

Gifted Education Day in Washington

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

The Columbia Room

Legislative Building

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

Part 2: Spotlights

YOU
are a key advocate for gifted education in Washington State.

**Join other advocates in Olympia and talk to your Legislators about the value
of Highly Capable Programs for both the student and the state.**

Gifted advocates are a lone voice. There are many sympathetic causes in public education that enjoy the support of a wide variety of interests, but the toughest issues often are the ones with few champions. We may be few but our combined voices matter in advancing our cause.

Sponsors

Northwest Gifted Child Association
NWGCA
Active in supporting parents on a local level since 1963.
President: Marcia Holland
northwestgca@gmail.com. www.nwgca.org
Celebrating 60 years of helping parents.

Washington Association of Educators of the Talented and Gifted
WAETAG
Helping teachers since 1984.
President: Charlotte Akin
www.waetag.net

The Washington Coalition For Gifted Education
Chartered on February 20, 1985.
The Coalition is the advocacy arm of the gifted community in Washington state.
wagifted@earthlink.net

*Gifted students have a right, as a matter of equity,
to access an education that meets their specific needs.*



Design by Krissy Venosdale <http://venspired.com/?p=2792>

Our position.



Helping all students learn and grow is a goal of every school. Implicit in that goal is an understanding of how to work with special populations of children. Highly Capable Programs encompass the expertise needed to properly identify and serve not only the students who demonstrate high achievement, but also those who have the potential to achieve at high levels. Recognizing and nurturing giftedness in children presents an important challenge to educators. Schools need to respond to their educational needs before their abilities diminish or become less recognizable to those who can do something to nurture them.

Highly Capable Programs cover the specific services and programs offered as well as the teacher training necessary to provide the academic guidance gifted students need in order to thrive. Gifted and talented education, then, is the system by which districts recognize and serve this special population of children.

Gifted Education Day is the day to talk with your Legislators. Tell them that in the end we want the inclusion of HCP in Basic Ed to be meaningful, providing adequate and appropriate programming.



Some Key Ideas

Excerpts from various presentations by Jonathan Plucker, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy. <http://ceep.indiana.edu>

Few policy makers are willing to make gifted education their key education issue.
On issues they don't know about, they are as informed as your next door neighbor.
That which is not visible is by definition invisible.

As a result, policy makers need your expertise. The vast majority will listen to your input...but don't expect them to follow your advice.

Therefore, we need to redefine success as a series of small accomplishments.
Critics expect you to be defensive, so when you are it feeds their base. The best defense is a good offense.

People will work with you if you have value to them; this means you have to compromise every once and a while. Show a policymaker that you can and will help them out, and you will quickly gain an ally. Bring concrete solutions. Have a thick skin: sometimes you just can't win.



Education systems that fail to develop the potential of students from every background can make claims to neither excellence nor equity, neither quality nor equality. A culture that values talent in all students is of inestimable benefit to everyone.

The excellence gap is not the same phenomenon as the achievement gap. Policymakers and educators should ask two questions: How will this impact advanced students? and how will this help more students perform at advanced levels?

We need to include the performance of advanced students in discussions of common standards and to conduct more research on advanced learning and talent development.

An “over-arching” argument.



The fact that too many of our most talented students are not receiving the services they need to turn their untapped potential into tremendous achievement is not just a problem for gifted educators, but challenges all educators, policy makers, and our society at large to take action in to reverse this failing.

We must expect more than proficiency from many more students. Policies, funding and practices at all levels should consistently support high expectations and high achievement, going well beyond grade level for many more of our students.

We will never have the schools we want for our children by focusing on adequacy. We must ask ourselves whether aiming for minimum performance levels for all students is an acceptable singular goal for the nation and whether achieving minimum levels requires that we abandon support for a goal of more students reaching advanced levels of achievement. Do we continue to hammer away at a focus on adequacy and remediation, or are we going to focus on a culture of excellence, high expectations, potential, and creativity.



Another “over-arching” argument.



Education systems must place a high floor under every student's feet. However, even if the high floor were fully in place, it would not be enough. It is also important to make sure that there is no ceiling and that students who have passion, aspiration or talent in whatever field of endeavor – musical, artistic or sporting, for example, as well as academic – have the opportunity to fly.

Educators and policy makers love to talk about 'meeting children's needs', but meeting needs is not enough. It is also necessary to unlock aspiration and unleash energy and potential.



'All children are gifted" and other myths.



What do you say to a Legislator who says "I personally believe all students are 'highly capable' "? Here is a response provided by Charlotte Akin, President of WAETAG.

Of course all students should be held to high standards, and I am so appreciative that you understand the importance of early learning to support this. I'm sure you also understand that a great variety of children come into the public school system. They come from a variety of income backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds and experience backgrounds. They come at very different levels of prior learning and readiness to learn. The group of children legally defined in Washington State as highly capable are those extreme children who operate well above the grade level when they come to us and have the ability to learn at rates much faster than the norm. These are the children I have been advocating for, as they are the ones left behind, particularly under NCLB, with all resources and consequences aimed at the lower achievers. These children have high dropout rates (15-30%) and a number of other risk factors. Apart from the personal consequences to these children, we are the only developed nation in the world that has national policy that excludes the learning needs of their brightest students, and we do this at our own peril in terms of competitiveness. I do hope that you will remember that you serve "all" - and all means all. Don't leave these children out.





We expect children to arrive in kindergarten knowing the alphabet and their numbers. However, some children arrive already reading and proficient in the use of numbers while others arrive with only a tenuous grasp on the alphabet and numbers. This situation is partly the result of their home environment and partly as a result of innate abilities.

While it is the school's responsibility to work with the low achieving children to bring them to grade level, and this is what schools are doing under NCLB, what are we to do with the 10% or more of the class who have arrived in school already well beyond grade level and with the ability to learn at rates much faster than the norm? Are they to be allowed to stagnate or even regress because their need for a challenging curriculum is not being met? The school has an equal responsibility to meet these students where they are at and to bring them to their full potential. The Highly Capable Program is the means by which Washington State meets the needs of these "highly capable" students within basic education.

The requirements of NCLB actually leave these children behind. Study after study has shown that their achievement stalls. This leads to social and emotional problems and, by some estimates, from 15% to 30% of these highly capable students drop out of school.

Highly Capable programs provide the opportunity for an educational system that allows every student equity of opportunity to achieve their full potential.





Definition and Rationale for Gifted Education

What is "gifted"? The term is specifically defined in some state codes, but may be called "high ability," "talented," or other designation. The field of study devoted to understanding these children and how to provide for their development is called "gifted education."

NAGC definition: *"Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains."* (<http://www.nagc.org/WhatisGiftedness.aspx>)

NOTE: In schools, the term gifted recognizes exceptionality in aptitude or achievement that requires appropriately differentiated services in order for the student(s) to develop to their potential.

Rationale: Regardless of the state and the varying code and rule requirements

- Developing and nurturing high performance supports the future prosperity of our nation, state, community, and of individuals.
- Most gifted students are not developing to the level their potential would indicate is possible. (http://edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2011/20110920_HighFlyers/Do_High_Flyers_Maintain_Their_Altitude_FINAL.pdf)
- In the normal distribution of ability and/or of achievement, 68% score near the mean; students far from the mean require different educational experiences to develop optimally or at all.
- All children deserve the opportunity to learn something new each day.
- Schools have a responsibility to meet the learning needs of all students. Gifted children are found in all income, cultural, and racial groups; gifted children may also have one or more disabilities.
- Most teachers say their brightest students are bored and under challenged. (<http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/high-achieving-students-in.html>)
- Most teachers have no training in working with gifted learners. (http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2008/200806_highachievingstudentsintheeraofnochildleftbehind/20080625-farkas-pp.pdf)
- In classroom observations, most learning activities are not differentiated for gifted learners. (<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=538>)

Considerations

- Multifaceted systems are necessary for identification to find *all* students with advanced potential from *all* income, racial, and cultural groups to be certain we are accountable to developing their potential.
- It is unrealistic to expect high school students with advanced potential to perform at high levels if they have not had previous and continuous opportunity to work at an advanced level. (<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/ForgottenMiddleSummary.pdf>)
- Identifying students with advanced potential and providing services beginning in Kindergarten is needed or high performance from many is lost. (www.jkcf.org/assets/files/0000/0084/Achievement_Trap.pdf)
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessment must be modified to meet the needs of gifted learners.
- Assessment systems need to be designed to measure growth for all students, including those capable of above-grade level achievement.
- The performance of advanced students needs to be monitored to ensure continued learning gains.

Implications: The responsibility is shared

- States: expect and monitor annual growth of all student groups, including the gifted, and report that growth by the disaggregated group.
- Districts: design appropriate policies, services, and professional development for teachers of the gifted.
- Buildings: implement services and assess teacher effectiveness in developing potential of gifted students.
- Teachers: provide appropriately differentiated learning experiences for gifted students.
- Parents: become educated about how to develop talents and good work habits in gifted children.

Critical Content of Gifted Education for K-12 Schools

Potential and Performance: Opportunity, motivation, and task commitment can assist in developing advanced potential into outstanding performance. Schools can find those learners with advanced potential and design appropriately differentiated experiences that provide opportunity and challenge to develop a particular talent into outstanding performance. Curriculum and experiences designed for typical learners are not sufficiently complex to develop advanced potential.

Identify Students Who Need Gifted Services

- It is a state and local responsibility to identify and serve gifted students; there is no federal law.
- Check state code and rules to find domains of giftedness required to be identified and served (e.g., general intellectual, specific academic, visual and performing arts, creativity).
- District-level identification ensures consistent, fair practices and implementation.
- The purpose of identifying gifted children is to provide them with specific services in order to develop their advanced potential in a particular domain, not to identify them for the sake of a label.
- Identification measures are matched to the services provided (e.g., for services in language arts, use a measure of verbal reasoning and a measure of verbal achievement; a student could be identified through either pathway).
- A multifaceted identification system includes measures of performance (achievement), measures of potential (ability/aptitude), and qualitative data (descriptive data specific to the domain being served).
- Effective performance measures in academic content areas are valid, reliable, and include norm-referenced achievement tests with high ceilings. Criterion-referenced measures frequently have grade-level ceilings.
- With fair and defensible identification systems, the group of students identified for gifted services will reflect the cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity of the district as a whole.
- Unless the state requires otherwise, students can qualify if they score at an outstanding level on *either* the achievement *or* the ability measure. Not all students have had equal opportunity to develop.
- Unless the state requires otherwise, different norms (local and subgroup), rather than different measures, will help find students from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Screening procedures are designed to include all students at targeted points in the school sequence.
- Establish and equitable appeals and exit procedures are best practice.

Provide Appropriately Differentiated Learning Experiences

- Gifted students show greater achievement gains when they have opportunities to learn together. Ability grouping for the gifted is an evidence-based practice.
- Grouping must be accompanied by more in-depth curriculum and more rigorous instructional methods for gains to occur.
- Greater learning gains occur when challenge is provided daily in the talent area.
- Gifted students benefit from opportunities to pursue individual interests in depth.
- Acceleration combined with enrichment (tied to content) is needed for optimal growth.
- Gifted learners respond well to a faster pace of instruction with more complex and in-depth content.
- An acceleration policy establishes procedures for learners capable of more rapid progression.

- Quality instruction develops critical and creative thinking.
- Further differentiation of gifted services, curriculum, pacing, and instruction is necessary to meet individual needs. This is true even within programs such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate.
- Some gifted students will need additional and ongoing supports in order to be successful.
- Teachers of gifted students need ongoing specialized professional development led by qualified individuals with deep content knowledge and experience in gifted education.
- Learning experiences should be developed and articulated across K-12 for systematic talent development.
- Gifted students benefit from differentiated guidance and counseling services and deliberate cultivation of intrapersonal skills that support a commitment to high achievement.

Advanced Performance and Program Effectiveness

- Statewide and district assessments allow for above-grade achievement and individual growth.
- Some gifted students need additional opportunities for above-level work, such as taking high school courses in middle school; college level work while in high school.
- Evidence of advanced performance is collected and used for decision making across each domain included in a talent development framework.
- Evaluating program effectiveness analyzes outcomes, solicits feedback, looks for program coherence, and provides direction for future improvements based upon data.

Accountability, Assessment, and Learning Growth for Gifted Students

Accountability Depends on Appropriate Measurement

- States, districts, buildings, and classrooms are accountable for the learning growth for *all* students.
- The most meaningful measure is *not* the percentage of students demonstrating a minimal level of proficiency, but rather the number of students who demonstrate an agreed upon amount of growth, over a specified period of time, as a result of their educational placement.
- Gifted learners have been found to experience 18 - 21 months of academic growth in 12 months when provided appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction.
(<http://nagc.org/index.aspx?id=4450>)

Gifted Student Growth Cannot Be Measured on Many Assessments

- Current measures are commonly criterion referenced to grade-level standards, resulting in an inability for gifted learners to demonstrate knowledge above grade level for the baseline or later measurements. Measures constructed using a vertical scale of continuous progress over multiple grade levels are needed to assess growth for individual students.
- Elementary gifted students were shown to know 40-50% of the grade-level curriculum on the first day of school. (<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/reports/rm93106/rm93106.pdf>)
- Computer adaptive accountability systems may be able to address a greater range of student performance. Above grade or off-level testing can be effective in demonstrating higher level performance or the appropriateness of above-grade placement for instruction.
- Achievement assessments that are standardized, norm referenced, and have high enough ceilings can give good information about what gifted students already know and have learned since previous testing. These are useful for instructional planning as well as accountability.
- Items that assess critical thinking and not just knowledge and comprehension are needed.
- A position paper co-authored by NAGC and CEC-TAG may be helpful
<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=6296>.

Teacher Accountability: Professional evaluations call for objective measures related to student growth as well as additional evidence of effective teaching and professional practice.

- Pre-tests for specific goals, for units, or for a year provide an accurate measure of a student's knowledge of upcoming content and skills. These pretests establish the baseline for growth and the instructional level needed. They are locally developed if state accountability measures do not contain adequate ceilings.
- Post-tests aligned with the pre-tests provide evidence that the change in student performance can be attributed to instruction.
- Professional practice includes the use of student data to plan instruction. Data provide evidence of the need for and planning of differentiation.
- Professional practice includes participation in professional development for meeting the needs of students with high abilities.
- Classroom observation of gifted student instruction includes assessment of specific elements of instruction that are effective for these learners. *Assessing Classroom Differentiation* is an observation tool that can be found at <http://www.nagc.org/administratortoolbox.aspx>.
- Personnel knowledgeable about gifted learners are included at all levels of curriculum, instruction, and assessment decision-making.