

Book Title: Achieving Equity in Gifted Programming
Wells, April, published Prufrock Press Inc
P.O. Box 8813, Waco, TX 76714
2020
91pp. ISBN-13: 978-1-61821-877-3 \$24.95

Book Review by Dr. Susan Moore, Johns Hopkins University School of Education

Achieving Equity in Gifted Programming gives practical tools and advice on how to recognize and address racism, implicit bias, and cultural responsiveness. Gifted education has been at the center of tremendous controversy over how to dismantle barriers to identifying and educating gifted and advanced learners. The terms racism, bias and lack of equity are familiar to marginalized populations in terms of equal access to rigorous and advanced curriculum. The problems in gifted programming have been identified, but no one has really highlighted practical solutions to solve these divisive issues. The question many educators and school leaders have asked is what tools can our school use to implement to make equity in gifted education actionable? April Wells answers that illusive question. She is an author, and a district administration in the Illinois School District U-46. She was the Gifted Coordinator where she facilitated the redesign of the district's gifted program and implemented the tools which she writes about.

It is no coincidence this book is published at a time when many talented and gifted programs are under attack for a lack of diversity, inclusion, and inaccurate representation of the student population. This past summer, as Mayor Bill de

Blasio finished his tenure as the mayor of New York City, he ordered the city's elementary schools to adopt accelerated learning for all, stop testing for giftedness and devise a new system of subject-specific accelerated coursework. The education chair of the NAACP's Seattle chapter forcefully stated "We want the gifted program just abolished. Period. It is fundamentally flawed, and it's inherently racist." Well's functional guidebook on achieving equity in gifted education could not have come at a more critical time for school leaders and teachers.

This book was written by an educator for educators and school leaders. Wells took the formidable obstacles to achieving equity and gives leaders the practical advice on how to analyze data, peel the onion on issues of bias and access to a map that can be customized towards individuals assisting a school district's gifted and talented program to become more equitable. She deconstructs the complicated issues and helps to calm the frayed nerves of educators and administrators. Wells understands a key point in achieving equity, it is all about access. "We were zealous in providing pathways for students who were traditionally overlooked in the district." Her cogent book is indeed the roadmap to how to redesign a gifted education program to ensure the greatest number of students are identified and served. The difficult task of ensuring equity in pre-identification is to implement universal screening. Wells wisely stated, "Universal screening provides a big picture review of the data cohort, which helps compose a

talent pool.” Wells’ work gives practical examples of the development of effective programming for diverse students and how to engage with parents of gifted children. The reflection questions at the end of each chapter encourage the reader to examine the policies, procedures and thought processes that need to evolve and eliminated. Wells challenges us to learn our ABCs to achieving equity. A is for access, B is to recognize bias and C is that colorblindness is a myth. She challenges the reader to think critically about their actions and programs and own their bias. This book is a rich treasure of ideas, personal examples, and lessons from the field. Wells wrote a succinct book of self-help and personal reflection for the talented and gifted educators who are trying to get it right. This is the definitive guide for educators and school leaders to ensure culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse gifted and talented students have fair access to challenging curriculum, the development of their potential and at achieving excellence.