



Key Considerations in Identifying and Supporting Gifted and Talented Learners

A Report from the
2018 NAGC Definition Task Force

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Key Considerations in Identifying and Supporting Gifted and Talented Learners

Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Student with gifts and talents:

- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.
- Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.
- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent.
- Require varied services based on their changing needs.

Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.

Although the percentage of students served in gifted and talented education programs does not currently reflect the general student population, gifted and talented youth exist in all cultural and economic groups (Olszewski-Kubilius & Steenbergen-Hu, 2017). One contributor to this underrepresentation has been an assumption that there are few students to identify in these groups. Fewer than 10 states specifically highlight the importance of identifying culturally and linguistically diverse students or low SES students in their state definitions (Worrell, Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Dixon, 2019). Moreover, few teachers have any coursework in gifted education or training to increase their cultural competency in recognizing advanced potential in students (Ford, 2013). Teacher preparation programs typically have either no courses or only one course related to diversity or at-risk students (Mule, 2010). Consequently, many school systems use identification methods that contribute to disproportionality (Grissom & Redding, 2016) when procedures, such as universal screening, have been found to increase the number of low-income and minority students identified as gifted by 180% (Card & Giuliano, 2015). When appropriate identification protocols are employed along with programming models that cultivate potential, more students from historically underrepresented groups can be identified, resulting in a more equitable process and gifted enrollments more reflective of the national student population (Trotman Scott, 2016).

Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.

Without sufficient access to appropriate opportunities, students with gifts and talents could experience adverse developmental effects. To determine whether a student's potential was adversely affected, educators must consider individual students' contexts and previous opportunities to learn, not

The NAGC Board of Directors named a Definition Task Force in late 2017 and charged it with reviewing (a) the theoretical definitions of giftedness (historic and more recent), (b) the various definitions of giftedness currently on the NAGC website, (c) [the Whole Gifted Child Task Force Report](#), and (d) [the Talent Development Task Force Report](#) and then developing a suggested update for NAGC's definition of giftedness, one that synthesizes best thinking in the field today and that might serve as a unifier for our field. The Board approved the report at its meeting on March 16, 2019. The report will be converted to an NAGC position statement in 2019.

just the student's age- or grade-level performance. Adverse developmental effects have been noted for gifted students who do not have opportunities for early education or to participate in challenging programs. This is particularly true for those from poverty who underperform when compared to their gifted peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and are at greater risk for dropping out of high-achieving groups during the elementary and secondary school years (Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2018; Plucker, Hardesty, & Burroughs, 2013; Wyner, Bridgeland, & Dilulio, 2007; Xiang, Dahlin, Cronin, Theaker, & Durant, 2011). Conversely, well-designed programs that challenge and support gifted students are associated with increased success (Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, & Olszewski-Kubilius, P., 2016). Although meta-analyses focusing on studies of underserved gifted students, particularly ethnic minorities, is low, there is compelling evidence that high-ability students from underserved populations thrive when provided with appropriate services (Henfield et al., 2017; Woo et al., 2017).

Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.

Some students who are gifted and talented may also have a disability or mental health diagnosis in one or more domains (Reis, Baum, & Burke, 2014). Being twice-exceptional may negatively impact gifted education identification and opportunity to foster talents (Ferri, Gregg, & Heggoy, 1997; Foley-Nicpon, Assouline, & Stinson, 2012; Rinn & Nelson, 2009), as well as psychosocial functioning (Foley-Nicpon & Kim, 2018). Twice-exceptional students' area(s) of disability (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, dyslexia, dysgraphia, Autism Spectrum Disorder) often prevent performance on academic tests that is commensurate to their advanced abilities and potential (Gilman & Peters, 2018). Accurate identification of both talent and disability domains is crucial to guide appropriate psychological and educational planning (Foley-Nicpon, Allmon, Sieck, & Stinson, 2011; Mendaglio & Peterson, 2007; Wood, 2010). Despite variability in how professionals should address specific domains of talent and/or disability, researchers agree that assuming a strengths-based, talent-focused approach is best practice with twice-exceptional students both in and out of the classroom (Baum, Schader, & Hébert, 2014).

Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their area of talent.

Socio-emotional development may lag behind intellectual development (e.g. asynchronous development). Thus, it is crucial that gifted education professionals and parents of students with gifts and talents be mindful of social-emotional development to promote well-rounded development and self-actualization. Further, qualities such as emotion regulation, social skills, willingness to take strategic risks, ability to cope with challenges and handle criticism, confidence, self-perceptions, and motivation should be developed, as they may differentiate those individuals who move to increasingly higher levels of talent development from those who do not (Dixson, Worrell, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Subotnik, 2016; Jarrell & Lajoie, 2017; Olszewski-Kubilius, Subotnik, & Worrell, 2015; Seaton, Marsh, Parker, Craven, & Yeung, 2015). These qualities should be further differentiated based on the domain of talent and the stage of talent development.

Require varied services based on their changing needs.

Students with gifts and talents have needs along a continuum as well as in a diverse range of areas and domains (both cognitive and affective). Needs also differ across students (Reis & Renzulli, 2009) as well as within domains (Peters, Rambo-Hernandez, Makel, Matthews, & Plucker, 2017). For example, two students identified as gifted in math in grade five might have vastly different needs. One might require greater depth and exposure to grade six content, whereas the other might require radical acceleration in order to have needs met. The services that students require should be based on both

their current achievement level or potential and how the instructional environment addresses their immediate and future needs. The goal of services should be to alleviate a need that would otherwise go unmet (Borland, 2005; Lohman, 2006; Peters, Matthews, McBee, & McCoach, 2013). Because students' needs change over time and because educational environments change over time, gifted education services must change as well.

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