

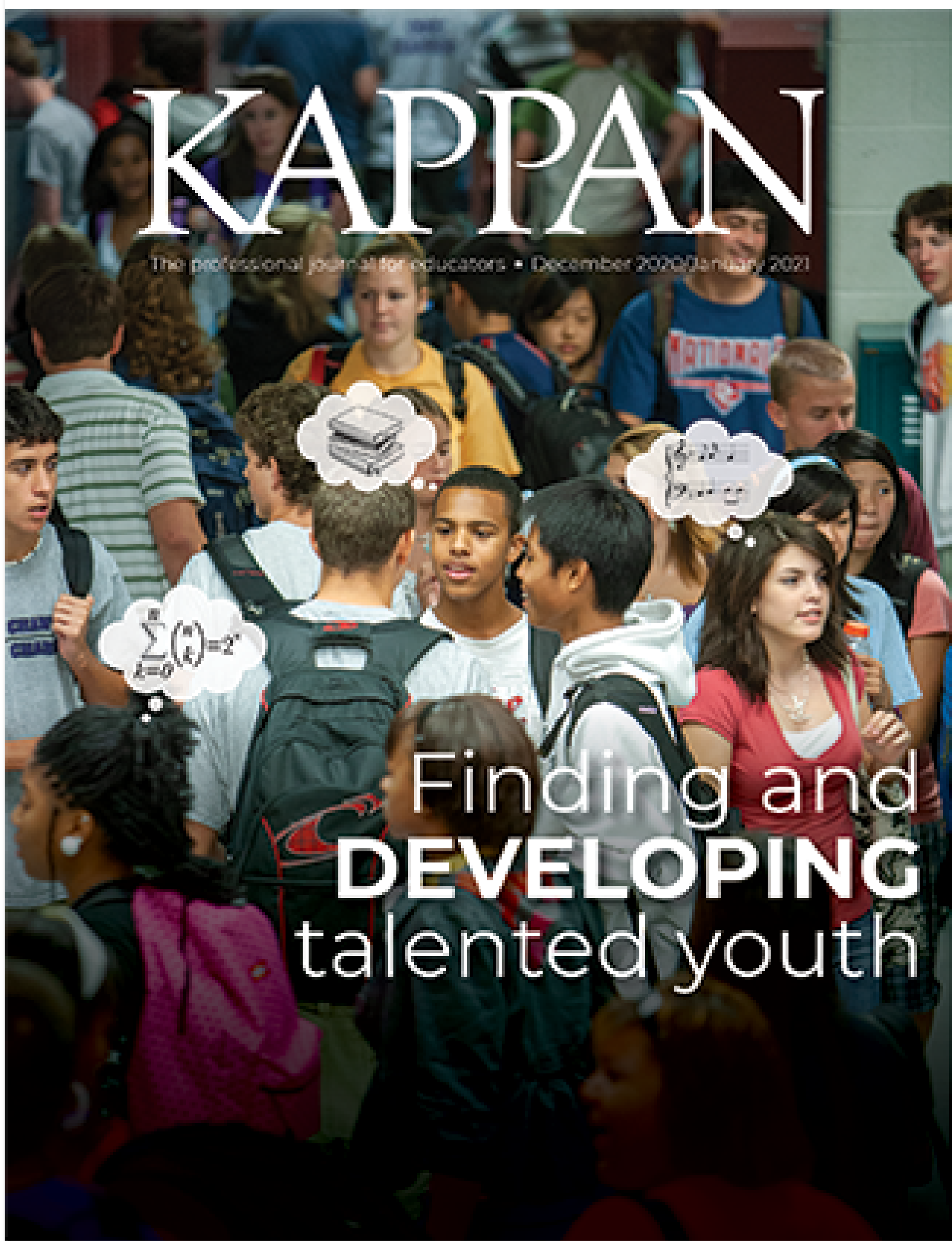


There's Power In Teaching Podcast
 FROM **PKD** INTERNATIONAL

SUBSCRIBE

THE ECONOMICS OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT

By Rafael Heller | Nov 23, 2020 | Editor's Note



When we planned [this issue](#) of Kappan, my colleagues and I expected that it would focus on the research into how best to identify and support the millions of American students who are ready for a greater level of academic challenge, whether or not they belong to the 5-6% of the population who meet the usual criteria for “giftedness.” And, by and large, that is exactly what our contributors have done, in articles that review what’s known about the effectiveness of advanced educational programs, how to select students equitably for such programs, and how to help greater numbers of students from marginalized backgrounds reach their full academic potential.

I’ve been struck, though, by the extent to which these authors have also chosen to highlight the economic forces that have shaped their field. If the nation’s gifted and talented programs have largely excluded poor children, it isn’t for any educationally sound reason, they note. If Black and brown students have been all but shut out of specialized high schools in science and technology, it isn’t because researchers have suggested doing anything of the sort. Rather, it is because policy makers have limited the number of such programs and schools, artificially creating a scarcity of learning resources, which has, in turn, triggered a mad scramble among affluent and/or ambitious parents to secure those few opportunities for their own kids.

The articles in this issue call upon public educators to stop showering those resources on a small number of children deemed (often by way of dubious selection criteria) to belong to an intellectual elite. Rather, they argue that our schools and districts should be careful to assess and monitor the needs of all students, and to provide every student with an appropriate level of academic challenge, whether they are struggling to catch up to their peers or performing several years ahead of them.

There’s nothing particularly innovative about this sort of personalized attention and support. However, it can’t be done on the cheap. According to recent research, many more students can and should benefit from the sorts of advanced learning opportunities that our schools have always reserved for a fortunate few. And in that case, as Scott Peters, James Carter, and Jonathan Plucker put it in [their article](#), we’re faced with two choices: Either we can cut the pie into smaller and smaller pieces, so that every child who deserves a bite can have one (no matter how small), or we can bake a much bigger pie. If, as a nation, we truly want to develop the talents of all of our young people, then the choice is obvious.



SUPPORT OUR WORK
If you found this article useful, consider becoming a PDK member to help us continue sharing the latest thinking in education research, policy, and practice. Members receive unlimited access to our articles.

JOIN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RAFAEL HELLER

Rafael Heller is the former editor-in-chief of *Kappan* magazine.



SHARE:
 [f](#)
[x](#)
[p](#)
[in](#)
[e](#)
[p](#)

< PREVIOUS

[The legal battle over high school entrance exams](#)

NEXT >

[Principal wants interview committee to hire his friend's child](#)

RELATED POSTS



Not an ordinary summer
June 16, 2020



On learning, brains, and zombies
November 26, 2018



From what it's not to what it is
September 23, 2019



In reform decisions, somebody knew consequences
April 1, 2017



Phi Delta Kappan, a publication of PDK International, offers timely, relevant, and provocative insights on K-12 education policy, research, curriculum, and professional development. Kappan readers include new and veteran teachers, graduate students, school and district administrators, university faculty members (researchers and teacher educators), and policy makers.

Email: kappan@pdkintl.org
 Membership/Subscriptions: memberservices@pdkintl.org
 Phone: 812-339-1156 OR 800-766-1156
 Fax: 812-339-0018
 Mail: P.O. Box 13090, Arlington, VA 22219
 Submit a manuscript: manuscripts@pdkintl.org
 Permission requests: [Copyright Clearance Center](#)
 Advertising/Sponsorship Opportunities: [Media Kit](#)
 Kappan weekly email: [Sign up page](#)