Lessons From The Best: How Top Scoring Countries Meet The Needs Of Their Gifted Students.

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Outline

- What determines the “Best” and the “Top”? 
- International Assessment and results 
- Standardization or/and Individualization? 
- Lessons from South Korea 
- Lessons from Finland 
- Lessons from New Zealand 
- Recommendations
The “Best” and the “Top”?
International Assessment and results of Top Scoring Countries

OECD: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests 15 year old students: Results 2012 - South Korea and East Asian countries highest in Mathematics, Science before Finland. Finnish students’ performance has been among the best in all the domains in each PISA cycle, highest in reading.

The Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) every four years - 49 nations; 8 benchmarking participants – 4th and 8th grade. 2012 Report on 2011 tests:

- Reading: Hong Kong led the world at 571, followed by the Russian Federation (568), Finland (568), and Singapore (567). U.S. scored 556 on the international scale.
- Math: The top-tier countries were five Asian nations: Singapore (606), Korea (605), Hong Kong (602), Chinese Taipei (591), and Japan (585). U.S. fourth graders scored 541, near the middle of second-tier countries. On the 2011 TIMSS, however, Finland and the U.S. had statistically insignificant scores in fourth and eighth-grade mathematics.
- In Science: 4th grade Korea (597), Singapore (583), Finland (570), Japan (559), Russian Federation (552), then USA (565). Chinese Taipei (552), New Zealand (497).

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) every five years – 63 nations; 14 benchmarking participants – 4th grade

Reference: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College (IEA): http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/

OECD – PISA : http://www.oecd.org/pisa/
BALANCING?

STANDARDIZATION
• NCLB
• RACE TO TOP
• CCSS
• Teacher Accountability
• Curriculum Test Driven
• Standards-Based Curriculum
• Status of Teaching Profession

INDIVIDUALIZATION
• Differentiation
• Individual Extended Educational Plans
• Personal Digital Portfolios
• Individual Goals – wide interests and abilities
• Multiple perspectives, preferences, needs.
• Creative Productivity
Lessons from South Korea

- Confucian focus on “Effort” over “Ability”
- Advanced curriculum with acceleration and competitive achievement
- Family = success = academic achievement
- Comprehensive system of gifted education programs, schools and provisions
- Recent move to develop Innovative and Creative Thinking
Lessons from South Korea

- Kim, S; Kim, J (2005) Top of the Class. Berkley Trade
- Korean Immigrants – Lawyer and doctor
- Parental involvement in education
- Every home/school experience becomes teachable
- High expectations; high achievement
- Structured home learning
- Family “failure” and support networks and tutoring
- Less focus on external rewards, task-oriented
Lessons from Finland

- Belief in the Professionalism of Teachers – Responsibility versus Accountability – National Core Curriculum
- Teachers as high a status as doctors and lawyers - competitive
- All teachers have masters degrees
- Egalitarianism and equity and excellence (demographics dominant ethnicity, increasing diversity)
- Few standardized assessments; no grades in elementary school
- Ease of acceleration
- Focus on individual needs of students, modification according to profiles for all children.
- High standards in all schools – free education (minimal fees).
- Very little homework – support systems and structures.
- No special gifted education programs – curriculum extension and modifications approach.
Lessons from Finland

Lessons from New Zealand

- Rigorous National Curriculum
- Focus on equity and excellence
- Comprehensive Programs and Support Systems for Gifted and Talented Learners
- Individualized learning programs for all students
- Belief in equity, community service
- Creative Productivity
- Community Focus – Maori concept of Whanau (“extended family”) school learning communities. (“a collection of ideas”).
Lessons from New Zealand

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