in above-grade level content based on their individual progress.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often were gifted and advanced students in your classroom accelerated in above-level content based on their individual progress?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from accelerating the content for your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____
(Fill in)</td><td>As a result of accelerating the content, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in applicable subject(s).
❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the applicable subject(s).
❑ demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.
❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ produced more advanced or higher quality products.
❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
❑ other: _____
(Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 11: *(ACCELERATION)*

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit when placed with students in higher-grade levels as needed for acceleration within their areas of talent.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom placed with higher-grade level students for acceleration in talent areas?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented placing a gifted or an advanced student with higher-grade level students in their area of talent? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other: _____ (Fill in)</td><td>As a result of acceleration to higher-grade by subject, most of my gifted and advanced students have: (Please check all that apply.)

❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ demonstrated improvement on district benchmark tests in applicable subject(s).
❑ earned a higher STAAR score than the previous year in the applicable subject(s).
❑ demonstrated improvement on above-level testing.
❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ produced more advanced or higher quality products.
❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
❑ other: _____ (Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 12: *(OTHER)*

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit when a mentor or tutor provides personalized instruction in areas of talent.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did a mentor or tutor provide personalized instruction for gifted and advanced students in an area of talent?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times per month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing gifted and advanced students a mentor or tutor for personalized instruction.
(Please check all that apply.)
❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other:
_____
__ (Fill in)</td><td>As a result of mentor or tutor instruction, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ developed or strengthened a relationship with their mentor or tutor.
❑ demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ produced more advanced or higher quality products.
❑ learned to advocate for themselves.
❑ demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ demonstrated greater leadership among their peers.
❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
❑ asked higher level questions.
❑ other: _____ (Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 13: *(OTHER)*

I believe it is important to work together with parents/guardians (collaborate) to address their gifted or advanced child's strengths and needs.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often work together with parents/guardians (collaborate) to address their gifted or advanced child's strengths and needs?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these, if any, may have prevented you from collaborating with parents/guardians regarding their gifted and advanced child's needs and progress.
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ I am not confident in my skills to implement this strategy.
❑ Teachers at my school do not support this practice.
❑ Administrators at my school do not support this practice.
❑ The district curriculum that I am teaching prevents this practice.
❑ I do not have the resources to implement this practice.
❑ Other:

_____
(Fill in)</td><td>As a result of collaboration with parents/guardians, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ communicated with their parents/guardians about their progress.
❑ become more aware of their strengths and needs.
❑ learned to advocate for themselves.
❑ experienced more learning activities in their areas of interest.
❑ been more engaged in the classroom.
❑ other: _____ (Fill in)</td></tr>
</table>

DEMOGRAPHIC BLOCK

What type of school do you teach at?

- ❍ Public
- ❍ Charter- Public
- ❍ Private

What is the name of your school district?

- ❍ China Spring ISD
- ❍ Connally ISD
- ❍ Midway ISD
- ❍ Waco ISD
- ❍ Other

What is the name of your charter school?

- ❍ Harmony Science
- ❍ Another school
- ❍ Another school

Please type the name of the private school that you teach at below:

_____

What grade level(s) do you predominantly teach?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ Pre-Kindergarten to 5th Grade
- ❑ 6th to 8th Grade
- ❑ 9th to 12th Grade

What are the subjects that you predominantly teach?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ English/language arts
- ❑ math
- ❑ science
- ❑ social studies
- ❑ the arts
- ❑ other

What percentage of students in your classroom is identified as gifted or advanced learners?

- ❍ Less than 5%
- ❍ 6% to 15%
- ❍ 16% to 25%
- ❍ 26% to 50%
- ❍ 51% to 75%
- ❍ 76% or more

How many years experience do you have teaching?

- ❍ 1 year to 3 years
- ❍ 4 years to 10 years
- ❍ More than 10 years

How many years experience do you have teaching *gifted* students?

- ❍ 1 year to 3 years
- ❍ 4 years to 10 years
- ❍ More than 10 years

What is your professional background in gifted education?
(*Please check all that apply.)*

- ❑ 30 clock hours in gifted education
- ❑ 6 clock hour annual update(s)
- ❑ AP professional development
- ❑ IB professional development
- ❑ undergraduate course(s) in gifted education
- ❑ graduate course(s) in gifted education
- ❑ master's degree with specialization in gifted education
- ❑ doctoral degree with specialization in gifted education

In what type of gifted program model do you teach?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ General education
- ❑ Resource room
- ❑ Cluster classroom
- ❑ Multi-grade classes
- ❑ Pull-out
- ❑ Gifted-only classes
- ❑ School-wide Enrichment
- ❑ Pre-AP or AP
- ❑ Dual credit classes
- ❑ Magnet school
- ❑ International Baccalaureate®
- ❑ Other: _____

Appendix C:

Survey Invitation for K-3 Teachers

GT TEACHER BELIEFS SURVEY

Dear Educator,

Click here to take the survey!

I am conducting a survey to understand the beliefs and practices of K-3 teachers in rural South Georgia regarding gifted education. Your insights are incredibly valuable and will contribute to enhancing professional development opportunities within your school district, supporting advocacy efforts for gifted and talented education in Georgia, and informing future professional development and training programs to serve gifted and advanced students in the region better.

This survey is designed specifically for teachers who have provided services to children officially recognized as "gifted" through the formal identification process, in a classroom setting for at least one year. For the purpose of this study, the term "gifted" refers to students who have been officially identified and labeled through established processes.

Your participation is voluntary, and all personal responses will be kept confidential. Individual responses will not be reported; however, collective data will be used to provide insights into the needs and perspectives of the K-3 teachers across the RESA.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and includes 13 question sets addressing teacher beliefs and practices in gifted education. If you want to familiarize yourself with the NAGC best practices before taking the survey, you can read more about them here.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or study, please do not hesitate to contact me at chrihardy@valdosta.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation in and commitment to enhancing education for gifted students in our region.

Sincerely,
Christine Hardy
Valdosta University

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled "Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA," which is being conducted by Christine Hardy, a doctoral student in Curriculum and Instruction at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to understand how K-3 teachers view and use best practices for gifted education and what challenges, if any, they face to best support gifted students. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about how to better support teachers and improve gifted education in the K-3 setting. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Participation should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. This survey is confidential. No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Christine Hardy at chrihardy@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

I have read and understood the consent form above and am willingly participating in this survey.

- ❍ Yes, I agree to participate in this survey.
- ❍ No, I do not agree to participate in the survey.

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Preliminary Question: *(Gifted Population)*
Are there any students in your classroom officially identified as gifted via the formal identification process?

❍ Yes *(Skip to next Question)*

❍ No

Are any of your students currently being considered for gifted identification or being monitored for potential giftedness?

❍ No (*survey ends)*

❍ Yes (*next question)*

Question Set 1: *(Flexible Grouping)*

I perceive that gifted and advanced students benefit from working together in small groups with other gifted or high-ability peers.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom grouped together with gifted or other high-ability peers?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from grouping your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of ability grouping, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 2: *(Assessments)*

I perceive formative, ongoing, and summative assessments are useful in determining gifted and advanced students' knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you use assessments in planning and implementing your lessons with gifted and advanced students?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from using assessments with your gifted and advanced students? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of assessments, most of my gifted and advanced students have: (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 3: (*Differentiation*)

I believe gifted and advanced students benefit from engaging in diverse, meaningful, and challenging work that is specifically tailored to their unique abilities, interests, and learning needs, and that is distinct from the experiences of their typically performing peers.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did gifted and advanced students in your classroom engage in tailored learning experiences or projects that were meaningfully different from those of their typically performing peers?
❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented gifted and advanced students in your classroom from engaging in tailored, meaningful, and challenging work that is distinct from their typically performing peers? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of engaging in tailored, meaningful, and challenging work, most of my gifted and advanced students have: (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 4: (*Pacing/Compacting*)

I perceive gifted and advanced students benefit from flexible pacing appropriate to their abilities, knowledge, and skills.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you provide flexible pacing appropriate to your gifted and advanced students' abilities, knowledge, and skills?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any may have prevented you from using flexible pacing with your gifted and advanced students.
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of flexible pacing, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 5: (*Enrichment*)

I perceive gifted and advanced students benefit when teachers provide curriculum content that has more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom provided with curriculum containing more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing deeper or more complex curriculum content for your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of providing deeper or more complex content in the curriculum, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 6: *(Content Acceleration)*

I perceive gifted and advanced students benefit from being allowed to accelerate in content based on their individual progress and abilities, including working above grade level when appropriate.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you allow gifted and advanced students in your classroom to accelerate in content or work above grade level based on their individual progress and abilities?
❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from providing acceleration opportunities for your gifted and advanced students?
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of above-level work, gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 7: *(Grade level Acceleration)*

I perceive gifted and advanced students benefit when placed with students in higher-grade levels as needed for acceleration within their areas of talent.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often were the gifted and advanced students in your classroom placed with higher-grade level students for acceleration in talent areas?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented placing a gifted or an advanced student with higher-grade level students in their area of talent? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of acceleration to higher-grade by subject, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 8: *(Family Collaboration)*

I believe it is important to work together with parents/guardians (collaborate) to address their gifted or advanced children's strengths and needs.

- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you collaborate with parents/guardians to address their gifted or advanced child's strengths and needs?

❍ Never ❍ Less than 1 time per month ❍ 1-3 times a month ❍ 1-3 times a week ❍ 4-5 times a week</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these, if any, may have prevented you from collaborating with parents/guardians regarding their gifted and advanced child's needs and progress. (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Lack of confidence in implementing this strategy.
❑ Lack of support from team teachers
❑ Lack of support from administrators.
❑ Lack of support from parents/guardians.
❑ District curriculum constraints.
❑ Insufficient resources (time, materials, etc.).
❑ Other</td><td>As a result of collaboration with parents/guardians, most of my gifted and advanced students have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Developed a deeper understanding of their strengths, interests, and needs.
❑ Demonstrated greater interest or passion for learning.
❑ Produced higher-quality or more advanced work.
❑ Demonstrated persistence in solving difficult problems.
❑ Engaged more actively in the classroom.
❑ Demonstrated improved collaboration or leadership skills.
❑ Gained self-advocacy skills in their learning environment.
❑ Achieved higher performance on assessments or benchmarks.
❑ Strengthened parent-teacher relationships that support student learning
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

Question Set 9: *(Professional Development)*

I perceive professional development focused on gifted education improves my ability to effectively teach and support gifted and advanced students.

❍ Yes

❍ No *(Skip to next Question)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During this past year, how often did you participate in professional development focused on gifted education?

❍ Never ❍ 1 time this year ❍ 2 times this year ❍ 3 times year ❍ 4 or more times this year</td></tr>
<tr><td>Which of these factors, if any, may have prevented you from participating in professional development focused on gifted education? (Please check all that apply.)

❑ Professional development opportunities in gifted education were not offered at my school or district.
❑ Lack of relevance of available opportunities to my teaching needs.
❑ The cost of participating in professional development was prohibitive.
❑ My workload or teaching schedule made it difficult to participate.
❑ I did not feel professional development in gifted</td><td>As a result of professional development focused on gifted education, I have:
(Please check all that apply.)

❑ Increased my confidence in implementing gifted education strategies
❑ Improved my ability to differentiated curriculum and instruction
❑ Enhanced my ability to assess effectively
❑ Gained skilled to address the social-emotional need of gifted students
❑ Gained strategies to advocate for equity in gifted education
❑ Other</td></tr>
</table>

education was necessary for my role. ❑ Other	

DEMOGRAPHIC BLOCK

What is your school district's name?

- ❑ A County
- ❑ B County
- ❑ C County
- ❑ Camden County
- ❑ D County
- ❑ E County
- ❑ F County
- ❑ G County
- ❑ H County

What is your highest level of education?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ Bachelor's Degree
- ❑ Master's Degree
- ❑ Specialist Degree
- ❑ Doctoral Degree

Which grade level(s) do you predominantly teach?
(Please check all that apply.)

- ❑ K
- ❑ 1
- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3

How many years of experience do you have teaching?

- ❍ 1 year to 3 years
- ❍ 4 years to 10 years
- ❍ More than 10 years

How many years have you taught students who have been identified as gifted?

- ❍ 1 year to 3 years
- ❍ 4 years to 10 years
- ❍ More than 10 years

What is your professional background in gifted education?
(*Please check all that apply.)*

- ❑ No formal background but experience teaching gifted students
- ❑ Undergraduate course(s) in gifted education
- ❑ Participation in professional development specially designed for gifted education
- ❑ GACE Gifted Certification
- ❑ GA Gifted Endorsement
- ❑ Graduate course(s) in gifted education

Appendix D:

Alignment of Teacher Beliefs with NAGC Standards and Georgia's Gifted Handbook

I perceive...	Related NAGC Gifted Teacher Standard	Related NAGC General Teacher Standard	Georgia Gifted Handbook
Gifted and advanced students benefit from working together in small groups with other gifted or high-ability peers.	1.3.1, 4.2.2, 5.1.3	Recognize the learning differences and social-emotional needs of gifted students, including effective grouping strategies.	Supports cluster grouping and flexible grouping as best practices for meeting academic and social-emotional needs.
Formative, ongoing, and summative assessments are useful in determining gifted and advanced students' knowledge, skills, and/or abilities.	2.4.1, 2.4.3, 3.1.5	Use formative and summative assessments to evaluate student progress and inform differentiated instruction.	Encourages formative and summative assessments to identify student needs, inform differentiation, and monitor growth.
Gifted and advanced students benefit from engaging in diverse, meaningful, and challenging work tailored to their unique abilities, interests, and needs.	1.6.1, 3.1.4, 3.1.6	Plan differentiated curriculum and instruction that incorporates higher-order thinking, creativity, and complexity.	Recommends differentiated curriculum designed to provide depth and complexity beyond grade-level standards.
Gifted and advanced students benefit from flexible pacing appropriate to their abilities, knowledge, and skills.	1.6.1, 3.1.6	Recognize the importance of flexible pacing to accommodate individual learning needs.	Highlights flexible pacing strategies, including curriculum compacting and acceleration, to match student readiness.
Gifted and advanced students benefit when teachers provide curriculum content with more depth and complexity than the standard curriculum.	3.1.3, 3.1.4	Design curriculum that emphasizes depth, complexity, and critical thinking.	Requires enriched and conceptually challenging curriculum aligned with state-mandated gifted standards.
Gifted and advanced students benefit from being allowed to accelerate in content based on their progress and abilities.	5.1.1, 5.1.4	Advocate for acceleration practices based on readiness and performance.	Supports subject-specific acceleration to meet gifted students' advanced academic needs.
Gifted and advanced students benefit when placed with students in higher-grade levels for acceleration within their areas of talent.	5.1.1, 5.1.4	Understand principles of grade-level acceleration and advocate for appropriate placement.	Provides guidance for implementing grade-level acceleration when necessary.
Collaborating with parents/guardians helps address gifted and advanced students' strengths and needs.	2.1.2, 2.4.5	Build collaborative relationships with families to support student development.	Emphasizes parent-teacher collaboration for addressing the strengths and needs of gifted students.
Professional development focused on gifted education improves teachers' ability to support gifted and advanced students.	6.1.2, 6.2.1	Advocate for professional development in gifted education to improve instruction and advocacy skills.	Supports ongoing professional development in differentiation, curriculum design, and meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted learners.

Note. Information adapted from National Association for Gifted Children (2010, 2019) and Georgia Department of Education (2024-2025)

Appendix E:

Letter to IRB

Dear IRB Committee,

I am writing to seek approval for my research study entitled "Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA." This study is designed to investigate the beliefs and practices of K-3 teachers regarding the implementation of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)-aligned best practices in gifted education.

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to understand how K-3 teachers in a rural South Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) perceive and implement NAGC-aligned best practices in gifted education. This study will explore teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these practices, the frequency of their implementation, and the barriers to their full application.

Methodology:

A quantitative survey methodology involving the distribution of a modified version of the GT Teacher Beliefs Survey will be used. This survey will be administered electronically to K-3 teachers across the RESA, who have at least one year of experience working with gifted students. The survey will collect data on teachers' beliefs and practices without collecting personally identifiable information.

Participant Involvement:

Participation in this study will be voluntary, with teachers having the option to withdraw at any time. The survey is expected to take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. A $100 Amazon gift card will be randomly raffled off to a K-3 teachers from the group I send the survey to regardless of completion.

Data Handling and Confidentiality:

All data will be stored securely in an encrypted, password-protected database that is accessible only to the research team. Personal information will not be collected, ensuring the anonymity of all participants. Data will be reported only in aggregate form, and individual responses will not be identifiable.

Ethical Considerations:

This study was designed to minimize the risk to participants by adhering to the ethical guidelines of academic research. An informed consent form will be provided to all

participants, detailing the study's purpose, the procedures involved, their rights as participants, and confidentiality measures in place.

I have attached the survey instrument and an informed consent form for review. I appreciate your consideration of my research proposal and look forward to your approval for commencing this important study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine Hardy

Doctoral Candidate, Curriculum and Instruction

Valdosta State University

Email: chrihardy@valdosta.edu

Phone: 561-876-8764

Appendix F:

IRB Exemption Report

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04585-2025

Responsible Researcher(s): Christine Hardy

Supervising Faculty: Dr. John Lairsey

Dissertation Research Member: Dr. Kathy Nobles

Project Title: *Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA.*

Institutional Review Board Determination:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

Additional Information & Guidance:

- *Your research study may begin at the following approved research locations:* ***Okefenokee RESA - Dr. Greg Jacobs (04.02.25), Ware County School System (04.02.25), Charlton County School District (04.14.25), Pierce County Schools (04.16.25), Atkinson County School System (04.18.25), Camden County Schools (05.01.25), Brantley County Schools, Clinch County Schools, & Coffee County Schools (05.03.25).*** *Additional locations will be considered upon receipt of a letter of cooperation.*

- *The IRB approval number (IRB-**04585-2025**) must be added to the Qualtrics survey, recruitment methods, correspondence. Etc. The IRB approval number confirms that the research study has been reviewed & approved by VSU's IRB.*

- *The participant(s) selected from the drawing to receive a $100 Amazon gift card must sign the Participant Payment Log sheet upon receipt of the gift card.* ***The payment log sheet must be securely maintained with research data****.*

- *Upon completion of the research study all data (e.g. data, email correspondence, name lists, transcripts, Participant Payment Log, etc.) must be securely maintained (e.g. locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a* ***minimum of 3 years****. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

☒ ***Proposed modifications must be submitted to the IRB Administrator at tmwright@valdosta.edu for review and approval before being implementation is permitted.***

Elizabeth W. Olphie *03.06.2025*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.

Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix G:

1st Survey Follow Up to K-3 Teachers

Subject: Your Input Needed: Gifted Education Practices Survey

Dear Educator,

Click here to take the survey!

I am conducting a survey to understand the beliefs and practices of K-3 teachers in rural South Georgia regarding gifted education. Your insights are incredibly valuable and will contribute to enhancing professional development opportunities within your school district, supporting advocacy efforts for gifted and talented education in Georgia, and informing future professional development and training programs to serve gifted and advanced students in the region better.

This survey is designed specifically for teachers who have provided services to children officially recognized as "gifted" through the formal identification process, in a classroom setting for at least one year. For the purpose of this study, the term "gifted" refers to students who have been officially identified and labeled through established processes.

Your participation is voluntary, and all personal responses will be kept confidential. Individual responses will not be reported; however, collective data will be used to provide insights into the needs and perspectives of the K-3 teachers across the RESA.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete and includes 13 question sets addressing teacher beliefs and practices in gifted education. If you want to familiarize yourself with the NAGC best practices before taking the survey, you can read more about them here.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to **Christine Hardy** at **chrihardy@valdosta.edu**. This study (IRB-04585-2025) has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Thank you in advance for your participation in and commitment to enhancing education for gifted students in our region.

Sincerely,

Christine Hardy

Valdosta State University

chrihardy@valdosta.edu

561-876-8764

Appendix H:

2nd Survey Follow Up to K-3 Teachers

Dear Fellow K-3 Teacher,

Click here to take the survey! Raffle for a $100 Amazon Gift Card!

I am conducting a short research study to better understand the beliefs and practices of K–3 teachers in the Okefenokee RESA regarding gifted education. My chair is Dr. Lairsey and my researcher is Dr. Nobles. Your voice matters, and your insights will help strengthen support, advocacy, and training for teachers of gifted learners across the region.

This study is intended for current K–3 teachers who either:

- **Have worked with students officially identified as "gifted"** through the formal identification process, **or**
- **Have a student currently "on watch" who you are planning to recommend** for gifted services

As a fellow kindergarten teacher, I truly understand how busy you are. That's exactly why I'm conducting this research—to help bring more attention to this often-understudied area and ensure K–3 teachers like you have the tools and support needed to implement best practices for gifted students in real classrooms.

The survey takes about 10 minutes and includes 13 question sets focused on your experiences and perceptions of best practices in gifted education. If you'd like to review the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) best practices referenced in the survey, you can click here to learn more.

Participation is completely voluntary. No identifying information is collected, and responses will remain confidential. Results will only be reported in summary form.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at **chrihardy@valdosta.edu**. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (**IRB-2025-105**). For questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the IRB at 229-253-2947 or **irb@valdosta.edu**.

As a thank you for your time and consideration, all K-3 educators who receive this invitation will be entered into a raffle for a $100 Amazon gift card!

Sincerely,
Christine Hardy
Kindergarten Teacher & Doctoral Candidate
Valdosta State University

Appendix I:

3rd Survey Follow Up to K-3 Teachers

Happy almost-summer K-3 Teachers!!!

I know everyone has a big to-do list while closing up their classrooms, but I'm humbly reaching out one last time, hoping to gather enough responses for my study on K–3 gifted education practices in the Okefenokee RESA.

So far, **80 teachers out of 556** have responded — THANK YOU if you already have!! Dr. Nobles (my committee researcher) and Dr. Lairsey (my chair) encouraged me to make one final push for a stronger response rate — they would like to see 100!

If you haven't already, would you mind taking 10 minutes to complete the anonymous
survey? https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5iO2IGBw6t4BLV4

All teachers will be entered into a **$100 Amazon gift card raffle** — the **survey closes today at 5:00 PM**. The winner will be notified shortly after!

✔ Approved by the Valdosta State IRB: **IRB-04585-2025**

Thank you so much for considering it — and wishing you a restful, well-deserved summer break!

Gratefully,
Christine Hardy
Kindergarten Teacher and Doctoral Candidate

Appendix J:

Raw Data from Survey

Count of Q1: Consent
108

Row Labels	Count of Q2: Identified Gifted
	2
No	46
Yes	60
(blank)	
Grand Total	**108**

Row Labels	Count of Q3: Potentially Gift
	62
No	26
Yes	20
(blank)	
Grand Total	**108**

Appendix K:

Cleaned Survey Data from 60 Surveys of Teachers with Identified Gifted Students

Progress	tion (in sec	Finished	Q1: Consen	dentifiedG	Potentially	GroupingBe	GroupingIm	rouping Ba	roupingBe	ssessmentB	sessmentIn	ssessmentE	ssessmentI
100	126	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Other	No			
100	349	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed
100	514	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Produced I
100	299	True	Yes, I agree	No	Yes	Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	253	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Demonstra	No			
100	21972	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	Never	Other	
100	327	True	Yes, I agree	No	Yes	Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	195	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	321	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed
100	244	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed	Yes	Less than 1	Insufficient	resources (
100	212	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	276	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	350	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Demonstra	Yes	Less than 1	Insufficient	resources (
100	170	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Produced h	No			
100	411	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Demonstra	Yes	1-3 times a month		Demonstra
100	340	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	417	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Produced h	No			
100	311	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Demonstra	Yes	Less than 1	District cur	riculum co
100	334	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Engaged m	Yes	1-3 times a month		Produced I
100	501	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Produced h	Yes	1-3 times a month		Achieved h
100	152	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	Less than 1	Insufficient resources (t		Yes	Never	Insufficient	resources (
100	818	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	246	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed
100	258	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	325	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Demonstra
100	373	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	512	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	349	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		No				Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed
100	216	True	Yes, I agree	No	Yes	Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a week		Gained self
100	1456	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	1435	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	524	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	5004	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	1-3 times a week		Developed	Yes	Less than 1	Insufficient	resources (
100	2756	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	1-3 times a month		Developed
100	369	True	Yes, I agree	No	Yes	Yes	4-5 times a week		Demonstra	Yes	1-3 times a week		Produced I
100	334	True	Yes, I agree	No	Yes	Yes	4-5 times a week		Demonstra	Yes	Less than 1	Insufficient	resources (
100	394	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	Less than 1	District cur	riculum co
100	281	True	Yes, I agree	Yes		Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed	Yes	4-5 times a week		Developed

Appendix L:

RESA Superintendent Permission

Outlook

RESA Approval

From Christine Hardy <chrihardy@valdosta.edu>
Date Thu 24/04/2025 14:18
To Tina M Wright <tmwright@valdosta.edu>

From: Greg Jacobs <Gjacobs@okresa.org>
Sent: 02 April 2025 12:06
To: Christine Hardy <chrihardy@valdosta.edu>
Cc: John D Lairsey <jdlairsey@valdosta.edu>
Subject: Re: Research Survey Request

Delivered From External Sender

I will forward to our Superintendents who will have to give permission for surveying their staff. 3 districts are on Spring Break this week and 6 next week. I will take paper copies to our conference the following week for those who may not see the request in their email.

On Thu, Mar 27, 2025 at 6:02 PM Christine Hardy <chrihardy@valdosta.edu> wrote:

> Christine Hardy
>
> chrihardy@valdosta.edu
>
> (561)-876-8764
>
> March 27, 2025
>
> Dear Dr. Jacobs,
>
> My name is Christine Hardy, and I am currently conducting research for my doctoral dissertation titled *Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA* with the guidance of my chair Dr. Lairsey. The purpose of my study is to explore the beliefs and practices of K-3 teachers regarding gifted education within a rural South Georgia RESA. Specifically, the study aims to understand how teachers perceive the effectiveness of best practices for gifted students, how frequently they implement these practices, what barriers may prevent full implementation, and what teachers perceive as student outcomes if implemented. The findings will provide insights into how gifted education is supported at the early elementary level and could identify areas for professional development and policy improvement.
>
> I have obtained permission to use the GT Teacher Belief Survey, developed by Dr. Johnsen and Dr. Kaul (2019), as the primary instrument for this study. I am writing to request permission to distribute this survey to K-3 teachers within the districts under your jurisdiction. The survey is designed to be brief, requiring approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete, and participation will be both voluntary and confidential.
>
> While the survey responses will remain anonymous, general demographic information will be collected, such as school district, years of teaching experience, and educational background. I will take appropriate measures to ensure all collected data remains confidential.
>
> If permission is granted, I will follow up with an email requesting a district contact person who can assist in obtaining email addresses for building principals and K-3 teachers, as I would like to distribute this survey before summer break.
>
> Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Christine Hardy at chrihardy@valdosta.edu. This study (IRB-04585-2025) has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of researchparticipants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.
>
> Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your support in facilitating this research. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Christine Hardy

--
Greg Jacobs, Ed.D.
Executive Director
Okefenokee RESA
1450 North Augusta Avenue
Waycross, GA 31503
(912)-285-6151

Appendix M:

CITI Completion Report

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)

COMPLETION REPORT - PART 1 OF 2
COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS*

* Scores on this Requirements Report (Part 1) reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. The Transcript Report (Part 2) lists more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Christine Hardy (ID: 11421495)
- **Institution Affiliation:** Valdosta State University (ID: 475)
- **Institution Email:** chrihardy@valdosta.edu
- **Institution Unit:** EDU
- **Phone:** 5618768764

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** IRB Basic
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** This course is suitable for Investigators and staff conducting SOCIAL / HUMANISTIC / BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH with human subjects. The VA module must be completed if you plan to work with subjects at a VA facillity.

- **Record ID:** 50940584
- **Completion Date:** 26-Aug-2022
- **Expiration Date:** 25-Aug-2025
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score*:** 90

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED	SCORE
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	26-Aug-2022	4/5 (80%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	26-Aug-2022	5/5 (100%)
Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process (ID: 2)	26-Aug-2022	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	26-Aug-2022	4/5 (80%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	26-Aug-2022	5/5 (100%)
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	26-Aug-2022	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	26-Aug-2022	4/5 (80%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	26-Aug-2022	5/5 (100%)
Valdosta State University (ID: 746)	26-Aug-2022	No Quiz

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

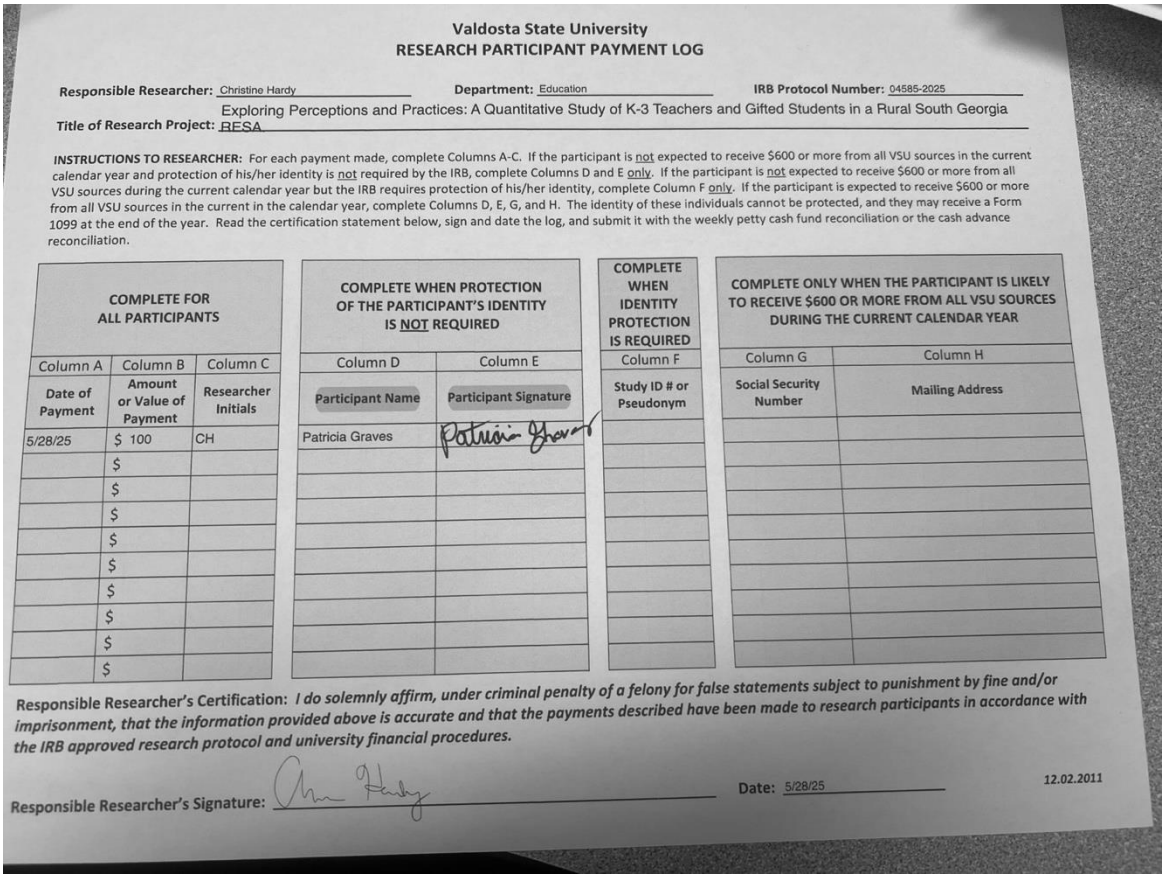
This document was generated on 17-Nov-2024. Verify at:
www.citiprogram.org/verify/?k0ef7e2a3-6fdf-4df6-a9f2-aca5372f978f-50940584

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program)
101 NE 3rd Avenue
Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US

Email: support@citiprogram.org
Phone: 888-529-5929
Web: https://www.citiprogram.org

Appendix N:

IRB Raffle Payment Log



Valdosta State University
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PAYMENT LOG

Responsible Researcher: Christine Hardy **Department:** Education **IRB Protocol Number:** 04585-2025

Title of Research Project: Exploring Perceptions and Practices: A Quantitative Study of K-3 Teachers and Gifted Students in a Rural South Georgia RESA

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESEARCHER: For each payment made, complete Columns A-C. If the participant is not expected to receive $600 or more from all VSU sources in the current calendar year and protection of his/her identity is not required by the IRB, complete Columns D and E only. If the participant is not expected to receive $600 or more from all VSU sources during the current calendar year but the IRB requires protection of his/her identity, complete Column F only. If the participant is expected to receive $600 or more from all VSU sources in the current in the calendar year, complete Columns D, E, G, and H. The identity of these individuals cannot be protected, and they may receive a Form 1099 at the end of the year. Read the certification statement below, sign and date the log, and submit it with the weekly petty cash fund reconciliation or the cash advance reconciliation.

COMPLETE FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS			COMPLETE WHEN PROTECTION OF THE PARTICIPANT'S IDENTITY IS NOT REQUIRED		COMPLETE WHEN IDENTITY PROTECTION IS REQUIRED	COMPLETE ONLY WHEN THE PARTICIPANT IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE $600 OR MORE FROM ALL VSU SOURCES DURING THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR	
Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F	Column G	Column H
Date of Payment	**Amount or Value of Payment**	**Researcher Initials**	**Participant Name**	**Participant Signature**	**Study ID # or Pseudonym**	**Social Security Number**	**Mailing Address**
5/28/25	$ 100	CH	Patricia Graves	Patricia Graves			
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Responsible Researcher's Certification: ***I do solemnly affirm, under criminal penalty of a felony for false statements subject to punishment by fine and/or imprisonment, that the information provided above is accurate and that the payments described have been made to research participants in accordance with the IRB approved research protocol and university financial procedures.***

Responsible Researcher's Signature: Christine Hardy **Date:** 5/28/25

12.02.2011