



A Teacher Education Program and the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*

Laurie J. Croft, Ph.D.

Administrator, Professional Development
Belin-Blank Center

Advisor, College of Education Honors
Opportunity Program

Cady Belitz, B.A.

Graduate, Honors Opportunity Program



In 2008, the United States Congress enacted **Public Law 110-315**, the **Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)**.

The HEOA reauthorized the amended 1965 Higher Education Act.



- Congress implemented a variety of changes that effect higher education, including teacher education programs.
- 432 pages, spanning every aspect of higher education, from definitions of educational terminology to student aid
- Title II details “Teacher Quality Enhancement”



- For the **first time**, ‘teaching skills’ included ‘gifted and talented students’
- Teaching skills enable a teacher to
 - ▶ increase student learning, achievement, and the ability to apply knowledge;
 - ▶ effectively convey and explain academic subject matter;
 - ▶ effectively teach higher-order analytical, evaluation, problem-solving, and communication skills;



- employ strategies grounded in the disciplines of teaching and learning that—
 - ✓ are based on empirically-based practice and
 - ✓ scientifically valid research, where applicable, related to teaching and learning;
 - ✓ are specific to academic subject matter; and
 - ✓ focus on the identification of students' specific learning needs,
 - ✓ particularly students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, **students who are gifted and talented**, and students with low literacy levels



- Each “teacher preparation program” was to be accountable for “preparing new or prospective teachers to be highly qualified” and
- possess teaching skills and an understanding of effective instructional strategies to meet the specific learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities, students who are limited English proficient, **students who are gifted and talented**, students with low literacy levels
- and **differentiate instruction** for such students



- Cady Belitz, University of Iowa College of Education Honors Opportunity Student, completed her senior thesis in May, 2010
- *A New Chapter for Gifted Learners: Implications of the Higher Education Opportunity Act*
- Content analysis of [online] syllabi for the Teacher Education Program
 - Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters
 - “gifted”, “talented”, “differentiated”, “high-ability”, “prodigy”



Fall Semester 2009

- Methods English: “differentiated”
 - Required Readings: *Teaching Romeo and Juliet: A Differentiated Approach*
- Foundations of Special Education: “gifted” and “talented” targeted as a category of consideration



- Fall, 2009, continued
- Syllabi = 83
- Syllabi with “gifted”, “talented”, “differentiated” = 2
(2.4 percent)



Spring Semester 2009

- Methods English: “differentiated”
 - Required Readings: *Teaching Romeo and Juliet: A Differentiated Approach*
- Elementary Student Teaching: “gifted”
 - Standard B: Diverse Learners
 - “Explain your philosophy on dealing with diverse learners....may include gifted....
Include links to **at least one journal entry** in which diverse learners were discussed....”



- Spring, 2009, continued
- Foundations of Special Education: “gifted” and “talented” targeted as a category of consideration
- Syllabi = 75
- Syllabi with “gifted”, “talented”, “differentiated” = 3
(4 percent)



Summer Semester 2009

- Foundations of Special Education: “gifted” and “talented” targeted as a category of consideration
 - ✓ “Students with disabilities, gifted and talented: strategies for effective treatment, collaboration between regular and special education teachers, remediation of academic, behavioral, social problems”



- Summer, 2009, continued
- Syllabi = 34
- Syllabi with “gifted” and “talented” = 1
(2.9 percent)



- Only 3 of the 5 key terms were found in 6 of 192 syllabi for the Teacher Education Program over one academic year
 - “Gifted” = 4
 - “Talented” = 3
 - “Differentiated” = 2
- **3.1 percent** of Teacher Education Program syllabi



- In spite of the HEOA, the Teacher Education Program has not launched systematic efforts to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach gifted and talented students
- Foundations of Special Education invites staff from the Belin-Blank Center to talk about gifted education for 1.5 – 2.5 contact hours.



- Accountability provisions are subsumed under Section 202 Partnership **Grants**
- Only institutions of higher education who are awarded Partnership Grants are “accountable” to implement the provisions under Section 202



Cady: “From both my own experience, as well as my findings throughout this research project, it is apparent to me that preservice teachers need more training about teaching GT students in order to best serve their needs appropriately and effectively.”

