



# **Investing in Gifted and Talented Learners: An International Perspective**

**Edited by Cathrine Froese Klassen and Eleoussa Polyzoi**



Selected papers from the 2009 WCGTC World Conference held in Vancouver, Canada

# Investing in Gifted and Talented Learners: An International Perspective

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## **Editors**

**Cathrine Froese Klassen**  
Executive Administrator, WCGTC  
University of Winnipeg, Canada

**Eleoussa Polyzoi**  
Professor  
University of Winnipeg, Canada

## **Design and Layout**

**Stephen Klassen**  
Associate Professor  
University of Winnipeg, Canada

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## Engaging the Minds of our Youth: The High Performing Student Program at ACS Athens

**Eleoussa Polyzoï**  
**Cathrine Froese Klassen**  
**Jeff Babb**  
**Stephanos Gialamas**  
**Christiana Perakis Evloyias**

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### Abstract

ACS Athens is an accredited Kindergarten to Grade 12 International Baccalaureate school, which offers students enriched programming across all subjects. The newly implemented High Performing Student (HPS) Program, unique in Greece, is part of the school's Optimal Match program in which the curriculum is matched to the students' needs and abilities through differentiation and extended learning. The authors developed a survey (adapted from Williams' Performance Levels of a School Program Survey, 1979) to review the HPS Program initiated at ACS Athens in the fall of 2008. Sixty-two teachers, administrators, and counselors (across all grade levels) completed the survey in May 2009, reflecting a 78% response rate. The survey addressed students' abilities in domains such as intellectual, leadership, creative-thinking, visual and performing arts, and affective abilities, which were assessed with respect to teacher training and professional development, community involvement, student-centered programming, and independent student learning. Results from this initial survey identify the program's multiple strengths and set the foundation for further development and consolidation of the school's HPS Program.

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*The world can be a wondrous playground of energy, curiosity, enthusiasm, like a ball of fire bouncing off of a court, twisting, turning, changing directions, angles, height and depth, seeing, observing, evaluating, contemplating, seeking meaning and understanding. It is through the process of reflecting that a simple isolated idea or concept can be transformed into a realm of infinite possibilities. (Eleni Froustis-Vriniotis, Educator and Counselor, ACS Athens School, 2008)*

In 2006, the University of Winnipeg (UW) in Canada and the American Community School (ACS) of Athens, an accredited Kindergarten to Grade 12 International Baccalaureate (IB)<sup>1</sup> school in Greece, signed a memorandum of understanding inviting UW senior education students in the final year of their degree pro-

gram to complete their five-week practice-teaching block, as interns, at ACS Athens.

In 2008, the first two authors visited ACS Athens as representatives of The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. Dr. Stefanos Gialamas, President of ACS Athens, expressed an interest in initiating a gifted program at his school and asked us to evaluate the program at the end of its first year of op-

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<sup>1</sup> The ACS Athens high-school diploma is recognized by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. #

eration. We accepted his invitation and undertook the evaluation in May 2009. The goal of this article is to report on the results of this evaluation, identify the strengths of the gifted program, and recommend areas for further development. A secondary objective of this study is to assess the usefulness of the evaluation instrument, a teacher survey for evaluating gifted programs in schools, adapted from Williams' Performance Levels of a School Program Survey (PLSPS).

## The Context

### *ACS Athens School*

ACS Athens is an international school that was founded in 1948 to serve the families of the newly established American military base in Greece. Currently, there are almost 800 students enrolled, representing over 45 countries. Approximately half of the students are American citizens of Greek origin; the remaining students are from the Middle East, Canada, Africa, Europe, and the People's Republic of China. Students are typically children of diplomats, chief executive officers, academics, government officials, and businessmen. Accredited by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges, as well as by the International Baccalaureate Organization, ACS Athens is located in the Halandri suburb of Athens, Greece.

As a state-of-the-art facility, ACS Athens is a full-capacity, wireless campus with interactive boards in most classrooms and laboratories. It has an extensive library containing the largest collection of English language books in Greece, numerous fully equipped science laboratories, a large professional-quality theatre, a fine-arts classroom suite, and a music room. The school also has outdoor basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, as well as a large gymnasium, a weight-training room, and an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Staff includes 96 teachers, 64 of whom have Master's degrees and four of whom have doctorates. Teacher-student classroom ratios range from 1:8 to 1:25. Several teachers are accomplished authors in their own right, having published books in the fields of mathematics, history, poetry, counseling, leadership, and linguistics. The physics teacher is the author of the IB text in Physics used by IB schools throughout the world.

ACS Athens has an outstanding record of student placement following graduation, with over 95% of graduates placing in top universities around the world, including Cambridge, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Duke, UCLA, Cornell, and Tufts.

The school is developing a Stavros Niarchos Foundation grant proposal to establish a Research and Development Centre and an In-Service Training Institute for teachers around the world.

### *Enrichment Opportunities*

ACS Athens, as a premier school in Greece, is known for its numerous program initiatives that promote innovative teaching and learning, including a Summer Leadership Institute, a major Newscoop student journalism project, and its award-winning Institute for Creative and Critical Thinking.

#### *Summer Institute on Academic Leadership.*

In 2009, ACS Athens initiated a summer leadership institute, in partnership with the University of Richmond, Virginia (Jepson School of Leadership Studies). ACS Athens students from Grades 11 and 12 first attended a three-day workshop at their home school, designed to challenge their personal concept of leadership as they explored its theoretical links with democracy, ethics, and community service, even as they explored the leadership potential within themselves. This was followed by a week-long series of workshops at the University of Richmond, focusing on the philosophical, historical, ethical, and social science foundations of leadership, the Jeffersonian ideal of democracy, and leadership in the field of science and environmental issues. As a follow-up to their academic studies, students had an opportunity to observe leadership in action in Washington, DC to learn, personally, from leaders in politics, business, law, government service, the military, medicine, journalism, and public-interest lobbying. Steve Madeiros, the school's academic director, reported that "[s]tudents were engaged in discussion, debate, role-playing, consensus building, negotiating, problem-solving, and project work, supported by a rigorous program of multi-disciplinary reading" (Gialamas, Pelonis, & Medeiros, 2009, p. 21).

**Newscoop student journalism project.** Newscoop, an organization founded by Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, has developed stellar student journalists who write about world issues from a student's perspective. The Newscoop project at ACS Athens offers students the opportunity to write, edit, and produce news documentaries in collaboration with other students throughout the world. The goal is to create a trusted news source, accessible on the web by students around the globe to inform each other. In 2009, ACS Athens students produced their first piece, a 26-minute documentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that was covered nationally by the Greek television media, with rave reviews (Kelly, 2009).

**The village project.** Since 2007, when fires ravaged the Greek countryside, ACS Athens has supported the Lepreo Village Elementary School, located in the Zaharo municipality. ACS Athens helped renovate the school, test the local water sources for contaminants, plant 150 trees in the burned forest area, establish a Technology and Education Centre to teach computer skills to students, and raised 5,000 Euros to purchase the school's first computer lab.

**The world debate tournament.** In 2009, ACS Athens hosted eight national teams for the first round of the World Schools Debate Championships, under the auspices of the President of the Hellenic Republic. Countries represented included Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Indonesia, Romania, Scotland, Israel, and the Philippines. ACS Athens students had a unique opportunity to watch world-class competitors in action.

**Institute for Creative and Critical Thinking (ICCT).** Successfully launched in the summer of 2006 by ACS Athens, in conjunction with leading universities, worldwide (Williams College, USA; Tufts University, USA; and York University, Canada), the first Athens Summer Institute marked a milestone in the school's history. The Institute established an innovative school and university partnership to promote critical and creative thinking across the disciplines for students enrolled at ACS Athens. It offered a unique, educational experience for young people from all over the globe who aspire to become world leaders in science, technology, business, government, education and

community affairs, and the arts. Its Director, Steve Medeiros (2007), elaborates:

... [In the summer of 2006], over the course of two weeks, our learning community was introduced to an amazing range of artifacts and ideas: the art of Mark Rothko as a meditation on the concept of infinity, a psychological approach to the issue of managing change, the idea of a map as a metaphor for and theory of how we interpret the world, the poetry of Emily Dickinson set to the musical forms of Protestant hymns, knot theory and its relation to the structure of DNA and the science of cloning, a Chandra Sheka meditation on the White Dwarf and the clash of old and new ideas in the field of physics, exploring African changes and rhythms through voice and movements as a means of creating theatre, the elegant and profound simplicity of the movement of a pendulum and what it tells us about the way the universe works, and the paradoxical mathematical concept that there are different sizes of infinity. And, all of this before the students and teachers moved on to the class!...Through collaborative inquiry and problem-solving, presentations, demonstrations, formal debates and discussions, experiments, writing in a range of genres, critical reading, games, improvisations, simulations, performances, field trips to Epidaurus and Delphi, and regular reflections on their learning, Institute participants explored the content of their...courses, honing their academic skills, while expanding their understanding of literature, science, mathematics, theatre, and politics. (Medeiros, 2007, pp. 20–21)

In 2009, the ICCT was awarded the prestigious Nikolai N. Khaladjan International Award by the American Association of University Administrators, the first time in its 40-year history that it had been offered to a Kindergarten to Grade 12 school, rather than to a university.

**Virtual science fair.** In 2009, ACS Athens middle-school students participated in the first ever virtual science fair, which involved hundreds of students, mentors, judges, and teachers from schools from around the globe. NVSF<sup>2</sup> Project Director, Stuart Fleischer of Israel, noted that "[w]hat was once considered

<sup>2</sup> NVSF stands for NESAs Virtual Science Fair and NESAs for Near East South Asia. #

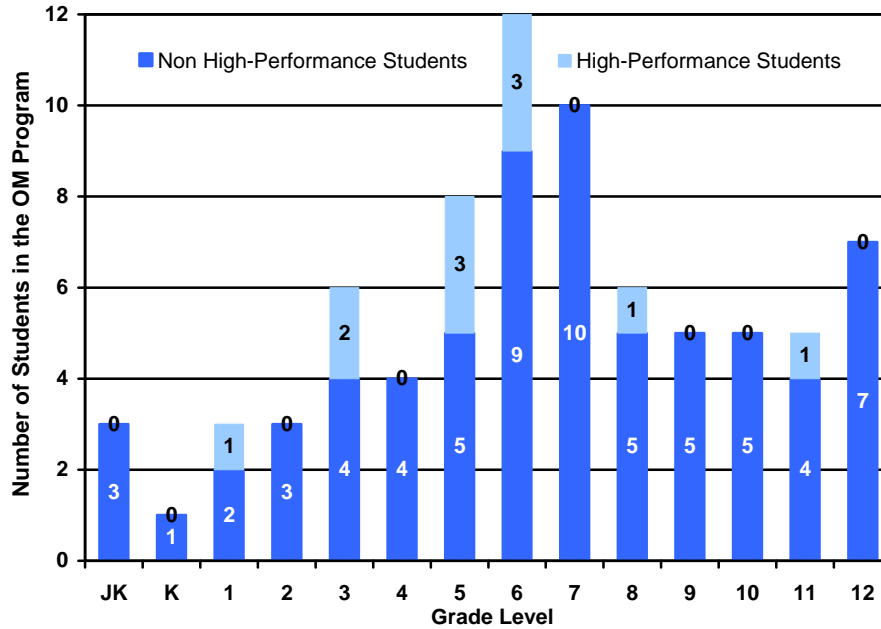


Figure 1. Number of Students in the Optimal Math (OM) Program by Grade Level

impossible is now being accomplished with today’s e-learning tools and e-mentoring, i.e., pairing experienced science educators and scientists with middle-school students. In doing so, it helps establish content-related, curriculum-based ‘tele-apprenticeships,’ or what is referred to as ‘e-mentoring’ (Fleischer, 2009, p. 31).

**Articulation with American universities.** Recently, the school has established an articulation agreement with two American universities in Virginia, namely, the University of Mary Washington and University of Richmond, which allows students to gain credit or course equivalencies for IB and Advanced Placement courses completed at ACS Athens. Discussions are underway with twelve other American universities to develop similar articulation agreements.

In addition to the many enrichment opportunities afforded to all students attending ACS Athens, the school, in 2008, introduced a new program for gifted or (what ACS Athens calls) high-performing students.

*The High Performing Student (HPS) Program*

Service delivery for the school’s high-performing students is provided through its

Optimal Match (OM) Program, housed on campus at the Stavros Niarchos Learning Centre. Johns Hopkins University defines optimal match as “the practice that seeks to equate a child’s educational experiences to his or her abilities, achievements, interests, and motivations” (Haldiman, 2004). The OM program is innovative in Greece in that it serves students who have various special needs, including learning disabilities, ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, speech and language difficulties, Down Syndrome, vision impairments, oppositional disorders, and dyslexia.

In 2008 – 09 academic year, the OM program served a total of 78 students, of whom 11 were gifted or high-performing (see Figure 1). Most OM students were from Grades 5, 6, or 7, and the majority of HP students attended elementary school.

Teachers who serve high-performing students in their classrooms work closely with OM specialists to help differentiate the curriculum, develop more appropriate learner outcomes, and offer a variety of challenging learning experiences. Specific programming strategies used by ACS Athens include curriculum compacting, acceleration, differentiated instruction, and pull-out enrichment. The approach to enrichment delivery through these strategies is reflective of that advocated by Renzulli in his



Figure 2. Renzulli's Three-ring Conception of Giftedness

Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli, 2003), as these programming options are integral to his model. Curriculum compacting, for example, is to be offered to any eligible students, that is, to those who have already mastered the curriculum being taught and can benefit from having content compacted and then use the resulting freed-up instructional time on alternative studies of their particular interest. Such students are not necessarily selected from the talent pool, which Renzulli defines as the “10 – 15 percent of above average ability/high potential students...identified through a variety of measures, including achievement tests, teacher nominations, assessment of potential for creativity and task commitment, as well as alternative pathways of entrance (self-examination, parent nomination, etc.)” (Renzulli, p. 187). The percentage of students participating in the OM Program corresponds favorably with the talent-pool recommendation.

Renzulli contends that in order for identified students to reach their potential, diverse educational opportunities have to be provided, ones which are not part of the normal delivery of services in schools. His categorization of the types of enrichment required, as presented in his Enrichment Triad Model, has become popular around the world. In brief, they consist of three types of enrichment activities: Type I, which are intended to expose students, generally, to a broad range of topics of interest in various disciplines; Type II, which consist of group training and instruction in specific areas for the purpose of developing particular skills

(e.g. in critical thinking, research, or communication); and Type III, which are self-selected by the students, either in small groups or individually, in their own areas of interest and involve acquiring advanced knowledge and undertaking the development of an authentic product (Renzulli, p. 186). At ACS Athens, the HPS Program specialist works with classroom teachers to ensure that the curricula are differentiated and that learning experiences are designed to meet the individual needs of the students in the program. Such program delivery involves mentorships, guidance in small-group activities, individualized projects, ability grouping, individualized learning plans (ILPs), and offering of internationally recognized, specialized programs. The numerous enrichment activities at the school, as outlined earlier, correspond to the Type I, II, and III activities in the Enrichment Triad Model.

The High Performing Student Program, as part of the OM Program, was designed to provide appropriate educational opportunities for students with exceptional abilities and thereby challenge them suitably in order for them to reach their potential. In order to be eligible for the HP program, students must have above-average ability (an IQ of 130+), display superior talent or giftedness in a given area, and be highly motivated, which is reflective of Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness (Renzulli, p. 186) (See Figure 2). The critical aspect of this concept is the interaction among the three qualities.

According to Kalyvas, the school's counseling psychologist and OM teacher specialist, stu-

Table 1. *Sample Student Profiles*

Grade: 3 Israeli Male	Age: 9 years IQ: 150
"Sam is curious, polite, and inquisitive about the world around him. Last September, he came to ACS Athens speaking only Hebrew, but, nine months later, he is fully fluent in English. He provides a positive energy to the class with his uncanny ability to learn. He learns math with ease at the middle-school level. Sam is a teacher's dream. He constantly wants to be challenged."	
Grade: 5 Hungarian Male	Age: 11 years IQ: 140
"Joe is an enthusiastic learner who constantly craves knowledge. This year, he grew out of his shy stage, and his sense of humor really blossomed. Joe gets bored easily if not stimulated in class and is impatient with routine tasks but loves to help his peers understand complex concepts."	
Grade: 6 Mexican American Male	Age: 13 years IQ: 130
"Anthony has made tremendous strides in his studies this year. His effort was lackluster at the beginning of the year until he realized that he can be an "A+" student. He strives to be the best at everything. Anthony is talented in all school subject areas, including music. Last term, he composed and played his own music in front of his classmates. He is a modern-day Renaissance kid."	

dents qualify for the program based on criteria such as superior problem-solving skills; a wide range of interests (is well-read); a creative imagination; keen insight (looks for truth and justice); flexible, original thinking ability; abstract and complex thought capability; and a strong intellectual curiosity. Sample student profiles, provided by the OM teacher, showcase the diversity of talents of students attending ACS Athens.

### The Study

The goal of our study is to report on the results of an evaluation of the High Performing Student Program at ACS Athens, to identify its strengths and recommend areas for further program development. A teacher survey, adapted from Williams' PLSPS by the authors, was used to collect the data for the evaluation.

A secondary objective of this study is to assess the usefulness of this evaluation instrument.

### The Method

#### Participants

A total of 62 teachers across the three schools participated in the program evaluation, representing a 78% response rate (see Table 2).

#### Evaluation Instrument

The authors developed a six-page survey, adapted from Williams' (1979) Performance Level of a School Program Survey (PLSPS). The adaptation involved streamlining the diction and dropping the cognitive domain because of its overlap with the intellectual domain. The instrument was piloted, and

Table 2. *Participants in the Evaluation Study*

Participant	Level			Total
	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	
Teacher	13	11	30	54
Specialist Staff <sup>a</sup>	2	1	5	8
Total	15	12	35	62

<sup>a</sup>The staff specialists include the principal, school psychologist, counselor, OM director, and teaching assistant.

thereafter further changes were made, including adding the “have no knowledge” response option and refining the instrument, as a whole.

The instrument assessed six program domains by surveying the teachers’ perceptions of the school’s performance in addressing the following areas:

- **intellectual:** fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and informed decision-making;
- **leadership:** enabling the development of leadership qualities to influence, guide, or inspire others;
- **creative thinking:** encouraging the engagement in divergent, fluent, flexible, original, and elaborative thinking, resulting in creative productions;
- **visual and performing arts:** providing opportunities for the showcasing of exceptional talent for developing aesthetic productions in graphic arts, sculpture, music, dance, or drama;
- **psychomotor abilities and talents:** promoting excellence in sports, track and field, gymnastics, and dancing; and
- **affective abilities:** nurturing empathy, compassion, moral sensitivity, and a strong sense of justice.

Across each domain, 10 common questions were asked of teachers: (1) How is this domain measured? (2) Are special enrichment classes available in this area? (3) Are there opportunities, outside of class, to develop this talent further? (4) Are there advanced lessons within the inclusive classroom specifically targeting individual students? (5) Does the school offer any recognition or incentives for those who excel in this area? (6) Are there special opportunities given to students to develop or showcase their talents within the regular curriculum? (7) Are others brought from outside of school to work with students? (8) Is teacher professional development offered in this domain? (9) Do students with this gift or talent work with or serve as mentors for other students in the school? (10) Are students excused from classes to pursue further activities in this domain, in or out of school?

The questions were particularized to the demands of the domain; for example, within the intellectual domain the following questions were asked: How are intellectual abilities

measured? Do you offer special enrichment classes? Are students accelerated? Do you individualize student goals? Can students pursue advanced work? Do you offer special options like honors classes, advanced placement, special electives, or self-directed research projects? Do you bring outside specialists to work with students? Is professional development available for teachers in this area? Are high-ability students encouraged to work with or help others in their talent area? Do you excuse students from regular class so that they can pursue independent work away from the school building?

Participants were asked to respond to each question, under each domain, using one of five options: 1 = not being done (this practice is absent at my school); 2 = rare (it hardly ever happens); 3 = usually being done, but we need more of this; and 4 = adequately being done (leave as is). A fifth option was “I have no knowledge of this.”

### *Procedure*

The principals of the three school divisions (elementary, middle, and high-school) distributed the hard-copy surveys to all teachers, specialists, and administrative staff during a general faculty meeting. Surveys were completed during the meeting or taken home and returned to the principal the following day. All surveys were then forwarded to the first author three to five days after the general meeting. Data were recorded on spreadsheets by a senior research assistant and analyzed by a statistician, using SPSS.

### **Results**

Results are reported for all teachers, for all domains, including the “I have no knowledge” response.

#### *Teacher Responses: Program Strengths and Weaknesses*

The overall composite mean score for all teachers, combining all domains, is 2.80, a score falling between “this practice is rare (it hardly ever happens)” and “it is usually being done, but we need more of this.” Such a score is not unexpected since the HPS program has only been in place for one year.

Mean overall scores, broken down by domain, in descending order, are as follows: psychomotor, 3.11; visual and performing arts, 2.91; leadership, 2.84; affective, 2.72; creative 2.63; and intellectual, 2.60. The higher the score, the more adequately ACS Athens is addressing the target domain within its HPS program. These scores reflect the traditionally strong physical education program (highest score) and theatre program (next highest score) that exist at ACS Athens. Leadership, too, is a relatively strong element (third-highest score) that permeates all subject areas at the school. Additionally, there is emerging school support for the intellectual, creative, and affective domains of the school’s HPS program.

When the mean scores are examined by domain *and* specific question posed, as shown in Figures 3 to 8, one sees the rich detail that can inform how successful a gifted program is; how it relates to professional development, community involvement, and student-centered programming; how well the program is evolving over time; and what specific areas need greater attention in order to consolidate the program and ensure that it is adequately meeting the needs of its gifted students, as well as of the teachers who deliver the program. In Figures 3 to 8, the horizontal axis represents questions 1 to 10. The vertical axis on the left-hand side represents the teachers’ mean response scores, ranging from 1 (not being done) to 4 (adequate, leave as is). The higher the bar, the more adequately the school is addressing that domain in the HPS program; the lower the bar, the less sufficient the school’s response.

The alternate vertical axis on the right-hand side of each figure represents the percentage of teachers who responded “I have no knowledge” to a given question. This is visually represented by the line graph superimposed upon the histogram. The higher the line is, the greater the proportion of teachers who know very little or nothing of the HPS program. Thus, the line graph visually depicts how well-informed or knowledgeable teachers are about the HPS program. The figures below show mean response scores for all of the teachers in each of the domains of the survey.

*“No Knowledge” Responses*

Table 3 shows that a significant number of teachers at ACS Athens have “no knowledge” of selected aspects of the HPS program. For each of the domains—intellectual, leadership, creative thinking, and affective abilities—roughly 30 to 35 % of teachers marked “have no knowledge” on at least 50% of the survey responses. Teachers were considerably less knowledgeable about the domains of visual and performing arts (46.3%) and psychomotor abilities and talents (61.1%).

*Teacher Responses by School Level*

Overall mean scores, broken down by school level, reveal that scores for elementary-school teachers and middle-school teachers tend to be higher than those for high-school teachers (2.92, 2.88, and 2.73, respectively, out of 4). This is most likely due to the fact that the majority of HP students are currently in the elementary and middle schools where teachers have more experience with and are more informed about the HP program.

Table 3. *Percentage of Respondents Answering “I have no knowledge” on at least 50% and 75% of Questions by Domain: Teachers vs. Specialist Staff*

Domain	Have no Knowledge on at least 50% of Responses		Have no Knowledge on at least 75% of Responses	
	Teachers	Specialist Staff	Teachers	Specialist Staff
Intellectual	35.2	0	9.3	0
Leadership	33.3	0	5.6	0
Creative Thinking	29.6	0	1.9	0
Visual & Performing Arts	46.3	0	18.5	0
Psychomotor Abilities & Talents	61.1	0	40.7	0
Affective Abilities	35.2	0	14.8	0
Mean	34.8	0	15.1	0

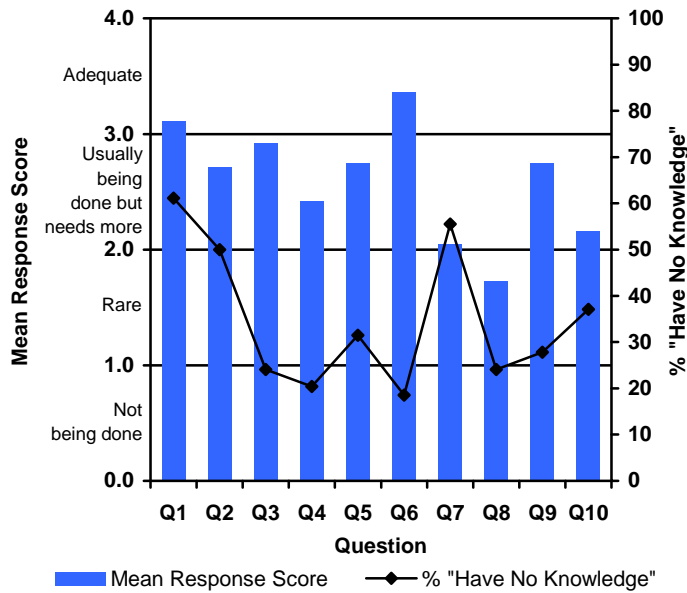


Figure 3. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Intellectual Abilities

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How are intellectual abilities measured?
- Q2: Are there special classes which enrich academic subject areas?
- Q3: Are high-ability students accelerated?
- Q4: Are they provided with individualized goals to meet their academic needs?
- Q5: Are opportunities given to pursue any advanced work?
- Q6: Does your school program provide special options (e.g., honors classes, advanced placement, electives, research projects) for those who perform academically above grade level?
- Q7: Do others from outside the school come to work with high-ability students?
- Q8: Is professional development provided to teachers for planning special academic programs beyond those offered to regular classroom students?
- Q9: Are students who have outstanding knowledge in an academic subject allowed to work with others less knowledgeable?
- Q10: Does your school program permit academic achievers to be dismissed from regular classes for independent work away from the building?

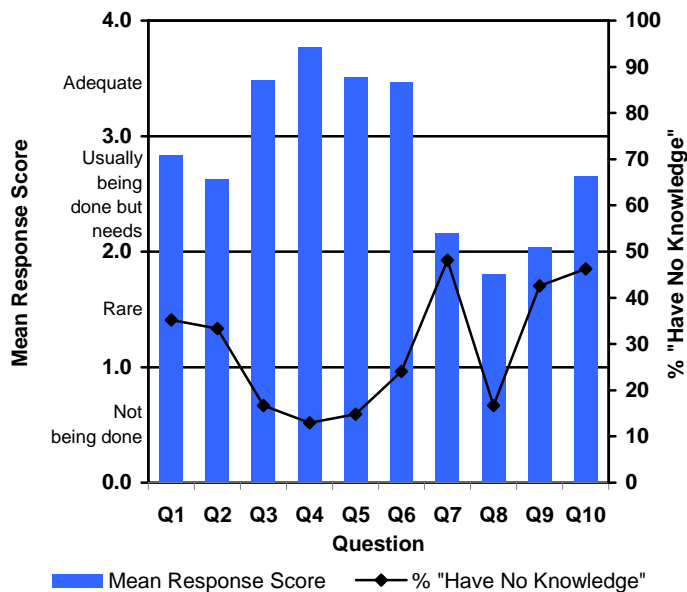


Figure 4. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Leadership Abilities

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How are leadership abilities measured?
- Q2: Do you use students' leadership performance to select them for further leadership experiences?
- Q3: Are potential class leaders—regardless of age, gender, grade, race, or color—given equal opportunities to perform as school leaders?
- Q4: Do students choose their own leaders in your class or school? How?
- Q5: Does your school provide recognition for those volunteering in leadership roles?
- Q6: Are those who are identified as leaders given special opportunities to assume leadership roles in and out of classroom settings?
- Q7: Do others from outside the school come to work on leadership training with potential student leaders?
- Q8: Is professional development offered to teachers for observing, diagnosing, and developing leadership abilities in students?
- Q9: Are school student leaders used to offer leadership training for other students?
- Q10: Are identified student leaders excused from classes to participate in further leadership activities in or out of school?

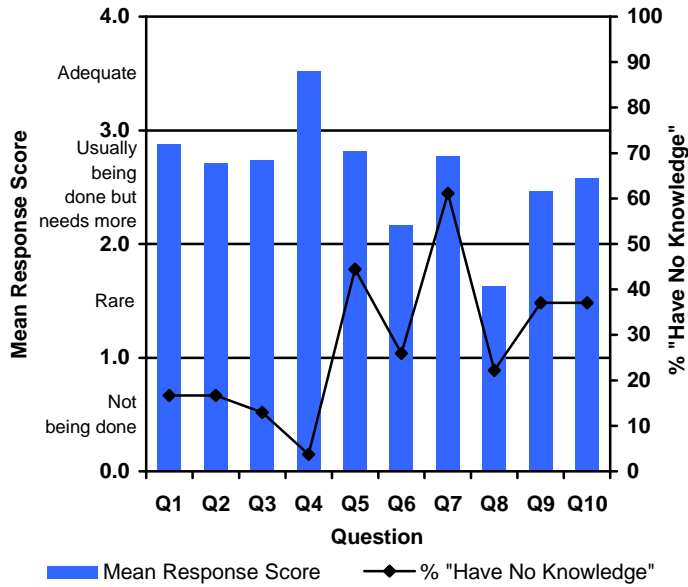


Figure 5. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Creative Thinking

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How do you measure creative thinking?
- Q2: Do you use students' performance in creative thinking to select them for further experiences requiring such skills?
- Q3: Are students who excel in creative thinking encouraged to work on hobbies, imaginative ideas, inventions, or extracurricular projects in class?
- Q4: Do you provide lessons or group activities requiring creative thinking in your classroom?
- Q5: Do you provide recognition or incentives for those who think creatively?
- Q6: Do you have special activity centers in your class for students to work on their creative ideas?
- Q7: Do others from outside the school work on creative thinking skills with student groups?
- Q8: Is professional development provided on how to teach creative thinking within the curriculum?
- Q9: Are students who think divergently used around the school (as mentors or teacher helpers) to work on creative productions with others?
- Q10: Does your school allow students to be dismissed from regular classes for independent or group work on creative activities?

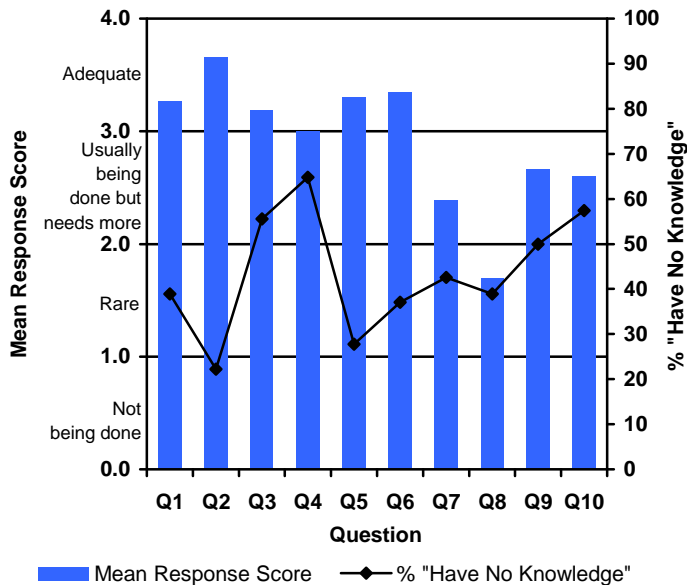


Figure 6. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Visual and Performing Arts

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How do you measure students' aesthetic expression in art, sculpture, music, dance, or drama?
- Q2: Are talented students of the arts selected and actively involved in displaying, beautifying, decorating, or performing artistic activities in your school?
- Q3: Does your class or school attempt to accelerate talented students through advanced work in the visual and performing arts beyond the regular curriculum?
- Q4: Are selected students assigned to work with staff music and art teachers on artistic activities beyond those offered all students?
- Q5: Does your school offer special recognition, awards, or incentives to those students who perform well in the arts?
- Q6: Are there provisions in your school for special visual and performing arts experiences offered to talented students?
- Q7: Are others from within or outside your school brought into the building to work with artistically talented students?
- Q8: Is staff professional development provided to help encourage and develop students' visual and performing arts?
- Q9: Are those who excel in some artistic endeavor provided opportunities to share their talents as student mentors or teacher helpers with other students?
- Q10: Are artistically talented students allowed to leave class to work with mentors or advocates in or out of school?

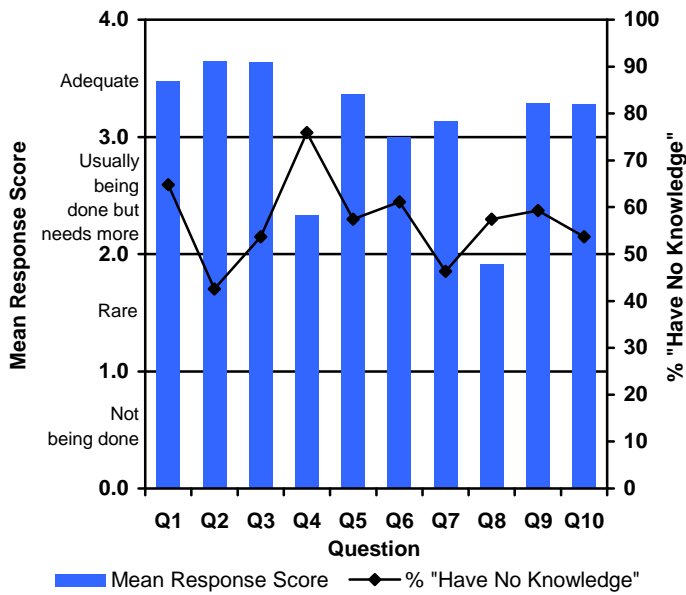


Figure 7. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Psychomotor Abilities

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How do you measure students' psychomotor development in school?
- Q2: Are students who excel in movement skills, actively involved in physical activities in your school?
- Q3: Are students who are advanced in movement and motor development selected for class or school activities requiring vigorous fine and gross motor skills?
- Q4: Are students suspected to be physically or perceptually advanced recommended for observations or tests to further verify physical balance, agility, and endurance?
- Q5: Do you offer special recognition or incentives to students who perform well on sensory motor tasks?
- Q6: Does your school program integrate physical endurance, muscle tone, body control, and planned physical production activities into the total curriculum?
- Q7: Are there provisions for parent and community involvement in physical education and health programs for students?
- Q8: Is staff professional development provided on how to measure and nurture students' physical or motor development?
- Q9: Are physically gifted students given opportunities to share their talents as mentors with other students not as physically inclined?
- Q10: Are physically talented students allowed to work on perfecting their physical expertise during or outside of school time?

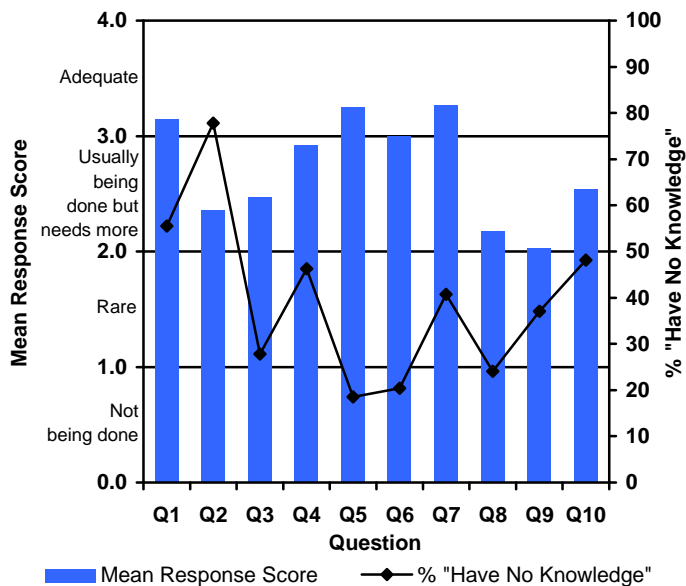


Figure 8. Mean Response Scores for all Teachers: Affective Abilities

**Survey Questions**

- Q1: How do you measure students' affective areas and emotional development in school?
- Q2: Are students who indicate strong affective development selected for enriched experiences to nurture their emotional maturity further?
- Q3: Do you provide time for students who feel good about themselves to continue strengthening their self-concept?
- Q4: For students observed being emotionally stable, are records kept of critical incidents, anecdotes, or observed behaviors in an attempt to show positive growth?
- Q5: Do you provide recognition or rewards for students who are self-disciplined, independent, and self-sufficient learners?
- Q6: Do you provide specific lessons and class activities for students which would purposely integrate their emotional development along with their academic development?
- Q7: Do other school staff or people from outside the school work on human development, motivation, or self-esteem programs with students?
- Q8: Is professional development provided to teachers to train them on building positive student self concept, cooperative attitudes, motivating students to want to learn, and getting along with others?
- Q9: Are students who demonstrate a positive self-concept given opportunities and encouraged to work with disruptive students or those who have behavior or discipline problems?
- Q10: Are emotionally developed students allowed to leave class to work with a mentor or advocate on individual projects of interest to them?

Table 4. Means Scores on the Lowest-Scoring Questions 7, 8, and 9

Domain	Mean Scores (1 to 4) <sup>a</sup>		
	Q7 Outside Expert	Q8 Professional Development	Q9 Students as Mentors to Peers
1. Intellectual	2.1	1.7	2.8
2. Leadership	2.2	1.8	2.0
3. Creative Thinking	2.8	1.6	2.5
4. Visual & Performing Arts	2.4	1.7	2.7
5. Psychomotor Abilities & Talents	3.1	1.9	3.3
6. Affective Abilities	3.3	2.2	2.0
Overall Means	2.6	1.8	2.5

- <sup>a</sup> 1 = not being done  
 2 = rare  
 3 = usually being done, but needs more  
 4 = adequate; leave as is

### Teachers versus Specialist-Staff Responses

Specialist staff (consisting of principal, psychologist, counselor, Optimal Match director, and teaching assistants who work with HP students) score the HP program more highly (with an overall composite mean score of 3.04) compared to regular classroom teachers (who score 2.80). Specialist teachers tend to be more informed about the HPS program and are more directly involved with various aspects of HPS service delivery, including identification, assessment, and programming. Teachers who have HP students in their classroom have higher overall mean scores (2.89) than those teachers who do not have any HP students (2.74), for similar reasons.

### Common Concerns across all Domains

The lowest overall mean scores by *targeted question* across domains was consistently the need for more professional development (1.8), followed by the need to use HP students more often as mentors for other students in the school (2.5), and, finally, the need to bring in more outside experts to work with HP students (2.6). The lower the score, the less fully developed the area at the school (see Table 4). The range of mean scores for these three targeted questions, regardless of domain, fall between 1.7 (“rare”) and 3.3 (“usually done, but needs more”).

### Discussion

This paper reports on the evaluation of the first year of the HPS Program at ACS Athens, an International Baccalaureate school in Greece. Assessment data were gathered through a survey, adapted from Williams (1979), which examined the school’s performance in meeting students’ needs in the areas of intellectual challenge, leadership, creative-thinking, visual and performing arts, psychomotor development, and affective abilities. These were assessed with respect to a number of areas, including teacher training and professional development, community involvement, and student-centered programming.

Despite its nascent stage of development, the HPS Program at ACS Athens clearly has numerous strengths; for example, the school has an outstanding physical education program (having won many international championships in basketball, track and field, and tennis). It has a vibrant visual- and performing-arts program, with annual theatre productions, like Plato’s *The Apology of Socrates*, Moisés Kaufman’s *The Laramie Project*, and Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*. It provides numerous leadership opportunities to both its teaching staff and students, including the in-house publication of a first-rate journal of effective teaching, leadership, and innovation, *Ethos*, to which both staff and students contribute. It also has a strong history of academic excellence, integrates community service within the curriculum for all students, and aspires to be

the centre for in-service teacher training for international school teachers, world-wide.

Despite these strengths, however, the survey points to a number of areas that require further development or improvement. These include the need for more frequent professional development for teachers in all areas of gifted education; the need for more outside experts like scientists, artists, engineers, musicians, poets, ecologists, geographers, entrepreneurs, politicians, and medical professionals, to be brought into the school to work with students; and, finally, the need to have HP students serve more frequently as mentors, in their own right, for other students in the school.

A closer examination of the survey results also reveals that there is a significant number of teachers at ACS Athens who have “no knowledge” of selected aspects of the HPS program. This underscores the need for better communication or sharing of information about the program among staff at all three school levels.

The following are recommendations to help consolidate the strengths of the HPS Program, having concluded its first year of implementation: provide extensive professional development or in-service training that reaches teachers throughout the school; establish a community mentorship program for HP students to enhance HPS Program; incorporate a gifted curricular model, such as the Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment Model, to guide the program-implementation process; introduce an evaluation plan to assess the success of the program and to guide improvement as it evolves; consider a more comprehensive identification system for gifts and talents that is not limited to IQ scores; more fully develop various HPS curricular strategies, such as curriculum compacting, acceleration, differentiated instruction, pull-out enrichment, contracts, independent projects, and mentorships.

The usefulness of the survey, adapted from Williams (1979), also merits some attention. This instrument proved to be effective as an

evaluation tool for assessing the HPS Program at ACS Athens. First, it is detailed and allows one to examine a variety of program dimensions simultaneously. Second, as a standard tool, it allows comparability across gifted programs. Third, it identifies specific strengths and gaps in programs under examination. Fourth, it provides direction for program improvement through pre- and post-surveying. Finally, it gauges the extent of change in gifted programs, over time, through annual assessments.

School administrators who may be contemplating the initiation of a gifted program at their school may wish to consider the following additional factors that influence successful implementation. Teachers must feel committed to all aspects of service delivery; they must believe in the program; they must be philosophically on board. There must be supportive school-board policies addressing gifted programs that provide educational, professional, and administrative assistance to staff and students. It is desirable to select a model of gifted education, like Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model, to provide structure and more efficient delivery of a program. A model of gifted education makes implementation easier, alignment of the curriculum more effective, and the articulation with the regular program more seamless. A director is needed to oversee and monitor the program and to serve as its leader and champion. Professional development is critical; it is the fuel that drives any program. Community mentors play an important role, an option that should be included in any enrichment program. To have a sustainable program, one must also have the funds, ways to support the program financially. Finally, one must have an evaluation plan to assess and monitor the success of the program over time. Once these are in place, the likelihood of success of any gifted program is greater, and the vital task of engaging the minds of youth becomes more meaningful and effortless.

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CORRESPONDENCE: Dr. Eleoussa Polyzoi  
e-mail: l.polyzoi@uwinnipeg.ca