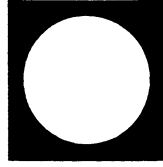


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# 1

How do you know which students are gifted? Most counselors respond by saying, "I look at the list I've been given." Because most counselors work in junior and senior high schools, the formal identification of gifted students is usually a *fait accompli* by the time counselors meet the students. Counselors are seldom involved in their school's or district's identification process. They don't sit on identification committees, and their expertise is usually not consulted. Many are not even given a list of students who have qualified for gifted education, and frequently no notation is made on the student's record.

Counselors may prefer to leave the identification of gifted students up to school psychologists and gifted educators. Despite the fact that counselors do have psychometric knowledge and test interpretation skills, they often believe that intelligence testing is beyond their scope. Therefore, they may not understand the basis upon which a student has been labeled as gifted, and may not be able to use the results of intelligence and achievement tests effectively in helping students. Even more unfortunate is the fact that a great many

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counselors suspect that the identification methods used in their school or district are not the most sound, but feel unable or unwilling to offer criticism or advice.

It is often the counselor who knows the gifted student as an individual, however. It is the counselor with whom the bright student has shared goals and dreams and analyzed weaknesses and strengths. There are counselors who look at their clients and see not just the girl who is applying for science camp, but the future physicist; not just the lonely, creative boy, but the future writer. These counselors are the true "talent scouts" for our society, and they should take an active role in helping schools to identify gifted students.

### **Problems With Identification Practices**

As a major national survey of identification practices showed (Richert, 1985), the process of identifying gifted students is carried out poorly in most of the nation's schools. According to Richert, there is a "distressing gap between research and its application to equitable identification procedures" (p. 4). The major problems with identification practices are:

1. There is a misunderstanding or lack of application of the broad federal definition.
2. Tests are used in ways they were not intended and for inappropriate populations.
3. Biased tests and procedures violate educational equity and screen out disadvantaged students.
4. Multiple criteria are combined in ways that are statistically unsound, or multiple criteria are not being used as intended.
5. Instruments and procedures are used at inappropriate stages of identification.

It is important to take each of these problems into consideration in turn to show how they have affected gifted students.

The federal definition of giftedness was developed by the U.S. Office of Education (as quoted in Marland, 1972, p. 1):

Gifted and talented students are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational pro-