

# What Policy Makers Need to Know About Gifted Education

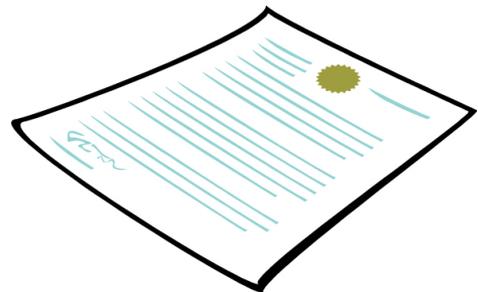
**Jeanne Purcell & Del Siegle - Editors**

Practitioners' Guide - A9511

## Implications for Schools

A collective body of research unequivocally supports programs in gifted education. Effective programs are associated with identified students' high academic performance, satisfaction with themselves and their learning environment, and positive attitudes toward learning. Programs are perceived as an integral part of the school and as adding to the learning environment within the building.

Education for the gifted has come a long way since the Marland Report was issued in 1971. All 50 states have formulated policies in the form of legislation, regulations, rules, or guidelines for gifted and talented young people in our schools. This fact is a very significant achievement, and is a consequence of vigorous and persistent efforts on the parts of many advocates.



## The Status of Programs

In some states, the achievements of the last two decades are reflected in the status of programs for the gifted and talented. Personnel from states in good economic health and with mandates to provide services to gifted and talented students report that programs are stable. Their programs remain as is or are expanding. In some states, however, policies designed for these students may be succumbing to other priorities. Personnel from states in poor economic health and/or without mandates report programs experiencing jeopardy. In these states, some programs are being eliminated, others are being reduced, and still others have been targeted as services that can be eliminated.

## The Comprehensiveness of Programs

In states in good economic health and with mandates, large numbers of students receive services in grades K-12. In all other states, smaller numbers of students benefit because services are provided to fewer grade levels. Under such conditions, students in their upper elementary and middle school years are most likely to receive services.

## Reasons Attributed to Program Status

Personnel from states with mandates indicate that mandates are most associated with the stability of their programs. Advocacy is mostly associated with the stability of programs in states without mandates. In states with and without mandates, a reduction in state and local funding is cited as the reason programs are in jeopardy.

## Levels Toward Which Advocacy Can Be Directed

Currently, officials in some districts and states are pressured to place educational priorities and resources elsewhere. Advocacy will be required to sustain the progress made since the issuance of the Marland Report. Advocates need to direct their messages to decision makers at four levels:

- The classroom level with teachers.
- The building level with all administrators and directors of special education.
- The district level with school superintendents, assistant superintendents, as well as board of education members.
- The state and federal level with elected officials, such as representatives, senators, commissioners, and department secretaries.

## Research Facts

- All 50 states have constructed policies in the form of legislation, regulations, or guidelines that support education of high ability students.
- Programs for gifted students in states with mandates and in good economic health are four times as likely to be stable or expanding as their counterparts.
- Children in programs for the gifted obtain higher achievement scores than their gifted peers who are not in such programs.
- Successful programs challenge students through high level content and appropriate pacing of the curriculum, provide many opportunities for these students to make their own choices, and allow them to have control over their learning environment.
- Successful programs focus on the identification of underrepresented populations of students in their written policies and provide support for teachers to address their students' learning needs.
- Gifted students who are accelerated show almost a whole year's advancement over talented, same-age non accelerates.
- Successful programs for gifted students are an integral part of the school and add to the learning environment within the building.

## References

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The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) is funded under the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, Institute of Educational Sciences, United States Department of Education. The mission of the NRC/GT is to plan and conduct theory-driven quality research that is problem-based, practice-relevant, and consumer-oriented.

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The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

2131 Hillside Road, Unit 3007

Storrs, CT 06269-3007

Tel: (860) 486-4826 Fax: (860) 486-2900

Web: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt>