

Identifying Gifted Students for the 21st Century Context

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ABSTRACT

The world we live in is very different from the 20th Century; the world of the future, in which our students will live, is unknown. Why, then, do we continue to use IQ tests created for the world of the past? We need to assess the 21st Century Skills of creativity, critical thinking, cooperation, and communication (4 Cs) rather than simple knowledge.

Knowledge can be accessed easily by everyone, but the ability to use it in creative, innovative ways is more important than simply possessing it. For the past 40 years, I have been experimenting with various methods to identify children and youth with the greatest potential for the world of the future. Following the important principles of engaging, developmentally appropriate, and potential to elicit important problem-solving behaviors in targeted areas, we have field tested, applied, and evaluated the success of performance-based assessments of the four Cs and ten talent areas for different ages and developmental levels.

Using these methods, in countries as diverse as the USA, UK, Chile, Mexico, France, Lebanon, UAE, and Canada, we have achieved equity across cultures, language groups, nations, and economic groups in identification of giftedness. We also have found that engaging students in solving real problems is an effective way to identify hidden talents in the 21st Century Skills. I will give examples, share important experiences, review relevant research, and give reasons why performance assessments are more successful than those relying on written or verbal responses.

KEYWORDS:

Developmentally appropriate methods, Educational experimentation, Research in education