Pitfalls to Guard Against
First, users of local norms must recognize that being gifted or advanced within a local comparison may not mean the student is prepared for the rigor of advanced classes. However, providing scaffolding and supports, such as tutoring and after-school and summer programs, make it possible for disadvantaged students to be successful with challenging coursework by giving them the tools they need to reach their potential.

Second, some community members may be concerned that using local norms may harm those who would be identified using national norms. Address this issue by identifying all students who meet the national norms as well as the underrepresented students who meet group-specific norms. This method identifies all the top performing students, regardless of whether or not they belong to a local group.

Using Local Norms
A Strategy to Reduce Excellence Gaps

Summary
Increasing the identification of students from all racial, cultural, and income groups for advanced educational opportunities is a nationwide goal of gifted education. Utilizing local norms holds promise for finding more proportional numbers of high potential students than have previously been recognized. More students from diverse backgrounds will therefore have their needs met and will be able to develop and use their talents to benefit their communities and our world.

RESOURCES


Videos (www.wku.edu/gifted/rap/videos.php)
Give Excellence a Chance
Who is Missing? Finding High Potential Students From Underserved Groups
Shrinking Excellence Gaps: Research-Supported Interventions


What are Excellence Gaps?
What are local norms?
Why are local norms important for reducing Excellence Gaps?
How can school systems use local norms?

“In some high poverty schools, using national norms may result in the identification of few or no high ability students, yet talent exists in every zip code. Using local norms helps find these students and sends the implicit message that every school in every neighborhood has talented children.”

What are Excellence Gaps?
Excellence gaps are differences in testing scores at the advanced level among subgroups of students. Many communities have populations of students who severely underperform relative to other demographic groups and fail to reveal their potential. Recent studies provide evidence that the gaps are due, at least in part, to debilitating contextual factors, such as poverty, negative peer pressure, bias, and discrimination.

What are local norms?
Kentucky’s Gifted Regulation 704KAR3:285 states that either national or local norms must be used by a district to identify a student for gifted services.

National norms compare a student’s performance to peers from the same age or grade from across the United States. Local norms compare a student’s performance to grade level peers in the same district or school. The more specific the norm group used for comparison, the better. The use of narrowly defined comparison groups, such as race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status, reveals which students, given similar backgrounds and circumstances, are achieving or have the potential to achieve at advanced levels.

Dr. Marcia Gentry, Professor of Educational Studies at Purdue University, defines local norms as a set of scores that compares peers using a local, relevant data sample rather than from national data that may or may not be relative to the local setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers of Students in Grades 4-6</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Students</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Students</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian Students</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with an IEP</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are local norms important for reducing Excellence Gaps?
The chart above compares numbers and percentages of students identified as gifted/talented using both national and local norms. Note how the percentage of gifted/talented students in each comparison group moves closer to matching the total school percentage for that group when local norms are used instead of national norms.

How to Find Local Norms
Standardized testing scores normally compare students’ performances with national norms ranging from the 0-99th percentile. However, it is possible to go beyond these initial data, using three stages.

STAGE ONE: Ask test publishers for district norms, which gather data for all students in a given district so that students can be compared to others in their district on any given assessment measure.

STAGE TWO: Look at school norms. Because individual schools within a district are often drawn from disparate communities, comparing student scores across the entire district could result in comparing students of very different backgrounds. In such cases, using school norms gives a clearer picture of students’ potentials.

STAGE THREE: If a school itself is very diverse, use local group norms. For example, if 30% of a school’s students are Hispanic, compare the scores within that group rather than with the school as a whole. Using local group norms allows a better picture of students’ advanced abilities to emerge. They create a more representative proportional sample for identifying students for gifted services, thereby helping to close the Excellence Gaps.