

Washington State University

College of Education

Braydon Smith

Will defend the dissertation on

Date: March 19, 2024

Time: 11:30 A.M.

TriCities Campus – Floyd 247

Zoom available upon request to gradstudies@wsu.edu

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

RACE, EQUITY, & GIFTEDNESS: GIFTED & TALENTED REFERRAL DECISION- MAKING AMONG PRIMARY GRADE TEACHERS

Chair: Shannon Calderone

Gifted and talented programs are a constant fixture of American public schools across the nation. Most states require their schools to offer gifted and talented programs. However, as widespread as gifted and talented programs are, there exists a nationwide equity issue when it comes to the demographics of students being served in these programs. Across the nation, gifted and talented programs disproportionately serve our most advantaged students. One of the most common entry points into these programs remains teacher referrals. This qualitative case study, examines the perceptions and referral decisions of primary education teachers in a large eastern Washington school district. Research Questions sought to understand the following research questions: (1) What factors do primary educators look for when referring students to gifted and talented service? (1a) How do primary educators describe an ideal gifted and talented student? (1b) In what ways do primary educators believe bias to impact the referral of gifted and talented students? (2) How do primary educators view current and gifted and talented programs and referral procedures? (2a) How does a primary educators' views on gifted and talented programs impact their gifted and talented referral decisions? (2b) What benefits or drawbacks do educators see in gifted and talented programs as a whole and at the primary grades? (3) How prepared do primary educators feel they are to accurately identify gifted and talented students? Analysis of the interviews and artifacts collected from the district demonstrated several sobering realities. Despite district and state definitions, there is no shared understanding of giftedness amongst the educators, different behaviors are interpreted very differently depending on what teacher a child has, and parent advocacy has a significant impact on the likelihood of student identification. This study has implications for policy makers, educational leaders, and researchers as we begin to have conversations on what role gifted and talented education should play in modern equity driven schools.