

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

IDENTIFYING THE GAP BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF THE GIFTED/LEARNING
DISABLED (TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL) HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE
SERVICES PROVIDED

By

Lucie K. Lewis

THE BOYER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, 2005

ROGER J. DUTHOY, Ed.D. CHAIRPERSON

The classroom is intended to provide a positive learning experience where students develop not only the subject mastery expected but also the self-esteem and self-efficacy to learn, grow, and benefit from their educational experience. However, for some students, the classroom can become a torturous experience. These are the students who, though intellectually able, gifted, and talented, also have learning disabilities that interfere with their ability to perform to their level of giftedness. They are perhaps the most invisible, underserved population in the schools. They are twice-exceptional students. The effects of failing to serve the needs of these students are long-term and rob our society of the potentially significant contributions of these students. Small urban communities, such as Springfield, Massachusetts, struggling with the problems common to inner-city school districts such as restricted resources and limited budgets are likely to

be ill equipped to support their twice-exceptional students effectively. The support gap between student need and community services is more serious in such communities since the risk factors contributing to twice-exceptionality are the most prevalent in these communities. By documenting the presence of a support gap between services and need and validating the impact of the lack of services on the students, the first steps in implementing the needed services can be taken. Using descriptive research, this survey-based study documents the scope and nature of students' needs and the degree to which those needs are unmet for high school students living in Springfield, Massachusetts. This study surveys both public and private schools servicing these students. Further research will be needed to identify the most appropriate strategies for the Springfield area and to define the most effective ways to implement these strategies.