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## The Campaign Against the One Right Answer

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There is no argument about the need to educate students to seek and value the right answer. Yet, there is a need to challenge the academic and personal consequences of teaching all students, and particularly gifted students, to believe that seeking the right answer is the only purpose of an education and the most significant means to achieve success at school. The concern to teach “for” the right answer has further negative ramifications than the well-expressed concern for the overemphasis placed on teaching to the test.

When a group of gifted students that has been successful studying transportation, geometry, and climatology nervously asks the teacher if the construction of a new type of bridge to cross a rising flooded area is “the right answer” to the assigned problem, then educators should begin to worry about the need the students have to believe that all problems have one right answer.

When a group of gifted students is debating the contemporary issues related to the application of the great philosophers’ ideas about the division of labor within a society and ask the teacher which team had the right answer, then educators need to be concerned about the variance between one of the often-stated goals of gifted education: the need to tolerate ambiguity and respond both academically and psychologically to open-ended divergent ques-

tions and the reality of the gifted student’s need to want assurance that there is a right answer.

When a small group of gifted students is critically analyzing the story of Cinderella to determine the changes that would be necessary in character development and setting to make the story relevant for today and ask the teacher if their responses are the right answers, then educators need to be concerned about the type of academic socialization that is taking place within our schools and its potential carryover to living in the real world.

While educators continuously advocate for the need to provide educational services to gifted students, they also need to mount campaigns to assist colleagues and parents to recognize the disconnect between the accepted goals of gifted education and the contemporary goals of general education. Without recognition of these differences, educators of the gifted miss an ever-present opportunity to bring attention to the fact that learning to find the right answer is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The type of learning experiences that focus on the attainment of the right answer represent the readiness for gifted students to extend their abilities and interests to traverse the educational pathway to seek alternative answers to problems, to view existing ideas in new and unusual ways, and to pursue levels of expertise that extend beyond the basics of knowing the right answer. **GCT**