

JNE ScholarOne E-News #9

Summertime, summertime! JNE is celebrating some big news! We recently received congratulatory acknowledgment from *Journal Citation Reports*® and will be included soon. See our announcement link.

This edition of E-News is meant to get your academic juices flowing as we prepare for another school year. We are once again excited to have our column interview, “FTE: From the Expert” along with some helpful reminders about JNE and ScholarOne. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

FTE: From the Expert

Interviewed by: Natascha F. Saunders, Doctoral Candidate

The Journal of Negro Education had a chance to interview Dr. Donna Y. Ford, Professor of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University and who currently holds a joint appointment in the Department of Special Education and Department of Teaching and Learning. Dr. Ford has been a Professor of Special Education at the Ohio State University, an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Virginia, and an Assistant Professor at the University of Kentucky.



Dr. Ford conducts research primarily on gifted education and multicultural/urban education. Dr. Ford is known across the globe for her work on: (1) the achievement gap; (2) recruiting and retaining culturally different students in gifted education; (3) multicultural curriculum and instruction; (4) culturally competent teacher training and development; (5) African American identity; and (6) African American family involvement. In addition, Dr. Ford consults with school districts, and educational and legal organizations on such topics as gifted education under-representation and Advanced Placement, multicultural/urban education and counseling, and closing the achievement gap.

Question & Answer

Q1: What does closing the achievement and opportunity gaps look like to you? What does this concept mean to you?

Dr. Ford: As you know, the majority of my work is in gifted education. I am working diligently to desegregate gifted education. I argue that the under-representation of Black students in gifted education and their over-representation (misplacement) in

special education contributes to not only the achievement gap but also miseducation.

Closing the achievement gap is a foundation for everything I do, no matter what article or book I write or what presentation I give, it is grounded in the goal of closing achievement and opportunity gaps. It is two things; the first thing is no more important than the second. Whenever one uses either term, it is comparing Black students and White students. Achievement gap, opportunities gap, expectations gap, and resource gap are all terms I use interchangeably. They are comparing performance outcomes, often between Black and White students.

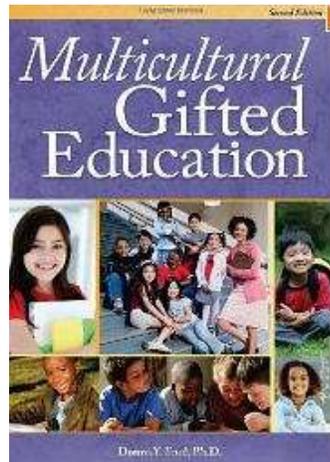
We must also focus on underachievement. Underachievement is not about how one group is performing compared another group. It is about what you are capable of doing compared to how you are performing. Why are there very capable Black students not performing to the level their test scores, and grades, teachers, caregivers, say they should be performing? Underachievers will have high scores, but they are making C's rather than A's. From the information about them, they should be taking AP classes but they are not. So I look at those two discrepancies: one based on racial group comparisons and the other based on self-comparisons.

Q2: How does a teacher, mentor, parent, or coach contribute to that effort?

Dr. Ford: I prefer to use the term family or caregiver in lieu of parent. In this day and age, there are children who are not raised by their parents for myriad reasons. So caregiver is more inclusive. Many Black children live in extended families. Grandparents play a significant role in Black families. However, to answer your question, I think teachers can and must help in closing the achievement gap and reducing if not eliminating this ongoing problem of Blacks performing lower than Whites.

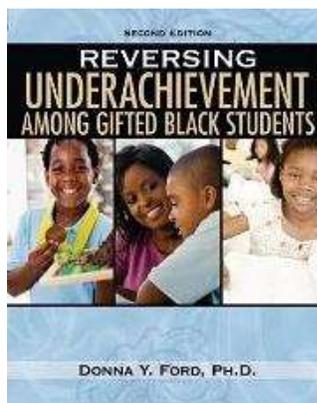
Teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and administrators have to do a lot of soul searching and reflection to be more effective with Black students; most of them are White. They must work aggressively and proactively to become culturally competent. This means dealing with biases, prejudices, and stereotypes—anything that disrupts the educational learning process. They must immerse themselves in the community of their students, take courses on race, culture, and poverty and take advantage of professional development opportunities in order to

become culturally competent. I stress this in *Multicultural Gifted Education*.



Families and caregivers must know that family involvement and engagement are essential to closing achievement gaps and decreasing underachievement. Families are the greatest advocates so they must collaborate with schools. We must make sure we are asking questions and communicating with school personal. And we have the right to disagree with decisions they make, such as placing our children in special education and not placing them in gifted and advanced classes. We have to make sure that our children are being educated 24/7, 12 months a year, during the summers, and we are teaching or home schooling our children. This would ensure that our children are not falling behind; that they are reaching their potential. Families need to do all that they can with what they have to give their children the best education possible!

I recently created the Facebook page called **FAME—Families Against Mis-Education**



(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/877406398986223/>). On that page, we are providing resources that are low cost or no cost. We can educate our children with minimum assets. We must be resourceful in finding ways to educate our children for the entire year with minimum funds. Go to the library, use the Internet, find mentors, and more.

Q3: On your website you stated a quote from the United Negro College Fund, ‘A mind is a terrible thing to waste’. And then you personally stated, ‘A mind is a terrible thing to erase’. Can you elaborate on your quote and its meaning?

Dr. Ford: The UNCF quote is an inspirational one I heard frequently as a child growing up in early ‘60s. My quote means I’m going to use this gift because God gave it to me. I felt guilty for not doing well. When Black students (any student) do not have access to rigorous opportunities, such as gifted education services, their gifts and talents can be erased. There are so many barriers for Black students in accessing gifted and AP classes. We have so many Black students that come to schools who are thoughtful and motivated, with a great desire to learn and succeed. However, discriminatory attitudes by education and inequitable policies and procedures close doors. This contributes to both underachievement and achievement gaps. Thus, a mind is not only a terrible thing to *waste*, a mind is a terrible thing to *erase*.

When we do not identify Black students as having high potential, they don’t use it; instead, they lose it. For example, I am thinking of my grandson riding his bike without training wheels when he was age 2. Winter came and he forgot how to ride the bike. Now comes summer, and he doesn’t recall how to ride it. He needs the training wheels at age 3. Therefore, symbolically if we are not riding, that is learning, during all seasons, we fall behind or forget what we have learned.

There is no time for atrophy. I really mean that. I know that bicycle example was really simple, but I hope it makes the point.

Q4: Do you think many educators have low expectations for students of color? Or perhaps do you believe some educators just may not know how to identify gifted students?

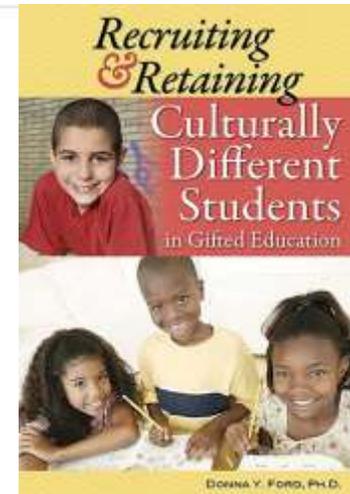
Dr. Ford: There are over 4000 universities across the United States. Approximately 50 universities have programs and classes in gifted education. Untrained teachers don’t have the skills to recognize gifted students. Thus, there are many biases and stereotypes about gifted students. They don’t know how to teach or reach gifted students. And I am not letting them off the hook. Then add race to the mix. How will a teacher who lacks training in both gifted education and multicultural education be effective with gifted Black students? It is no wonder the under-representation of Black students in gifted education is so pervasive, to the tune of 50% under-representation nationally. This amounts to about 250,000 Black students who have been denied access to gifted education classes and opportunities. What a waste of gifts and talents.

I talk about the serious problem of segregated gifted education at length in my book, 'Recruiting and Retaining Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education'. The majority of these teachers are: (1). Not trained to recognize gifted students. (2). Not trained to be culturally incompetent. (3). Female, and the majority of them are not successful working with our boys of color. (4). Not trained to work with children who live in poverty.

Q5: Regarding your consulting work with school districts, educational and legal organizations within gifted education and Advanced Placement, what have been some of your most intriguing findings? Positive? Negative?

Dr. Ford:

Sadly, I have to lean toward them being mostly negative. Let me briefly elaborate. School districts do not ask to hire me if things are going well. They hire me as a consultant if things are not going well, I'm hired to train, evaluate and make recommendations regarding recruiting and regarding how to equitably reduce gifted education under-representation. I examine discrepancies and make recommendations such as education and training, family support, student support, changes in instruments, as well as policies and procedures. There are many components, but ultimately my hope is to desegregate gifted programs for Black and Hispanic students.



Q6: In what direction do you believe research in gifted education needs to go? Why?

Gifted education is a neglected area of study in the larger scheme of things. When the word equity is used, many people think of special education, suspensions, and expulsions. These areas seem to get more attention than gifted and AP issues. I have been in this field for some 20 years. As a young scholar, I considered concentrating on special education over-representation for Black students; but many were tackling this area—as they must. I took a different route; too little attention was focused on gifted education under-representation. Again, both contribute to achievement gaps and underachievement. There is so much that needs to be investigated, interrogated, and dissected about gifted education and Advanced

Placement. This field is wide open and I highly recommend to many to consider joining me in this work.

Q7: If someone was intrigued by what you've shared with us on gifted education where should they begin reading?

I recommend starting with my latest book, *Recruiting & Retaining Culturally Different Students in Gifted Education* (2013).

Then perhaps consider some of my other publications:

- *Reversing Underachievement Among Gifted Black Students* (1996, 2010)
- *Multicultural Gifted Education* (1999, 2011)
- *Gifted and advanced Black Students in School: An Anthology of Critical Works* (2011)
- *In Search of the Dream: Designing Schools and Classrooms that Work for High Potential Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds* (2004)
- *Diverse Learners with Exceptionalities: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Inclusive Classroom* (2008)
- *Teaching Culturally Diverse Gifted Students* (2005)

Q8: Any final thoughts and words of wisdom?

It's important to know that we have some culturally competent teachers, but not enough. We have very committed caregivers but different resources. However, we must find ways to help our Black children and advocate for them in general education, gifted education, and special education. Our children are in school for 13 years. They have one childhood. We have to give them the best opportunities to reach their potential and to achieve their dreams. We must all work diligently to close achievement gaps and prevent and reverse underachievement.

We thank Dr. Ford for taking time to share her story and experiences. Look for Dr. Ford's future publications in upcoming JNE editions. Visit her website: www.drdonnayford.com

ScholarOne Q & A

Q: I was told to revise and resubmit my manuscript for reviewers to look at it again. Do I send my original and my revisions back?

A: No. Please make sure that you are *only* attaching your revised manuscript when you upload your files. The quickest way to check this is to save your revisions on your desktop and upload your file from there to ScholarOne.

JNE/ScholarOne REMINDERS: Authors please update your files on ScholarOne. If you get shut out of the system for any reason, contact us at journalnegroed@gmail.com so that we can help get you back in. Once you create an account, make sure that account has *only* your contact information. When it ask you to add a secondary address do not list the address of your coauthor. Coauthor information is listed later in the system under author contacts.

Once you **accept** a manuscript for review the system is automated for **21 days**. If you need additional time to review, please contact us so that we can adjust the calendar otherwise the system and I will send you reminder emails.

JNE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please click on the link <http://www.journalnegroed.org/> to view the *JNE's* Press Release for being accepted for inclusion in Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports.

Another satisfied JNE ScholarOne E-news bulletin reader.



Lenda P. Hill
Associate Editor
The Journal of Negro Education