Unintended Consequences of No Child Left Behind Mandates on Gifted Students

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> *We are to provide an education adapted to the years, the capacity, and the condition of everyone…directed to their freedom and happiness. We hope to avail the state of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivate.*[1]
>
> Thomas Jefferson, *1900, p. 276*

Abstract

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation[2], education policy makers have focused on students at the lower end of the achievement spectrum, specifically those struggling to meet standards, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, those who are considered gifted have been increasingly underserved, at the expense of high ability learners in the United States. When the No Child Left Behind law was enacted in 2001, it forced schools to deeply subsidize the education of students performing below grade level. As result, gifted programs have suffered. For example, Illinois's gifted and talented programs experienced a $16 million cut and $5 million was eliminated from Michigan's GT programs. Federal spending declined from $11.3 million to $7.6 million in 2007 alone.[3] This paper will provide historical background on NCLB and gifted education in the United States, funding trends for NCLB and gifted programs, and the impact of this legislation on our nation's best and brightest students.[4]

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind federal mandate (2001) did not intend to leave any children behind, nor was it designed to curb the progress of those at the top of the learning curve. However, since this law was passed, it is apparent that the focus of many schools in the United States has shifted toward providing time, attention, resources, and policies in the direction of students scoring under the 40% level of achievement in reading and mathematics. This focus is necessary in order to avoid governmental sanctions impacting school funding and parental choice to choose a different school if their child is not achieving at this level of competence. According to the Four Pillars of NCLB this law will result in stronger accountability, more freedom for states and communities, proven educational methods, and more choices for parents. [5]

Stronger accountability means that under NCLB, the states are working to make sure all students achieve academic proficiency with *highly qualified teachers* (HQT). There are annual state and school district report cards to let parents know how their schools are progressing. Schools that do not make the required progress must provide supportive services such as free

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[1] Jefferson, Thomas. (1900). *The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*, p, 276. Funk & Wagnalls.

[2] *Four pillars of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. http://www.ed.gov/print/nclb/overview/intro/4pillars.html (accessed July 9, 2008).

[3] Cloud, John. (Thursday, August 16, 2007). *Are we failing our geniuses?* http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1653653,00.html (accessed July 9, 2008).

[4] Kaplan, Sandra N. (Spring, 2004). We stand determines the answers to the question: Can the no child left behind legislation be beneficial to gifted students? *Roeper Review, 26*(3), 124-125; Gallagher, James J. (Spring, 2004). No Child Left Behind and Gifted Education, *Roeper Review, 26*(3), 121-123.

[5] Four Pillars of NCLB:*Guide to Education and No Child Left Behind*. (2004). http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/guide/guide_pg12.html#history (accessed July 9, 2008).

tutoring and after-school assistance. If they do not make *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) after five years, there will be sanctions on the schools. Such measures may involve staffing changes that include firing teachers and administrators.

Unfortunately, threat or imposed sanctions do not seem to be effective motivators for improving teaching or learning. Schools and districts where underachievement is most prevalent, most likely include American's urban population of students who are low income or minority with disadvantaged learners or those who experience low levels of home support, are most accountable. Many of these schools now face losing experienced dedicated, teachers with administrators who may understand the very needs and issues of their community of learners. These schools have teachers and administrators who realize that success is not entirely dependent upon test scores. While high stakes testing is the engine that drives NCLB, there is growing literature to suggest unintended consequences are damaging the education of our students.[6]

More freedom for states and communities allows each states and school districts flexibility in how they use federal education funds. This flexibility allows districts to use their funds for their needs whether it be hiring new teachers, increasing teacher pay, or improving training for teachers. However, most schools in their desperate zest to improve test scores for struggling students, overlook those who exceed the minimum standards. Gifted students' needs are compromised as a result of unmet levels of challenge and opportunity. This does not represent freedom for high ability students in the educational system, nor does it provide teacher incentive or support to meet gifted student's needs.

Proven education methods implement scientific research to determine which educational programs have proven to be effective. Federal funding is specifically targeted to support specific programs and different teaching methods that have been proven effective. The difficulty with this approach is the variation of what is effective for student learning. Too many U.S. schools "over-invest in testing and under-invest in capacity building." Design flaws in the law include weak knowledge and theories about how to turn around failing schools to become more accountable and academically proficient. Building effective schools is complex and expensive. In addition Elmore[7] states that NCLB defects include weak ungrounded theories that should direct long-term solutions for school improvement and professional development.

More choices for parents mean that if a school has not met the state standards for two consecutive years, it is a school in need of improvement. Parents can have the option of transferring their children to better performing schools within their district. Students who are from low-income families and are in schools that cannot meet the standards for three years can receive supplemental educational services (SES). These services include tutoring, summer school, and after-school services. Students who may attend violent, dangerous schools, or have been victims of violent crimes while in school have the option to transfer to a safer school in their district. The irony of this sanction is that parents may transfer their children to another school without assurance of improved instructional practices in neither the school that they left, nor the school they will attend. This increases enrollment instability of both schools, not to mention concomitant academic, social, and emotional issues of transfer students.

[6] Nichols, Sharon L., and David C. Berliner. (May, 2008). Why has high-stakes testing so easily slipped into contemporary American life? *Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(9), 672-676.

[7] Elmore, Richard F. (November, 2003). A plea for strong practice. *Educational Leadership, 61*(3), 6-10.

Unintended Consequences: Narratives from the Field

From a listserv inquiry[8] in January 2008, the author gathered written comments from 25 respondents in three states in the Midwest. The question was posed, *How has the NCLB legislative impact made a difference in education (e.g. resources, attention, time, faculty, district focus, etc.) of your gifted population of students*? According to responses from multiple teachers, coordinators of gifted and talented programs, administrators, and parents these conclusions were drawn. Gifted students are overlooked and underserved as noted by these respondents. One teacher laments that there is a lack of space for her gifted classroom. She states, *next year the gifted program in our school has to share one room with special education to make room for another elementary classroom. There are other programs that could be asked to do this, but it is the GT program that will be hit again. I guess I am glad that I am retiring.*

Teacher of the Gifted in Iowa

Many teachers stated that district focus is on low performing students while bright students' scores are slipping. Sadly, the districts do not seem concerned because low students reach average proficiency. This teacher says, *the biggest impact I have seen with the NCLB is that all the focus seems to be on the low performing students. As the TAG instructor, I analyzed the ITBS [Iowa Tests of Basic Skills] scores for my gifted kids and found that many of them had shown significant decreases in their scores in the math area. Many of them showed a 20-point decrease or more! Unfortunately, this was not even a major issue with our district because they [gifted students] had scored* ***above*** *the State of Iowa NCLB minimum score.*

Coordinator of Gifted Programs in Iowa

Vast amount of time, money, and energy is focused on meeting the NCLB mandates in many districts. Curriculum is unchallenging, as gifted students are forced to review concepts they already have mastered. For example, another teacher writes, *the curriculum is being 'watered down' to fit lower students so that the NCLB scores show that those students meet the goal. Teachers felt that they couldn't 'move on' because so many students hadn't mastered a concept. Therefore, those that had mastered it, sat and reviewed….again and again.*

I was allowed time with the top kids to enrich them but this was limited to a 30-minute period a week, not nearly enough. Teachers are reluctant to let students out of class. They don't see that students already know material. Pre-testing was encouraged, but not accepted by most teachers.

Talented and Gifted Teacher in Iowa

One woman shares that there is a lack of district services, focus, time, or resources in gifted education. She says, *In my position as gifted facilitator for grades K-8 for 20 years and raising two grown gifted students in Kansas, I will tell you that there has been NO significant impact in our county in services, district focus, additional time, or in regular education to teach the gifted. I have 65 students on my caseload and provide advanced classes for grades 6-8 plus test-outs of regular curriculum, enrichments, independent studies, etc. Our classroom teachers are so overburdened with additional NCLB testing, preparation for testing, and paperwork that*

[8] University of Iowa listserv. (2008). As organized and monitored by Dr. Laurie Croft. Email laurie-croft@uiowa.edu

they can't possibly keep up with that much less provide more for gifted students. Unfortunately, gifted students are expected to "make it on their own."

Facilitator of Gifted Students in Kansas

My role as principal is to continually advocate for necessary resources to meet the needs of my students. It is a real up hill battle to say the very least. Our district is about 60% free/reduced lunch at the elementary level so the needs are very high. The main goal is to have the schools make AYP [Annual Yearly Progress] and almost all district and federal resources go to support those efforts. It is very frustrating.

Elementary Principal in Illinois

Again, instructional focus is on lower achieving students as growth declines for gifted learners. This woman shares her experiences. *At almost every grade level, gender, and S.E.S.* [social economic status] *our highest achieving section of students is decreasing. We are seeing growth in our median population of students. While it is evident that NCLB is working to help some of our lower achieving students, it is definitely having a negative impact on our high achieving students simultaneously! Many of the general education staff expressed concern about being required to teach to the lower achieving group in order to bring them up to the proficiency level and not having the time to give any consideration to the high-end students.*

Gifted Teacher in Iowa

History of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The NCLB Act was an attempt to implement more rigor into school systems by punishing those whose students did not pass standardized tests. However, it has had unintended consequences for high achievers. This law originates from the 1954 landmark case of Brown vs. the Board of Education[9] when the term "separate but equal" was determined to be unconstitutional. In 1965, a year after the Civil Rights Act was passed, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)[10] became law. The NCLB Act is the updated version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. This is the primary federal education law that describes federal requirements for the nation's public schools. The NCLB Act was passed in 2001 with bipartisan support and signed into law on January 8, 2002 by President George W. Bush.

This year (2008) marks the sixth anniversary of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, has been on a three-month tour of the country building momentum for a movement that recognizes education is, in fact, a civil right. She has been interacting with stakeholders to consider how to help every student achieve their potential. According to the Secretary Spellings' online Travel Log called *Notes from the Road,*[11] she has visited 22 states and met with 9 governors and 17 state education chiefs. She has also met with members of Congress, testified before state legislatures, visited schools, and held roundtable discussions with business leaders, superintendents, parents, and community members. She has

[9] Brown v. the Board of Education. (1954). http://brownvboard.org/summary/ (accessed September 14, 2008).

[10] Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (2001). http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html (accessed September 14, 2008).

[11] *Notes from the Road*: Press releases from U.S. secretary's travel log. http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/notesfromtheroad/index.html#aa-2008 (accessed September 14, 2008).

participated in classrooms, met with university presidents, and discussed educational reform with Microsoft chief executive, Bill Gates. These visits continued the national conversation about how to strengthen and improve NCLB. While discussions support the idea that our nation is on the move and that our schools and students are making progress, it is disappointing that progress of gifted students was not a topic of concern.

The U.S. Department in Washington, D.C. will publish a new resource called the National Dashboard[12] that shows how each state is doing on key indicators, such as graduation rates and achievement gaps. Will this data guide help educators, policymakers, and parents better understand how the best and brightest in their states are doing? The dropout crisis in our nation's high schools is as relevant for gifted students as it is for lower achieving ones. Approximately 5% of both populations drop out of school. Up to 20% of students who drop out, test in the gifted range according to the recent *Handbook of Gifted Education*.[13] The accountability movement must strengthen and improve education for all students, including our most able learners. The tendency to misunderstand and overlook gifted students is historically evident.

History of Contemporary Gifted Education

Slighting the needs of gifted children is not a new problem. Historically, there exists both ambivalence and tension in any democratic society between equity and excellence when any one group has attention or advantages seemingly not available for all members. As a culture, Americans are ambivalent about genius or excellence. We seem to simultaneously admire and admonish giftedness as an undeserved, unearned privilege.

Several significant events precede the contemporary gifted education movement in the United States. In 1869 in a study called "Hereditary Genius" by Sir Frances Galton, it was determined that genius was genetic or caused by hereditary factors. Researchers were interested in how to determine who was highly intelligent. From this the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test was developed in 1900 then revamped in 1916. In 1925 Lewis M. Terman began the classic 30-year study of identified gifted students. These individuals, selected by a single intelligence quotient (IQ), were followed into adulthood. The study of gifted individuals was centered on precocity, rarity, and oddity rather than characteristics of difference that might represent high performing students in a "normal" school setting.[14] Gifted students did not generally receive programmatic attention or opportunities in school.

Interestingly, the Soviets launched Sputnik into outer space in 1957, causing sudden increase in the U.S. mathematics and science curriculum, particularly in coursework that was condensed for high school and college students. Education of America's best and brightest students took center stage. Gifted programs sprang up in public schools. Private schools were founded and attention to gifted learners flourished. Interestingly, on a recent trip to Russia with National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) travel experience with the People to People Organization, the author had a professional opportunity to visit schools for the gifted in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Dr. Evgeny Markelov, principal of the State Educational Institution Boarding School for Intellectual Students, remarked that Russians feel "suspicious of people who are

[12] National dashboard: Mapping educational progress (2008). http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/results/progress/index.html (accessed September 14, 2008).

[13] Colangelo, Nicolas, and Gary A. Davis. (2002). *Handbook of gifted education (3rd ed.).* Allyn and Bacon.

[14] Davis, Gary A., and Sylvia B. Rimm. (2003). *Education of the gifted and talented (5th ed.).* Allyn and Bacon.

clever," depicting their views of the United States' interest in education for students of intellectual potential in during this time period in history. Unfortunately, U.S. sentiment was eventually similar and our enthusiasm for gifted education waned after approximately five years.

Following this fading interest in gifted education, national reports and studies have driven the current level of interest. In 1972 the Education of the Gifted and Talented, *The Marland Report,*[15] was published indicating that 5-7% of students in the U.S. were gifted, but most were not receiving the education they deserved. In the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*[16] by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a critical analysis of the U.S. educational system, indicated that the U.S. was losing ground compared to other nations in educating its youth, particularly the gifted ones. In 1993 *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent,*[17] the executive summary suggests that, the United States is squandering one of its most precious resources--the gifts, talents, and high interests of many of its students. In a broad range of intellectual and artistic endeavors, it seems clear these students are not challenged. This problem is especially severe among economically disadvantaged and minority students, who have access to fewer advanced educational opportunities and whose talents often go unnoticed.

In a more recent publication, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* by Colangelo, Assouline, and Gross,[18] these scholars argue for the academic acceleration of qualified gifted and talented students Despite evidence of acceleration as best practice for many gifted students. This strategy is often unemployed in U.S. schools and districts. Parents are worried, teachers are reluctant, and administrators are uninformed. Gifted learner's needs remain generally unmet.

Officially, in 1974 the Office of Gifted and Talented was given official status within the U.S. Department of Education. In 1988 the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act [19] was passed to provide grants to secondary and elementary students. Unfortunately, the amount of funds appropriated has declined. For the past two years (2006-2007), no new grants were awarded because of lack of funds. This tendency reveals our national ambivalence that thwarts opportunities for gifted learners, their teachers, and ultimately American society.

Ambivalence Toward Giftedness

Americans face a love-hate relationship battle between equity and excellence. While we applaud those with extraordinary skills and abilities or those who rise to greatness, we are committed to equity at the same time. The term giftedness has a tone of elitism seemingly eliciting hostility or threat regarding those who are not identified. Gifted students, perceived as the Einstein-type or labeled as geeks and nerds, are not popular. On the contrary there are as

[15] Marland Report to Congress on gifted and talented education (1972). http://www.ed.gov/pubs/DevTalent/part2.html (accessed July 14, 2008).

[16] *A Nation at Risk: The imperative for educational reform*. (1983). http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html (accessed July 14, 2008).

[17] National excellence: A case for developing America's talent (October, 1993). http://www.ed.gov/pubs/DevTalent/intro.html#ExecSumm (accessed September 14, 2008).

[18] Colangelo, Nicolas, Susan G. Assouline, and Miraca U. M. Gross. (2004). *A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students* http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/Get_Report.aspx (accessed July 14, 2008).

[19] *Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act*. http://www.nagc.org; http://www.ed.gov/programs/javits/index.html (accessed July 14, 2008).

many kinds of gifted students, as there are students who are gifted. Students are unique. They do not universally conform to an intellectual stereotype.

There exists the never ending debate over who is "gifted?" According to the U.S. Federal Definition of Gifted and Talented,[20] the federal government defines gifted and talented students, children, or youth as those...who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities[21]. Most states and districts use multiple measures to assess giftedness in the school population.

Nevertheless, regardless of the definition or accommodations, constituents complain about subjectivity in identification, assessment of giftedness, instruments used, the process employed to determine which students are served, and how enrichment services are provided. Finally, the desired level of services never seems adequate. While some services are not challenging enough or need-specific, other interventions cause students to miss regular classroom activity and result in isolation from peers. Unfortunately, anti-intellectual sentiment, hostility, even mistrust of, intellectuals and their intellectual pursuits persists.

Recent test scores[22] suggest that gains do not favor gifted learners. Research results suggest the following:

- "Bubble kids" (middle or average) made the largest test-score gains.
- Bottom 20% made the least progress.
- Top 10% of students made either no academic gains or at least smaller than those in the middle.

It is, therefore, a commonly believed myth that gifted students will succeed on their own.

Disparate Funding Trends

There are approximately 3 million gifted students in the United States, according to the National Associate for Gifted Children (NAGC).[23] In an Analysis of Funding and Services for NCLB - Special Education and Gifted Children in USA (See Table 1) comparing funding trends in all 50 states including Puerto Rico, Guam, and Washington, D.C., were seemingly fewer gifted students served, as well as less funding for gifted education programs overall. Data for some states, however, is not reported and for others is reported using various formulas. In addition, some states have not updated their information. Gifted students appear to be an underrepresented population with fewer dollars to nurture their high potential.[24]

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[20] *National Association for Gifted Children*. http://www.nagc.org (accessed July 14, 2008).

[21] No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110. Title IX, Part A, Definitions (22) (2002); 20 U.S.C. Sec. 7802 (22).

[22] Viadero, Debra. (July 16, 2007). *NCLB seen as curbing low, high achiever's gains*. http://texasedequity.blogspot.com/2007/07/nclb-seen-as-curbing-low-high-achievers.html (accessed July 14, 2008); Siegle, Del. (July 1, 2008). *Resources run short for gifted students*. http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/editorials/hcsiegle0701.artjul01,0,4321064.story (accessed July 14, 2008); Silberman, Todd. (November 12, 2003). *Most gifted gain the least.* http://newsobserver.com/front/digest/v-print/story/3018044p-2760962chtml (accessed July 8, 2008).

[23] *National Association for Gifted Children*. http://www.nagc.org (accessed July 1, 2008).

[24] Beisser, Sally. R. (2008). Table 1. *Analysis of Funding & Services for NCLB - Special Education and Gifted Children in USA*. Research study conducted spring 2008.

Table 1. Analysis of Funding & Services for NCLB - Special Education and Gifted Children in USA

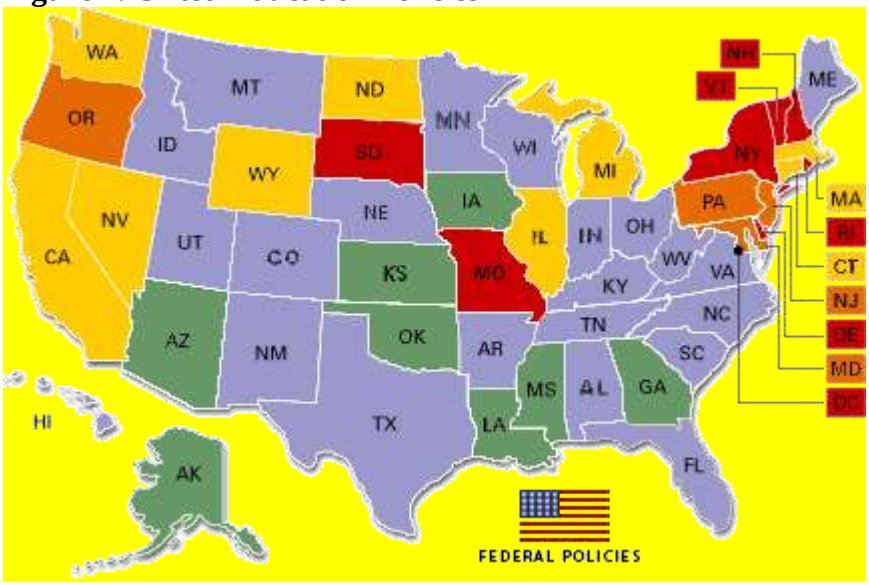
Prepared by:	Sally R. Beisser, Ph.D.	Drake University	Des Moines, IA USA	2008
State	NCLB - Special Eductation funding	Children Served in Special Educ	Gifted Children Funding	Gifted Children Served
Alabama	$177.6-$65.9	124,615	$2,300,000 (2006-2007)	32,390 (2006-2007)
Alaska	$35.5-$13.9	18,127	do not collect	5,574 (2000)
Arizona	$175.2-$70	197,002	3.2 Million (2006-2007)	75,121 (2006-07)
Arkansas	$111.5-$42.8	58,327	no information available	42,600 (2006-07)
California	$1.2 billion-$475.1 million	675,906	$48,000,000 (2004-2005)	512,698(2006-2007)
Colorado	$147.$8-59	78,762	$7.7 million (2006-2007)	56,133(2006-2007)
Connetticut	$130.5-$45.3	66,707	$100,000 (2006-2007)	9,082(2006-2007)
Delaware	$32.8-$12.7	17,778	not determined	5,057 (2004-05)
Florida	$615.7-$234.4	398,579	no information available	126,795 (2006-07)
Georgia	$306.2-$122.6	198,209	$154,569,906 (2004-2005)	181,058 (2006-07
Hawaii	$39.5-$15.3	21,938	$745,410 (2006-2007)	9,538 (2006-07)
Idaho	$53.9-$21	28,818	$8,510,000 (2006-2007)	14,610 (2006-07)
Illinois	$498.1-$180.4	323,091	$5, 000,000 (2006-2007)	126,063 (2000)
Indiana	$251.1-$88.8	176,998	$5,836,340 (2006-2007)	106,263 (2006-07)
Iowa	$119.2-$41.3	71,555	$28-30,000, 000 (2006-2007)	40,523 (2006-07)
Kansas	$105.7-$37.6	65,420	$9,173,087 (2004-2005)	14,376 (2006-07)
Kentucky	$159.8-$55.9	108,780	$7,100,400 (2006-2007)	113,671 (2006-07)
Louisiana	$185.8-$73.8	85,088	$28,000,000 (2004-2005)	19,848 (2006-07
Maine	$54.6-$18.6	33,039	$3,075,244.74 (2004-2005)	9,774 (2004-05)
Maryland	$197.1-$72.4	110,083	$459,829 (2004-2005)	100,487 (2000)
Massachusetts	$277.1-$95.9	149,674	$740,000 (2006-2007)	11,263 (2000)
Michigan	$391.1-$149.2	247,342	$285,000 (2006-2007)	52,756 (2006-07)
Minnesota	$187.6-$64.5	115,816	$8,575,368 (2006-2007)	61,555 (2000)
Mississippi	$117.1-$44.8	67,809	Not Collected (2004-2005)	27,873 (2000)
Missouri	$221.1-$77.1	not available	$0 (2006-2007)	30, 494 (2000)
Montana	$36.8-$14.1	19,195	$150,000 (2006-2007)	8,686 (2006-07)
Nebraska	$73-$25.5	46,437	$2,800,000 (2006-2007)	42,212 (2006-07)
Nevada	$66.1-$26.4	45,776	no information available	11,583 (2000)
New Hampshire	$47-$16.2	30,454	no information available	3,829 (2000)
New Jersey	$353.2-$123	372,626	$0 (2006-2007)	99,418 (2000)
New Mexico	$89.1-$30.9	71,463	$27,132,115 (2004-2005)	13,056 (2006-07)
New York	$752.1-$265.1	371,657	approx $15 million (2004-2005)	94,915 (2000)
North Carolina	$308.9-$117.7	192,635	$50,739,625 (2004-2005)	150,000 (2006-07)
North Dakota	$26.8-$10.4	13,858	$200,000 (2006-2007)	125,536 (2000)
Ohio	$426.8-$160.1	266,754	$47,200,000 (2006-2007)	286,604 (2006-07)
Oklahoma	$143.7-$53.5	96,480	$48,636,241 (2006-2007)	103,546 (2006-07)
Oregon	$126.1-$45.7	78,412	$0 (2006-2007)	41,668 (2000)
Pennsylvania	$418.5-$155.6	267,280	$2.5 million (2004-2005)	71,830 (2006-07)
Rhode Island	$43.7-$14.9	27,616	$0 (2004-2005)	3,400 (2000)
South Carolina	$172.7-$62.3	109,441	$29,257,829 (2006-2007)	66,546 (2000)
South Dakota	$32-$12.3	18,424	$0 (2006-2007)	4,370 (2000)
Tennesse	$227.6-$84.8	126,872	no information available	27,032 (2000)
Texas	$939.9-$379.1	511,370	$77,191,366 (2006-2007)	343,158 (2006-07)
Utah	$105.7-$40.9	67,113	no information available	13,707 (2000)
Vermont	$26-$10	10,920	no information available	1,191 (2000)
Virginia	$276.6-$104.7	174,884	$27,685,985(2006-2007)	160,603 (2006-07)
Washington	$218.1-$83.8	123,838	$6,500,000 (2006-2007)	35,600 (2006-07)
West Virginia	$75-$25.8	49,432	no information available	4,988 (2006-07)
Wisconsin	$206.4-$73.4	129,526	$282,000 (2006-2007)	84,872 (2000)
Wyoming	$27.3-$10.5	11,648	$10.20 per ADM (2004-2005)	8,325 (2004-05)
DC	$17.1-$6.5	13,376	no information available	no info. available
Guam	$15-1.2	not available	$1,700,000 (2004-2005)	1,826 (2006-07)
Puerto Rico	$106.4-40.8	82,270	not determined	not collected
All NCLB dollar figures in millions unless otherwise stated			Primary Resources as follows:	www.nagc.org; www.ed.gov;

www.schooldatadirect.org; http://www.gt-cybersource.org; http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04_055.asp

Cloud[25] states, "to some extent, complacency is built into the system. American schools spend more than $8 billion a year educating the mentally handicapped. Spending on the gifted isn't even tabulated in some states, but by the most generous calculation, we spend no more than $800 million on U.S. gifted programs. But it can't make sense to spend 10 times as much to try to bring low-achieving students to mere proficiency as we do to nurture those with the greatest potential." In an article asking if it is right to put emphasis on equity over excellence, Sue Winter of Missouri states, "If the whole pie equaled $100, the meat of the budget goes to No Child Left Behind at $64, special education gets $32, gifted education gets $0.026.[26]

In a comparison (see Figure 1) comparing all 50 states, it is interesting to note 8 states (green) offer gifted programming that is mandated and fully funded by the state, 22 (blue) states have gifted programming that is mandated and partially funded by the state, 4 (orange) have mandated gifted programming but no funding available, 9 (yellow) states do not mandate gifted programming yet funding is available, and in 7 (red) states plus Washington, D.C., gifted programming is neither mandated nor funded.

Figure 1. Gifted Education Policies[27]



Impact on Gifted Students

Gifted students are overlooked and underserved. In the face of unequal, inadequate resources for gifted learners, adequate learning is compromised in multiple ways. America's teachers are distributing time and energy to serve required needs of those at the other end of the learning spectrum. The need to focus on underachieving students at the expense of high ability

[25] Cloud, John. (Thursday, August 16, 2007). *Are we failing our geniuses?* http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1653653,00.html (accessed September 14, 2008); DeLacy, Margaret. (June 23, 2004). The 'no child' law's biggest victims? An answer that may surprise. *Education Week, 23*(41), 40.

[26] *Gifted Education Support Is Rare* (2008). Findhttp://www.myfoxkc.com/myfox/pages/News/Detail?contentId=6575579&version=1&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pageId=3.2.1 (accessed July 14, 2008).

[27] Gifted Education Policies (2008). *Davidson Institute's GT Cybersource*. http://www.gtcybersource.org/StatePolicy.aspx?NavID=4_0 (accessed July 14, 2008).

students means teachers are unmotivated and unrewarded to provide for their most gifted students. Therefore, impact on gifted learners includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Vast amounts of time, money, and energy is focused on meeting the NCLB mandates in many states and districts, at the expense of developing curriculum for gifted learners.
2. Lack of planning time, faculty development, and physical space for gifted education.
3. Gifted students' academic performance and test scores are declining
4. Curriculum is watered down and unchallenging as gifted students are forced to review concepts they already have mastered.
5. Not enough in-classroom time for enrichment of high ability students.
6. Teacher reluctance to release students from class or pre-test material for mastery.
7. Districts lack of concern for G/T because these students reach average proficiency.
8. Teachers are so overburdened with additional NCLB testing, preparation for testing, and paperwork that they are unmotivated and unrewarded provide more for gifted students.

In summary, administrative and instructional focus is on lower achieving students as growth in both performance and opportunity declines for gifted learners. Unfortunately, gifted students are expected to make it on their own, a myth we continue to perpetuate.

Goals to Better Serve Gifted Learners

1. Train regular classroom teachers and pre-service teachers[28] to understand needs and characteristics of gifted learners and to implement pedagogical strategies for a qualitatively, differentiated curriculum to meet their needs in and out of the classroom. According to a survey from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute[29], an education think tank, 64 percent of teachers received little to no training in gifted education in college and nearly 60 percent have received no professional development focused on gifted students.

2. Offer professional development for teachers and administrators to know how to teach high-level curricula to high-achieving kids. They need support for providing instruction that challenges students with outstanding talent, as well as, children at every level of learning. Effective pedagogical strategies include differentiation, flexible grouping, cluster grouping, acceleration, mentorship or apprenticeship relationships, appropriate use of cooperative learning, questioning, independent study, and advanced use of technology. These strategies must be practiced, supervised, and evaluated.

3. Set challenging curriculum standards for the gifted learners. The content standards, curriculum, and assessment practices must challenge all students, including those who are

[28] Beisser, Sally R. (1997). Differentiating the curriculum for the high-ability student, In L. Mann (Ed.), *ASCD Curriculum Handbook*. Reston, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Publication, *12*, 333-348; Beisser, Sally R. (2000, September). Differentiating the curriculum for the high ability student, *Iowa Educational Leadership, 111*, (1), 8-13; Winebrenner, Susan. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

[29] Siegle, Del. (July 1, 2008). *Resources run short for gifted students*. http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/editorials/hcsiegle0701.artjul01,0,4321064.story (accessed July 14, 2008).

talented. National standards in gifted education must guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum.

4. Provide social-emotional support for gifted students and their families dealing with concerns with perfectionism, isolation, invisibility, multi-potentiality, gender disparity, underachievement, double-labeling, fears, and additional issues experienced by high functioning children.

5. Increase learning opportunities for disadvantaged and minority children with outstanding talents particularly in early childhood. They need extra support to overcome barriers to achievement. Schools must make more high-level learning experiences available to these students.

6. Provide challenging learning opportunities. Schools and communities must provide more and better prospects for gifted students to learn advanced material, take courses not offered in the regular curriculum (e.g., The author once helped a 3rd grader learn Swahili), develop leadership skills, expand creative and critical thinking, or take risks to learn something difficult, yet not fear failure. Learning opportunities and resources for exceptional students must be available both inside and outside of school.

7. Allocate resources for the gifted. Gifted children are generally denied educational justice[30] if they fail to receive an education that adequately challenges them. A challenging education is essential to human flourishing. Without resource appropriation, it is obviously less possible to adequately challenge gifted children in any environment.

8. Do not imbalance appropriate instruction or funding for gifted learners as a result of focused attention on lower achieving students. Both those struggling to meet the standards, as well as those who surpass them, require a quality education commensurate with their needs to reach their potential, experience appropriate levels of challenge, build a sense of community, and develop self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, education policy makers have focused on students at the lower end of the achievement spectrum, those that are struggling to meet standards, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, those who are gifted have been increasingly passed over at their own expense. The United States must learn from nations whose top students perform well[31] and take steps to ensure that high-achieving American students compare favorably with their counterparts around the world.

One critic responded to a local news article on my upcoming presentation at the 20th Oxford Round Table presentation by saying, "Gifted students are odd balls, usually contribute little to society because they have no common sense, or life experience and end up within the hallowed walls [sic] of academia."

[30] Merry, Michael S. (2008). Educational justice and the gifted. *Theory and Research in Education*, *6*(1), 47-70.

[31] See commercial sponsored by Strong American Schools (SAS). http://www.edin08.com/AboutUs.aspx (accessed September 14, 2008).

However, in the 20th century it should be known that one of nation's most gifted leaders and entrepreneurs, Thomas Jefferson,[32] countered that education should be adapted to the *years, the capacity, and the condition of every student*, [including the gifted], *that is directed to obtain and preserve their freedom and happiness.* Few would argue against this for students performing at low or average levels. However, if our nation is to achieve a world class educational system we need to appropriately educate our high performing students in disciplines such as written communication, information literacy, historical consciousness, ethics and civic engagement, mathematics, science, writing, politics, the expressive arts, critical thinking, business, history, health, and global living and learning. It is the hope of this author that United States will refrain from squandering one of its most precious resources including the gifts, talents, and high interests of many of its students.

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