

2008-2009



➤ STATE of the NATION In Gifted Education

How States regulate and support programs and services for gifted and talented students

The estimated three million academically gifted and talented students in U.S. Pre-K-12 classrooms represent diverse experiences, expertise, and cultural backgrounds. All of them require a responsive and challenging educational system if they are to achieve to their highest potential.

An Executive Summary of the State of the States Report



“Forty years ago, we realized the impact of a sustained commitment to academic excellence when we celebrated the landing of a man on the moon. Future breakthroughs and discovery in science, medicine, and technology will be impossible if we fail to identify and serve today's brightest young minds. The time to act is now.”

— Dr. Ann Robinson, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, President of the National Association for Gifted Children

➤ Inadequate Commitment to Gifted and Talented Children

The U.S. is largely neglecting the estimated 3 million academically gifted and talented students who represent diverse experiences, skills, ethnicity, and cultural and economic backgrounds. All of them require a responsive and challenging educational system if they are to achieve to their highest potential.

According to the *State of the States* report, there is a markedly insufficient national commitment to gifted and talented children, which, if left unchecked, will ultimately leave our nation ill-prepared to field the next generation of innovators and to compete in the global economy.

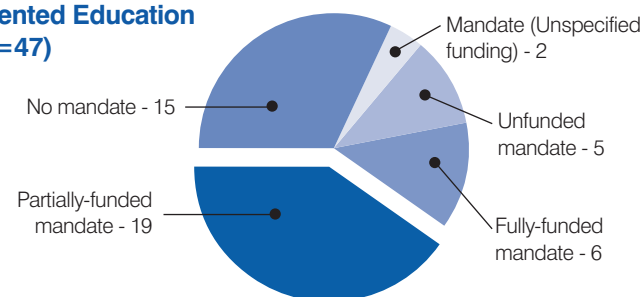
The federal government's support for gifted children now stands at only 2 cents of every \$100 dollars it invests in K-12 education.¹

At the state level, 26 percent of states provide no funding support to gifted education. In addition, a patchwork system of teacher training, availability

of services, and the lack of reporting and accountability has real consequences for high-ability students who may not succeed without specialized and rigorous instruction.

The data collected in the *State of the States* survey and highlighted here offers a snapshot of state policies and practices affecting gifted and talented learners in the 2008-2009 school year. Forty-seven (47) states responded to the survey. Following are key findings from the report.

Mandates for Gifted and Talented Education (N=47)



➤ What the Data Tells Us ...

Scarce Investment

Without support from the federal government, it is up to the states to fund gifted and talented education. Few states provide a reliable and adequate funding stream, leaving local districts to decide how and how much to invest in their gifted and talented children. This unevenness in funding and resources, even in states that mandate gifted education services, means the availability of and range of services is largely dependent on the ability and desire of a school district to fund gifted and

talented education programs with local school dollars.

- 13 states provided \$0 in state funds to support gifted education in 2008-2009, another 5 states spent \$1 million or less.
- 11 states make a greater investment in gifted students by spending more than \$10 million in state funds.
- 32 states mandate some level of gifted education services but only 6 fully fund the mandate; 5 states with mandates are not funded.

Unless we have excellent education for both our plumbers and philosophers, neither our pipes nor our ideas will hold water.
—John Gardner

Without a national strategy or federal mandate, gifted education depends on decisions made at state and local levels leading to a bewildering system of services.

Teachers Unprepared to Meet Student Needs

Well-trained professionals are indispensable to the identification and education of gifted learners. Without trained teachers, even significant investments in other resources and services may fail to attain meaningful and sustained results. Despite this need, most college teacher preparation programs do not include coursework on gifted learners in their curriculum. Additionally, training in gifted education identification and teaching methods is not widely required through in-service professional development courses, even for teachers working in specialized programs for gifted students. As a result, most gifted and talented children, who spend the majority of their time in the regular education classroom, are taught by teachers who are not trained to meet their special needs.

Patchwork Collection of Services

Although 28 states mandate some form of programs or services for gifted children, most states defer critical decisions to local districts. The result is a piecemeal, inconsistent, and at times bewildering collection of policies and programs that vary sharply from state to state and from district to district. While outstanding gifted and talented programs exist, thanks to local support, such programs are highly susceptible to local economic conditions. Ultimately, gifted and talented students are ill-served by this fragmented and uncoordinated method of delivery.

- The majority of gifted children are placed in the regular classroom setting where most teachers have little to no specialized training in gifted education.
- 41 states define giftedness, but 29 states do not require districts to follow the state definition.
- Only 11 states require districts to accept gifted identification decisions from other districts in the state.
- 10 states permit students to enter kindergarten earlier than the state

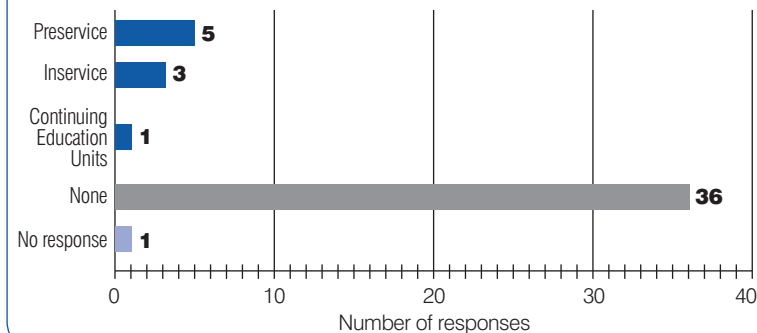
Lack of Accountability and Reporting

High quality gifted education services depend in part on support from the state education agency, and some type of reporting/accountability measures to ensure services are delivered equitably and according to state and local requirements. It is impossible for state officials to make well-informed decisions on gifted education policy, practice, and funding absent accurate data on the services offered and the students being served.

- 21 states do not monitor or audit district programs for gifted and talented students.

- Only 5 states require all teachers to receive pre-service training in gifted and talented education.
- General education teachers in 36 states are not required to have any training on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students at any point in their careers.
- 13 states require districts to have administrators for gifted education, yet only 4 states require them to have certification in gifted and talented education.
- Only 5 states require annual professional development for teachers in specialized gifted and talented programs.

Required GT Education for General Education Teachers (N = 45, multiple responses possible)



cut-off age, but 13 states do not allow the practice; 21 leave the decision to districts.

- 14 states provide public residential high schools for math and science, 2 for the humanities, and 6 for the fine and performing arts. 17 states provide funds for summer advanced programs called “governor’s schools,” and 16 states fund a virtual high school.
- 23 states have 1 or more full-time staff members at the state education agency dedicated to gifted education; 18 states have entirely part-time gifted education staff. In 32 states, the staff has responsibility for programs and projects not specific to gifted education.
- 18 states do not collect information about students in the state who are identified as gifted and talented.

1 The figure is calculated by comparing the U.S. Department of Education funding for students in K-12 education (approximately \$37.6 billion) as compared to funding for the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act (\$7.46 million) in fiscal year 2009.

› A Call to Action

As high-ability learners sit bored in classrooms around the country, our nation is failing to meet their learning, social, and emotional needs that are key to their success. In the 40 years since the lunar landing ignited so many young minds, our commitment to academic excellence has waned, leaving gaps in our ability to identify and appropriately challenge high-ability students from all backgrounds. The *State of the States* report confirms that the U.S. lacks a coordinated gifted and talented education policy and system. Instead, we have holes in a piecemeal collection of policies and resources that results in a loss, not only to the students, but also to the nation.

Our nation needs a comprehensive, national gifted education policy in which federal, state, and local leaders work together to ensure that all gifted and talented students are identified and served by well-trained teachers using challenging curriculum to meet their advanced learning needs. Supporting teacher training and professional development, designing and sharing model identification and service programs, and eliminating policies that obstruct students from receiving appropriate instruction are core elements of a national strategy to support our most advanced learners. A greater investment in these children is a greater investment in our nation's future.

*Education is not
the filling of a
pail, but the
lighting of a fire.*

—Benjamin Franklin

*Genius without
education is like
silver in the mine.*

—William Butler Yeats

National Advocacy Efforts

NAGC advocates on behalf of gifted and talented children before the Congress and the executive branch on a range of issues including teacher preparation, accountability for student learning, equity issues, and funding for research and services for gifted learners.

NAGC members and the general public may join these efforts by becoming part of NAGC's Legislative Action Network, a grassroots outreach program to increase awareness of the needs of gifted children through local media efforts and direct contact with Members of Congress. Visit <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=3642> to learn more and to join.

Visit the "Legislative Update" section of the NAGC website to learn more about NAGC's federal legislative agenda and how you can help. We also have compiled some "how to" strategies in the NAGC advocacy toolkit.

Visit the "Myths about Gifted Education" pages of the NAGC website for information helpful to rebut harmful myths about gifted students and gifted education.

› NAGC Policy Resources

NAGC has several publications to assist state and local advocates with key policy issues. Visit the NAGC website at www.nagc.org for the following:

- **2008-2009 State of the States in Gifted Education (CD-ROM)**
\$15.00 (member) / \$17.00 (non-member)
- **A Guide to State Policies in Gifted Education (CD-ROM)**
\$9.00 (member) / \$9.95 (non-member)
- **Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy (downloadable PDF)**
- **Position papers on key topics**
- **NAGC-CEC Teacher Preparation Standards in Gifted and Talented Education**
- **Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards**



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