**As you reflect upon your experiences, our readings and the Amiee Mullins video, what do you perceive to be the most challenging aspect of identifying children who are gifted and talented?**

Although the lack of funding and resources makes identification of gifted and talented students challenging, Clark summarizes the obstacle best when she writes, “…although certain characteristics can be generalized within this population, some gifted individuals may not possess the same characteristics as other gifted individuals or exhibit them in quite the same way” (199). Students who are profoundly gifted, or gifted in many different areas, are generally those who “stick out like a sore thumb” and are easy to identify. However, most of our gifted students are not profoundly gifted, and may only be gifted in one academic area, in a creative area, or have the potential to be gifted; but have not yet been challenged. Additionally, behavior issues, disabilities and social problems can sometimes mask the giftedness and make it very difficult to uncover; especially if adults working with these students have not been trained to identify gifted and talented characteristics. Since there are overwhelming differences in students who are gifted and talented, the most challenging aspect, in my opinion, is that professionals aren’t usually sufficiently trained to identify them.

Aimee Mullins talked briefly about the power that one adult can have on the education of a child, and that it takes just “one person to show children the epiphany of their own power.” However, many gifted and talented students do not have teachers who understand their needs and how to challenge them appropriately. In my own school, I am the only teacher who has been trained (at any level) in gifted and talented education. Our special education teachers (at least to my knowledge), have not received professional development on identifying twice-exceptional students; and are generally so overwhelmed with their caseloads that identifying any more students for gifted services (if we had any) is an impossible task. Even teachers have indicated their inadequacies in identifying gifted students. Clark writes, “Teachers themselves often have concerns about misidentifying students or may feel that sending a student from their class to attend a special gifted program implies that they are inadequate in their ability to teach” (205). Professional development trainings can not only give teachers, counselors, and administrators strategies for differentiating for gifted learners, but can help repair myths about gifted education and give teachers tools for identifying gifted learners in their classes.

**In order to assure that we are more effective in including under-represented populations in our gifted programs, how would you design the most perfect identification process and procedure and what elements do you consider to be the most critical?**

One of the most vital elements of any identification process is teacher education and training. There are a variety of identification methods and assessments that can be used to identify students for different forms of giftedness; but if teachers, counselors and administrators aren’t trained on what characteristics to look for, different forms of giftedness and how to identify students from under-represented populations; then those assessments and strategies are useless. As Clark writes, “Lack of knowledge regarding giftedness is one of the basic causes of identification problems” (205). Included in teacher professional development should be training for identifying gifted students from under-represented populations: gifted learners with disabilities, underachievers, and gifted students from low-income backgrounds or from under-represented cultural backgrounds.

Teachers are often overwhelmed with daily tasks, work to be graded, lessons to plan, and a multitude of other responsibilities; so it would be advantageous to have a checklist of gifted behaviors and nomination system in place that is practical and easy for teachers (and other school personnel) to use. This nomination form would include areas for educators to comment on possible areas of giftedness that they have observed, whether that is cognitive, academic, creative, etc. A checklist of gifted behaviors could serve as a helpful reminder for teachers who have little training in identifying gifted students. Clark states, “When given a list of specific behaviors to rate or a list of common characteristics found in gifted learners…the ability of teachers to predict those who will qualify as gifted learners is quite high” (205).

Ideally, a gifted and talented coordinator (that each school would have) would take over from there and collect more information about students’ backgrounds, families, test data, etc. Although the actual identification of a student for gifted programs should include a variety of adults (parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, etc.), it would be helpful to have one individual, trained in the identification and assessment of gifted students, available to put a profile together about the student. This person could determine which forms of assessments might be appropriate for the child (i.e. performance assessments, IQ tests, alternative methods, portfolios, etc.).

**How does the process you designed compare to what your school district currently uses?**

Although my current school district has gifted programs for 3-5th graders, we only have self-select advanced programs in the secondary grades; and therefore, there is no gifted programs. In Issaquah School District documents, it states that 2nd grade students are assessed for entrance into the highly capable program with the Stanford 10 Achievement test, CogAT cognitive abilities test, and SOI Structure of Intellect Creativity Test. Once students get to 6th grades, families help students decide whether or not to take advanced classes. Since there are no gifted and talented programs, teachers are not trained to identify students as gifted and talented. If they were identified, there would be no program for them.