



**Calendar Meeting Minutes/G&T Public Forum
(Approved by the Council at the 12/18/2017 Business Meeting)**

Date: 12/05/17

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: MS 447 - 345 Dean Street

Calendar Meeting Agenda

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Welcome - Pres. Camille Casaretti
- III. Gifted & Talented Panel Forum - opening remarks and panel introductions - Yasmeen Khan, Associate Producer and education reporter, WNYC
- IV. Panelists:
 - Matthew Gonzales, New York Appleseed
 - Allison Roda, author of Inequity in Gifted & Talented Programs
 - Barry Oreck, arts education and consultant for Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM)
 - Reena Shah, teacher at Arts & Letters Academy
- V. Audience questions for the Panel
- VI. Public Comments

(Calendar Meeting Call to Order 6:05 p.m.)

I. Roll Call by Scott Powell

Present:

Camille Casaretti

Scott Powell

Charles Star

Antonia Ferraro

Mark Bisard

Neal Zephyrin

Kathy Park Price

Lili Velez

Yanfeng Zhang

Absent:

Nicole Brier - Excused

Elena Romero - Excused

Guests:

Anita Skop, D15 Superintendent



II. Welcome - Pres. Camille Casaretti

- Introduced herself and thanked everyone for coming.
- Welcomed audience to December Calendar Meeting.
- Expressed that this topic is controversial and asked everyone to be respectful of each others opinions so that we can keep the lines of communication open.
- Informed audience there are comment cards available and asked them to write their questions during the forum. If they have a personal question regarding their child she asked that they write “personal” on top of card and someone will contact them.

District 15 Coalition for Equitable Schools - Carrie McLaren

- D15 Coalition for Equitable Schools focuses on in district, Elementary School G&T programs (not citywide, middle school or high school).
- Neither the DOE forums nor the DOE G&T handbooks provide any information about racial or socioeconomic equity.
- This forum was planned as a sort of counterweight to the DOE’s G&T forums which promote G&T and are held every year in every district.
- All 4 panelists have questioned the G & T program.
- Panelists don’t agree on everything.
- Introduced Panel Moderator: Yasmeen Khan.

III. Gifted & Talented Panel Forum / Panel Introductions - Yasmeen Khan

- In it for education in New York City.
- This will get parents talking.
- Very interested in this issue.
- Point of having this conversation is because when people talk about G & T there’s something missing in the demographic.
- There is segregation between general education students and G&T students.
- What is the educational purpose of labeling children? It’s about educational needs
- What do parents want from their child’s everyday classroom?
- What do parents want from their child’s school?
- What do parents want from the school system?
- Introduced the panelists: Matthew Gonzales, Allison Roda, Barry Oreck and Reena Shah.

IV. Panelists

1. Matthew Gonzales, Director of New York Appleseed’s School Diversity Project

- Not an expert on G&T, but has done a lot of research, and his organization NYA has addressed it in one of their Within Our Reach Reports.
- G&T has been a controversial issue for many years. Why does the controversy exist?
- The history of G&T goes back to the 1800’s. It was not systemic during that time.
 - Between 1860-1950: European (and eventually American) physiologists were working vigorously to codify assumptions about the nature of intelligence. The foundational



intelligence tests we used today were designed and normed on white middle class European students. This persists to this day.

- One of the earliest G&T classes existed in NYC in 1922, PS 165.
- In New York City: Early on minorities were excluded from taking G&T tests in a number of ways.
 - DOE found “minimal effort on the part of some districts/schools to familiarize parents with the existence of G&T programs and admission requirements.”
- In 2003 the Association of the Bar of the City of New York (ABCNY) published a report detailing documented discrimination within the City G&T programs going back to 1995.
- In 2008 Chancellor Klein expands G&T programs rapidly and DOE adopts a single, citywide admission criterion and process for G&T. (Use of OLSAT and BSRA)
- Between 2009 and 2010 there was a decline in diversity of G&T programs across the city.
- Number of efforts have been taken to increase access to G&T programs for Black and Latino students. None have worked.
- Some school districts did not have access to the G&T program until this year.
- We need to really ask ourselves, why do we invest in this system? Is it truly serving so called “gifted students” or simply serving as an exclusive space for educational enrichment for the most savvy and well-resourced families?

His contact information is: Email - mgonzaless@nyappleseed.org; www.nyappleseed.org; Twitter - @appleseednyc

2. **Allison Roda, author of Inequity in Gifted & Talented Programs**

- Conducted a study on how parents engage in the process of registering their kids in the G&T program.
- In her study, she wanted to know how satisfied parents are with their school choice.
- Parents could tell just by looking at the color of the student’s skin what program they belong to - general education or G&T.
- After touring a school and seeing the difference between the general education kids and the G&T kids, one parent mentioned “it was two separate worlds, the G&T and then everything else.”
- Black and Latino parents view the G&T program as a way to segregate kids.
- The G&T admissions policy is perfectly designed to achieve the segregation.
- Interviewed several parents: one white mother did not like the G&T program, but mentioned that her husband said that if their daughters get into the G&T he would love it, but if they don’t he would think it’s a terrible program.
- Tests were passed by kids who went to private preschool or were prepped for the G&T tests.
- Parents were getting their kids in the program because other parents in their social network were doing it.
- One black mother said the problem is that parents are paying money to prepare their children for the G&T test. She asked, why should I pay that much money to make my child ready?
- Is G&T best for your child? One assumption is that kids do not benefit in a diverse classroom, but in reality advantaged kids do well in diverse classrooms.
- Is G&T best for the community? Are we really giving all children access to gifted education? Is it good for the school community to separate students into gifted and gen ed tracks?



- We need to broaden the definition of what a good school looks like.
- Even though most parents in the study want diversity, there aren't a lot of options for diverse high quality schools in NYC.

For any questions she can be contacted at aroda@molloy.edu. Follow her on Twitter @akt1211.

3. **Barry Oreck, Director of New York City Professional Development for the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM)**

- Works with Dr. Joseph Renzulli and Dr. Sally Reis, founders of the Renzulli Model
- G&T has been around for more than 40 years. Started in the 80's, went away for a while and came back in the 2000's.
- Two kinds of models: 1. Organizational or Administrative - How to group kids? 2. Theoretical or Pedagogical - What to do with kids in any learning situation?
- Schools should look for what kids are good at not what they're not good at.
- There are many pathways for teaching and learning.
- The goals of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model: enjoyment, engagement and enthusiasm.
- Please visit website www.gifted.uconn.edu for more information.
- They use an enrichment approach to learning and teaching based on interests of students and teachers - all kids could be working in all kinds of ways.
- What makes giftedness? Everyone has the potential to show gifted potential. It's not one thing, it's a combination of things: Creativity, above average ability, task commitment.
- Most important piece is that no one is gifted in everything
- Giftedness is a set of behaviors someone can show. Giftedness should be used as set of behaviors and not of being.
- Basic idea: Look for kids' strength and use various curriculum methods.
- Kids who are in general education classes could be paired with G&T kids to work in projects. Find different ways to group kids. Use flexible grouping strategies.
- District 15 Schools that were involved in Schoolwide Enrichment in the 2000's: PS 1, PS 15, PS 24, PS 29, PS 38, PS 39, PS 124, PS 169, PS 230, PS 261, PS 295, PS 321.

Contact information: BarrySEMPD@gmail.com

Yasmeen Khan: Reena Shah is committed to school diversity. She will talk about what is our kids' education missing without diversity.

4. **Reena Shah, teacher at Arts & Letters Academy**

- She did a science experiment on buoyancy and density with her 9/10 year old students. They needed to build a structure and make it float. Only one kid figured it out, a kid who usually struggled with learning. He worked with a partner and helped his partner figure it out.
- This project showed her that this kind of results happen when different students are allowed to work/learn together.
- Kids develop at different level and different rate.



- She believes strongly that kids learn when teachers make them feel connected to what they are learning.
- No class is homogenous.
- Pedagogy (the HOW of teaching) is as important as Curriculum (the WHAT).
- Kids should feel safe and comfortable in a classroom.
- Schools should have flexible grouping.
- There should be opportunities for reading structure, support of a teacher. Students should be given a choice with that they're doing.
- Thinking that some students are stronger than others is shortsighted.
- Her job is to engage everyone in writing.
- A student who is a stronger reader should work with one who is not as strong.
- There should be opportunities for many students to demonstrate strength in different ways.
- Aren't there children who act out? Yes, always and everywhere. There is no single profile for students who are most challenging behaviorally in the classroom.
- Conflict will equal learning if approached the right way.
- Every class has their own dynamic.
- Why integration? It will provide opportunities to actively teach socioemotional learning.
- Schools should have a class structure based on openness and empathy rather than division.
- Students learning from students academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally. Students will learn to value diverse abilities, voices, and backgrounds.
- Parents think once their kid is in the G&T program they will be ok but it's hard to tell since kids develop at different levels.
- She encouraged parents that have a child at a school with a G&T program to talk with a parent representative of their SLT or PTA about this issue. PS 10 ended its G&T program because parents called for change and teachers agreed. Contact district15schools@gmail.com for support.
- Report any instances of racial or class bias related to G&T programs; contact the school principal. If the matter isn't addressed, make sure district 15 office knows.

Panel Moderator -Yasmeen Khan

- Asked the audience: Who has a child in the G&T program? Most parents raised their hands.
- Asked the audience: Who here has a child in general education and are considering starting the process to sign child up for G&T program? Just a couple of parents raise their hands.
- Parents are working with what they got in the school system.
- She hears so much about differentiation.
- The results aren't uniform.

New York City Council Member - Brad Lander

- Thanked everyone who organized this panel.
- It is useful to understand why people seek this program for their children.
- Invited everyone to go to the Council's oversight hearing on diversity in our public schools on 12/6/17 at 1 p.m. at 52 Chambers Street.
- Thanked everyone for being there.



V. Audience questions for the Panel

Question/comment from audience member: Moved his children from a school with 32 kids in a classroom, his son was bored in the class, teachers did their best. Moved his children to a school with G&T program and they are in smaller classes. He wants to know how are schools funded?

Yasmeen Khan: How is G&T correcting the overcrowded classrooms?

Audience member: Less children in the classroom. It's hard for children to challenge kids in an overcrowded classroom.

Reen Shah: Agrees it's hard to teach in an overcrowded classroom. She has 30 kids in her class. She teaches in an ICT classroom - 3 teachers in a class, there are always at least 2 teachers in the classroom. Maybe figure out how to get ICT classrooms.

Allison Roda: ICT classrooms are based in the inclusion model

Matthew Gonzales: Yes to ICT model. The system isn't broken. We should commit to stop investing in programs that promote segregation. Should invest in a system where everybody has access to all programs.

Yasmeen Khan: PTA fundraising. That's the way parents make a change.

Question/Comment by audience member: Parent of 2 children in public school. ICT is great but some kids have sensory issues. There should be no more testing. Her children have not taken a test in 5 years and they are fine.

Yasmeen Khan: Push by parents of color

Matthew Gonzales: Encourages parents who come from a place of privilege to jump in the fight. Encourages parents to look at organizations who make the commitment. Engage in the dialogue about diversity.

Allison Roda: In her research she found that parents were pushing back on the high stakes of standardized tests.

Barry Oreck: Testing isn't going away. G&T programs aren't going away. Some schools benefit from G&T programs. A school in a poor area got a G&T program 3 years ago. The G&T classroom has 11 kids while general education classroom has 30-35 kids. But parents don't want their kids labeled as gifted.

Yasmeen Khan: Parent who are seeking change in their schools should know it's up to them to decide if they want to dissolve the G&T program.



Barry Oreck: Does not believe in the idea that G&T programs keep white people in the school. Some schools are finding flexibility within their system.

Community Superintendent District 15 - Anita Skop

- Only 3 District 15 schools have G&T programs: PS 32, PS 38 and PS 230.
- PS 10 used to have it but they no longer had room for it or felt that it was a priority.
- Not all schools have to have G&T programs, but all schools should have the choice to keep it. If parents want it they should have the right to discuss it with their SLT and ask about it.
- If there is something parents are interested in they should bring it up at their school's SLT meetings.
- Only schools who have more funding can afford to purchase the Schoolwide Enrichment training in this Renzulli method.
- She believes all children are gifted in different ways.
- If we truly believe all kids have gifts then tests should not affect how we envision kids.

Question/comment from audience member: PS 38 parent, people who are zoned for different school district come to our school district to use our resources. They are the most racist/divisive people.

Reena Shah: When people have segregation they live it. We want children to be happy/learning as they spend their days in school.

Matthew Gonzales: 19-25 year old white supremacists marching in Charlottesville is a show of segregation growing. The damage is superiority complex. We let this happen when we let it happen in our school.

Allison Roda: Parents are concerned with the pressures they were putting on their kids with so many tests. Parents didn't want their children to know that they were labeled G&T

Question/comment from audience member: The idea of why parents look for G&T programs is that they feel their local school was not good . Parents want a school in a good neighborhood.

Barry Oreck: Been working in a school in District 1. They got a grant. It was a low scoring school. They were given a G&T program a couple of years ago. Now they are getting more applicants because they're highlighting the enrichment program.

Allison Roda: In the research she did she found that parents weren't looking at test scores, but relying on other parents, on what other parents thought of a school. She encourages parents to visit schools.

Question/comment from audience member: PS 38 parent/SLT member. He's happy with G&T program at PS 38. Can you take the things that are good about G&T program and make it better? Can you tell us what's good about G&T? We heard so many bad things about it tonight.

Matthew Gonzales: There were many good things about the G&T programs, but it's gotten worse. It's creating more tests.



Yasmeen Khan: How do we meet the needs of G&T children?

Reena Shah: Engage children with different interests. Have professional development in schools. Wants people to go into her classroom and give her constructive feedback. Listen to teachers - what do teachers need in forms of skills and structure?

Allison Roda: NYC is more focused on recognizing G&T kids than what they're learning once they enter the program. Curriculum stays the same. It is all about the teacher. Many kids take the G&T test but not all get a seat. Where are those kids? Schools should meet the needs for all students.

Barry Oreck: It depends on the teacher in the classroom. There are a lot of resources. A great example of a G&T class is that class that share their wealth.

Allison Roda: In the school she did her study, the PTA parents were G&T parents. While they raised money for the entire school, most of the money was used towards G&T classrooms. G&T kids were on more field trips than general education kids and they received new equipment in their classrooms.

Question/comment from audience member: PS 32 parent. Both her kids are in G&T classes. Went to PS 32 because it is more diverse academically than PS 39, but the G&T program is not getting more diverse. The G&T program is holding schools back. Thanks to the G&T program PS 32 lost its title I funding. Does not see the point of the program anymore.

Yasmeen Khan: Parents voice changes things.

Question/comment from audience member: This conversation is old. This all depends on the parents, the school and the Board of Ed. Why have this conversation just with parents? Why not have this conversation with the Board of Ed? Her child is brown if he is a brown child that does not test and stands next to a white child that does not test, people will assume the white child is smarter which is why her child needs to test.

**CEC Treasurer Charles Star thanked everyone for coming.
Asked for any public comments. No comments were made.**

Motion to adjourn meeting - 8:30 p.m.

- Minutes submitted by CEC15 AA Francisca Andino