Recommendations for Topics of Interest to Florida Gifted Educators/Teachers

The State of Florida has a comprehensive system for serving the needs of gifted and talented students, with state guidelines for school districts that stipulate identification, educational planning, curriculum and services, and gifted endorsement training. In addition, as well as magnet programs and specialist district schools, a wide range of both charter and private schools serve high-ability and gifted students from a very diverse populations with large percentages of English-Learners and immigrants. The State of Florida recognizes "giftedness" as "*students who have superior intellectual development and are capable of high (*Rule 6A-6.03019 F.A.C.).

Florida stipulates 'Procedural Safeguards for Exceptional Students Who Are Gifted' (Rule 6A-6.03313) to address parental rights. In addition, Florida schools need to abide by the stipulations of CS/HB7 "Individual Freedom" legislation effective 7/1/2022 that addresses diversity and inclusion issues and rights. The 'Parental Rights in Education Act' (HB1557 enacted March 28, 2022) outlines statutes for public education. Part of this legislation stipulates the exclusion of topics related to gender issues in early elementary classrooms, stating "*Classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards*."

To address the current concerns from teachers, district administrators and specialists in gifted education, the following topics would be most relevant to preparing proposals for NAGC 2023.

Identification

Equity, Access and Inclusion for special populations are a continuing concern. Florida stipulates guidelines under "Plan B" for low-income, Title I eligible students, and English Learners. Underrepresented groups are defined in Rule 6A-6.03019, as "*students with limited English proficiency or students from low socio-economic status families*". (Florida Department of Education, 2019). How to meet the needs of students included under this plan in terms of skills, competencies and background knowledge and infuse cultural, ethnic, linguistic, economic and exceptional perspectives remains a concern. Addressing the needs of students in poverty is a concern (78% of students in Osceola County receive free/reduced lunch) as well as homeless students (National Center for Homeless Education NCHE rights) especially those impacted by Hurricane Ian. Currently, there are 3 Jacob K. Javits Grants operating in Florida to address these needs.

Teacher Training

Florida has a range of options to train teachers in gifted education. The State Endorsement Modules were developed to meet the 15 hours required and districts develop their own training for implementation. In addition, Graduate certificates, Master's Degrees and Doctoral study is available in gifted education in Higher Education. Several commercial courses are also available online. Topics that address how to integrate the endorsement courses for all teachers

would be relevant. With teachers under pressure to obtain Reading Endorsements in Florida, the numbers of teachers seeking gifted endorsement has declined. How to infuse gifted education into training for all teachers and how to recruit teachers from diverse populations remains a concern.

Curriculum Challenges with differentiation within standards and acceleration
Florida has new state standards, the 'Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking' (B.E.S.T. E.O.1932, 2019) that stipulate curriculum unit plans ("CUPS") in Math and English Language Arts. As these are largely prescriptive, differentiation for gifted students remains a challenge. In addition, Florida Frameworks for K-12 Gifted Learners, stipulating end goals need to be integrated. Program evaluation remains a concern.

Florida approved the ***ACCEL*** legislation K-12 (2012 F.A.C. 1002.3105, 'Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning') for all students as needed, determined through a range of measures. This states that "*at a minimum, each school must offer the following acceleration options: whole-grade and mid-year promotion; subject-matter acceleration; virtual instruction in higher-grade level subjects; and the Credit Acceleration Program* (1003.4295). However, the awareness of these options amongst teachers, principals and specialists remains low, as well as the challenges of accountability. How to negotiate and integrate these options remains a challenge.

Florida stipulates the 'Development of Educational Plans for Exceptional Students who are Gifted' (6A-6.030191, F.A.C.). How to develop relevant, appropriate gifted educational plans that are linked to student profiles and needs is challenging. This is of concern in meeting the needs of **Twice-Exceptional Learners** where this should be integrated into the Individual Educational Plans. Sessions dealing with evaluating the quality of educational plans would be valuable.

Immigrants
In local districts, students come from all over the world with pressing challenges and with differing reasons for immigration, including refugees, and migrants. In Osceola County, 98 languages are spoken by students from 140 countries; 25% of the district students participate in ESOL programs. Current immigrants include large groups from border crossings, hurricane relocations, war-torn countries. Currently, over 100 teachers have been recruited to fill the teacher shortages in this district; these teachers are undergoing the same challenges of integrating into different education system. Addressing the needs of immigrant gifted both those who are English Learners and those whose English is advanced is a pressing need.

Addressing the social and emotional needs of the gifted
This is of primary concern for secondary gifted learners where the approach is usually via consultations – there are extensive academic options for AP, IB, dual placement, early entry, virtual learning, but the need to focus on identity, personal goals and careers is not being sufficiently addressed.

Addressing the experience of trauma in gifted students. This is of particular concern for students coming from war-torn regions (Ukraine); political and economic conflict (Americas and Central Africa); and natural disasters (Haiti, Puerto Rico).

English Learners

The Florida Consent decree (LULAC 1990l 6A **6A-4.02451 Florida Teacher Standards for ESOL Endorsement.**) addresses the rights of English Learners, and training of teachers in Florida schools to be ESOL endorsed. However, the connection between servicing English Learners and the identification and servicing of gifted learners remains an issue.

Gender Rights, LGBTQIA+, and Gifted.

As stated above, HB1557 excludes discussions on gender in early elementary classrooms. A result has been that many support services for gay students, such as Gay/Straight Alliance clubs, have been reduced in some schools. As the Orlando community is still suffering from the PULSE tragedy, this is of particular concern. Presentations on how to address these issues are very relevant and timely.

Virtual Learning

The Florida Virtual school offers access for all students, and districts have their own virtual programs. While there are specific courses offered for gifted students, the challenge is how to differentiate for gifted students online.

Advocacy groups active in Florida include the Florida Gifted Network, the Florida Association for Gifted, the Future Problem Program International, Mensa and regional groups and clubs.

Information compiled through a forum of Gifted Administrators and specialists, collection of survey of concerns to district coordinators in Central Florida and interviews.
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Florida Department of Education – Gifted Education Statutes: https://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/gifted-edu.stml
Florida Senate: House Bill 7 "Individual Freedom" https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7
Florida B.E.S.T. Standards: https://www.cpalms.org/Standards/BEST_Standards.aspx
Florida Frameworks for K-12 Gifted Education:
https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5660/urlt/k12giftedlearners.pdf
Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning (ACCEL), (2012; 2021). http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.3105.html
Florida Consent decree: https://www.fldoe.org/academics/eng-language-learners/consent-decree.stml
National Center for Homeless Education: https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/