

Researchers find Arkansas gifted-student screenings often miss low-income students

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Credit: Wikipedia

Researchers in the Arkansas Department of Education Reform recently found that high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds are half as likely to be placed in Arkansas schools' gifted programs as their more affluent peers.

In a new study, published in the *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, the authors examined the standardized [test](#) scores of Arkansas third-grade students over five years, and examined the likelihood that the highest-achieving students would be identified as gifted. Of the 4,330 students who scored the highest in both math and literacy, about 30 percent were left out of gifted programming.

"This rate of identification was about equal across various racial backgrounds, but economic differences mattered. Among [low-income students](#), about 37% were missed, a greater proportion than the overall number," co-author Bich Tran wrote in a research brief in *The Conversation*. "Once we statistically controlled for variation in district enrollment, location, region and differences in gifted selection or school policies, being from a low-income family was associated with a 50% lower likelihood of being identified as gifted relative to similarly high achieving peers from higher-income backgrounds."

In addition to Tran, a recent alumna now at Dartmouth College, authors include Jonathan Wai and Sarah McKenzie in the Department of Education Reform, Jonathan Mills at Coleridge Initiative, and Dustin Seaton at Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative.

The researchers advocate for Arkansas schools to screen all students to help determine gifted program eligibility rather than relying on a nomination process. "We suggest using state standardized tests as universal screeners to increase the number of low-income and other disadvantaged students in gifted programs," they wrote. "These tests are already given to all [students](#), so districts could use the tests without added expense."

More information: Bich Thi Ngoc Tran et al, Expanding Gifted Identification to Capture Academically Advanced, Low-Income, or Other Disadvantaged Students: The Case of Arkansas, *Journal for the*

Education of the Gifted (2022). [DOI: 10.1177/01623532211063936](https://doi.org/10.1177/01623532211063936)

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