

Javits - TOPS Presentation

GDCALN Meeting

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Agenda

- **Javits Project**
- **Disproportionality/Excellence Gap**
- **Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Practices**
- **USTARS~PLUS TOPS tool**
- **General updates**



Javits Overview

Official Javits project title:

Expanding Excellence: Mitigating Advanced Achievement Disparities Through A Response to Intervention System

Purpose:

- Find potential early using a strengths-based approach;
- Mitigate disproportionality in identification of high-ability/high-potential primary students that qualify for free/reduced price lunch and/or are English learners;
- Reduce the resultant Excellence Gap.

Overview slides courtesy of Chrys Mursky

Disproportionality & the Excellence Gap

- **“The excellence gap ... is [the] difference between proportions of subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement ...” (Plucker, Burroughs and Song (2010).**
- **Wisconsin currently has a stark excellence gap for students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, English learners, twice-exceptional students, and students of color.**

TOPS Tool - What & So What?

What - TOPS stands for Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students. It can serve as a magnifying glass for student behaviors that may then lead to more assessment to determine whether a student is gifted.

So What - Helps with a mindset shift from deficit-based to strength-based. In short, helps promote a view of all students being "at-potential"

A Teacher Must Know What to Look For

Slide courtesy of
German Diaz &
Martha Lopez from
Milwaukee Public
Schools.



Why Use TOPS?

To appropriately recognize potential in students. That means ...

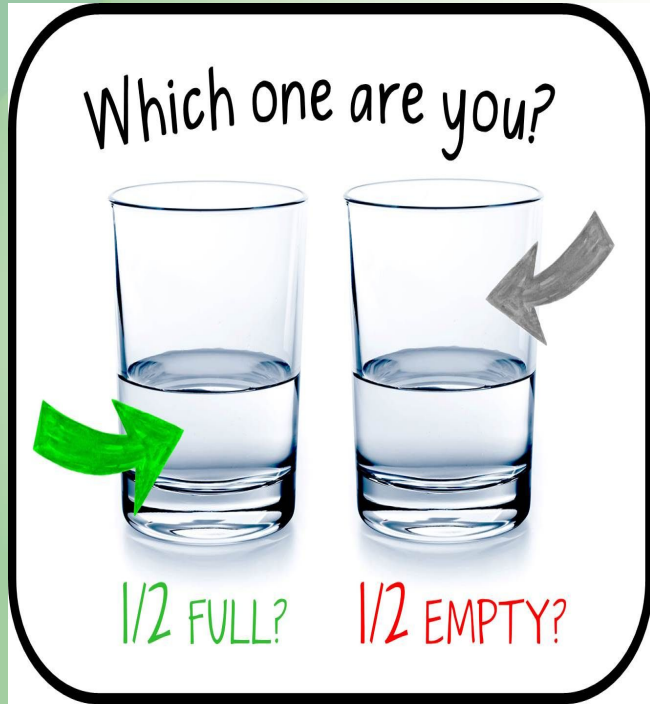
- A teacher must know what to look for.
- Classroom practices should support high-end learning.
- The classroom climate should be emotionally supportive, so children will show us their best.
- Observing behavior over time
- Recall that TOPS is a tool to recognize children with outstanding potential who *may* be gifted.

Purpose of TOPS?

Helps teachers to recognize students with outstanding potential

- **Whole class → individual basis**
- **“At potential” vs “at risk”: opens eyes to all students**
- **Focus on teacher-pleasing & non teacher-pleasing behaviors**
- **Focus on behaviors that manifest over time in multiple settings/variety of domains**

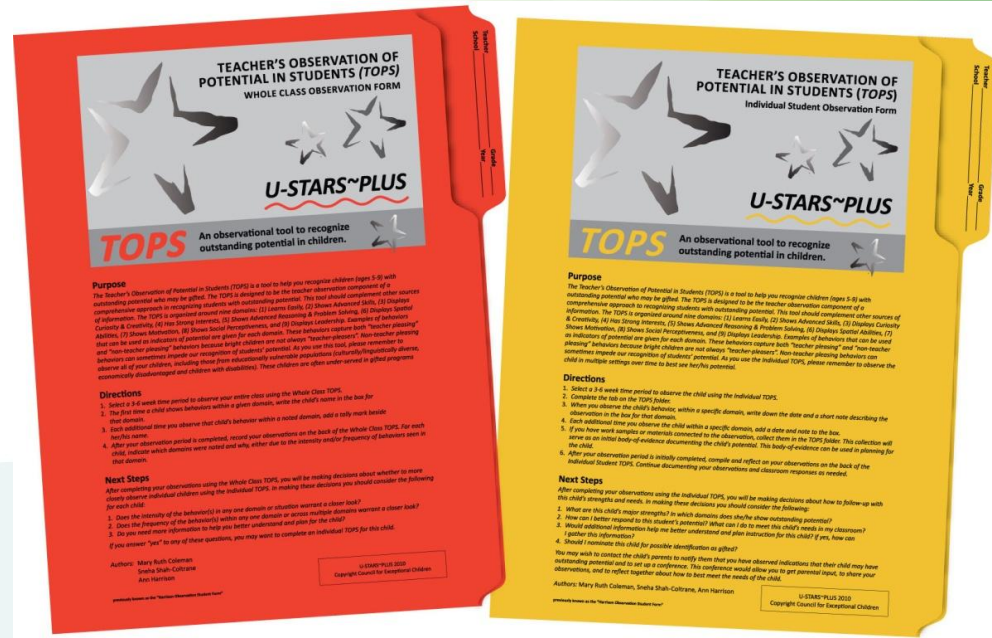
How do you see your students?



Slide courtesy of Lopez & Diaz (MPS)

Exploring TOPS

Whole Class Observation Form vs Individual Student Observation Form



Slide courtesy of Lopez & Diaz (MPS)

Let's Explore

1. Read the characteristics under each domain.
2. What do you notice about the characteristics within each domain?
3. What stands out?
4. Any students come to mind?
5. Share out

Your Personal Norm-Referenced Group

- The individuals you named for each domain of the ***TOPS*** will serve as your personal norm-referenced group. Thinking of these students should help as you learn to spot outstanding abilities in your students.
- Remember that we need to actively search for potential in *all* of our students!

Shows
advanced
skills

Has
strong
interests

Learns
easily



Slide courtesy of Lopez & Diaz (MPS)

Whole Class Observation

- Between a 2-week period (e.g. Oct. 15 – Nov. 2) teachers will observe their whole class.
- Teacher creates an opportunity where students will display many behaviors. When a child shows behaviors within a given domain, write the child's name inside the TOPS folder.
- Each additional time you observe that child's behavior within a noted domain, add a tally mark beside his or her name.

Individual Student Observation

Now, it's time to decide which children to more closely observe between (e.g. Nov. 5 – Nov. 16). Consider ...

- Does the *intensity* of the behavior(s) in any one domain or situation warrant a closer look?
- Does the *frequency* of the behavior(s) within any one domain or across multiple domains warrant a closer look?
- Do you need more information to help you better understand and plan for the child?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you may want to complete an Individual TOPS for this student.

Then What?

After completing the individual form, it's time to decide how to follow up with this child's strengths and needs.

- What are this child's *major strengths*? In which domains does she/he/they show outstanding potential?
- How can I better *respond* to this student's potential? What can I do to meet this child's needs in my classroom?
- Would *additional information* help me better understand and plan instruction for this child? If yes, how can I gather this information?
- Should I nominate this child as potentially gifted?

TIPS for TOPS

- **Get help from your colleagues.**
- **Solicit information/opinions from other teachers.**
- **Plan learning rotations with other teachers.**
- **Take detailed notes.**
- **Be purposeful & intentional.**
- **Collect supporting evidence.**
- **Use TOPS as talking points.**

Reminder

Recognition of potential *does not* automatically mean identification as *gifted*; what it does is demand an appropriate educational response.

TOPS Tool - Practice Time

Let's jump right in using video from a 4th grade bilingual classroom in Milwaukee ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOwVa9f--V4>

TOPS Tool ... another So What

Why Bother?

As per Harradine, Coleman, and Winn (2014), [a]fter using the TOPS, a majority of the teachers (74%) felt they could more readily recognize high-potential students from culturally or linguistically different and economically disadvantaged families” (p.24). In fact, “... teachers indicated that they would never have noted the academic potential of ... 22% [of their students]... had they not been using the TOPS (p.28). Finally, “one fifth of the teachers (20.6%) indicated that the TOPS revolutionized the way they look at students ...” (p. 31).

QUESTIONS

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