

2010–2011



● **STATE of the NATION
In Gifted Education**

A Lack of Commitment to
Talent Development

A Half-Century After Winning the Space Race,
Our Nation's Competitiveness is at Risk

An Executive Summary of the 2010-2011 State of the States Report



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children



Despite pleas from leaders in business, industry, and government calling for a renewed national commitment to developing our most talented students, many states are focusing little to no attention or resources toward this purpose. In the two years since the previous *State of the States in Gifted Education* report, the consequences of continued neglect of our most talented students have become even clearer:

- U.S. students continue to lag behind other nations on a host of international tests in math, science and reading.
- The achievement gap between high-ability minority and low-income students and their non-minority peers is widening.
- The nation continues to rely heavily on foreign-born talent, particularly in demanding math and science fields.
- While evidence of the neglect of our most capable students has increased, our collective resolve to address it in a comprehensive and meaningful manner has diminished.

The sole federal program for gifted students was eliminated in 2011, leaving not a single federal education dollar to address the learning needs of advanced students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. States continue to address gifted education in a highly uneven and fragmented manner, leaving many students without access to appropriately challenging curriculum. And although 13 states are unable to provide data on the ethnicity of gifted and talented students, the data received indicates gaps in identifying and serving gifted students from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The data collected in the biannual *State of the States* survey and highlighted here offer a snapshot of state policies and practices affecting gifted and talented learners in the 2010-2011 school year. Forty-four (44) states and 1 territory responded to the survey. Following are key findings from the report.



What the Data Tell Us

A Disturbing Lack of Accountability

States are not held accountable by the federal government for the academic performance of their high-achieving students, which has contributed to a climate of neglect. This lack of accountability means too many states fail to collect and report data on how these learners are faring in school and to gather details on the programs and services designed to meet their needs.

- 14 states do not collect information about students in the state who are identified locally as gifted and talented.

- 20 states do not monitor district programs for gifted and talented students.
- Only 17 states have 1 or more full-time staff members at the state education agency dedicated to gifted education; 27 states have entirely part-time gifted education staff. In 31 states, the staff has responsibility for programs and projects not specific to gifted education.
- Only 10 states publish an annual report on gifted and talented education; another 5 publish this information as part of a larger report.

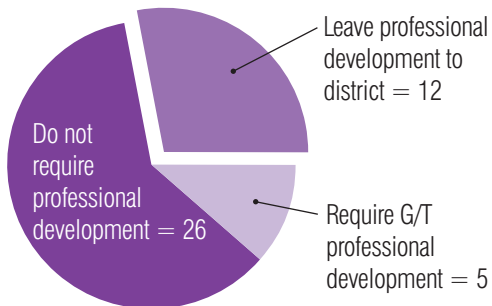
Limited Support for High-Potential and High-Ability Students

The responsibility for providing and funding gifted education services across the country rests with states and local school districts. Even in the states that require students be identified and/or served, service access, frequency, and type of services varies widely and often depends solely on the commitment of the local district. These variations lead to disparities in how the needs of gifted students are met.

- Of the 36 reporting states, 10 provided \$0 in state funds to support gifted education in 2010-11, another 4 states spent less than \$1 million.

- 15 states make a greater investment in gifted students by spending \$10 million or more in state funds.
- Since the last *State of the States* report, 14 states have reduced state funding for gifted education.
- 12 states require districts to have administrators for gifted education, yet only 4 states require them to have certification in gifted and talented education.
- 41 states define giftedness but 8 states do not require local districts to follow the state definition.

Required Annual Professional Development in G/T for Teachers in G/T Programs N=43



Teachers Unprepared to Meet Students Needs

Well-trained professionals are indispensable to identify and properly serve high-potential and high-achieving learners. Without trained teachers and program administrators, even significant investments in other resources and services may fail to attain meaningful and sustained results. Despite this connection, the majority of teachers did not receive coursework on the nature and needs of gifted students in their college preparation programs. Additionally, training in gifted education identification and teaching methods is not widely required through in-service professional development courses, even for teachers working in specialized programs for

gifted students. As a result, most gifted and talented children, who spend the majority of their time in the regular education classroom, are taught by teachers who are not trained to meet their needs.

- Only 6 states require all teachers to receive pre-service training in gifted and talented education.
- 24 states do not require gifted and talented credentials for professionals in specialized gifted and talented programs.
- General education teachers in 36 states are not required to have any training on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students at any point in their careers.
- Only 5 states require annual professional development for teachers in specialized gifted and talented programs, 26 states do not require it, and 12 leave it to the local school district.

A Patchwork Collection of Services

Despite mandates for service in 26 states, most states leave important decisions to local districts. The result is a crazy quilt collection of services and inconsistency from district to district and even school house to school house within districts. While quality gifted education programs do exist, lack of accountability and the reliance on local funds makes these programs vulnerable to changes in local leadership and economic conditions.

- Gifted children receive the majority of their education in the regular classroom setting where most teachers have little to no specialized training in gifted education.

- Only 16 states require districts to accept gifted identification decisions from other districts in the state.
- 7 states permit students to enter kindergarten earlier than the state cut-off age, but 10 states do not allow the practice; 24 leave the decision to districts.
- 16 states provide public residential high schools for math and science, 2 for the humanities, and 11 for the fine and performing arts. 13 states provide funds for summer advanced programs called “governor’s schools”; and 14 states fund a virtual high school.
- Only 8 states have state policies that specifically permit academic acceleration; the rest leave the decision to the local school district.



A Call to Action

Our collective failure to prioritize the development of our most talented students is a crisis for the nation, one that looms larger with each passing school year as students languish unchallenged. It may not be as noticeable as a daily decline in the stock market or uptick in the unemployment rate, but the consequences of failing to address it in a meaningful manner right now are just as grave and reach far into the future.

The nation has a clear choice. We can continue to discount the scope of the problem in the face of voluminous data and expert recommendations. Or we can commit ourselves to a systematic

process of identifying and cultivating our most talented students, both those we already recognize and those who remain to be discovered through proper identification and appropriate services. This systematic solution must begin with state and district accountability for the progress of their top-performing students. It must be implemented by well-trained teachers, administrators and other school personnel, and must be funded to the greatest extent possible. Educators at all levels must commit to exploring innovative and cost-effective strategies that will ensure a pipeline of excellence to meet the nation’s needs now and in the future.

Remaining globally competitive demands we maximize the academic potential of our high-ability students.

— NAGC President, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius

“The U.S. is faced with a clear and profound choice between action and complacency. The Board firmly believes that a coherent, proactive, and sustained effort to identify and develop our Nation’s STEM innovators will help drive future economic prosperity and improve the quality of life for all.”

—National Science Board, 2010



National Advocacy Efforts

NAGC advocates on behalf of gifted and talented children before the Congress and the executive branch on a range of issues including teacher preparation, accountability for student learning, equity issues, and funding for research and services for gifted learners.

NAGC members and the general public may join these efforts by becoming part of NAGC’s Legislative Action Network, a grassroots outreach program, to increase awareness of the needs of gifted children through local media efforts and direct contact with Members of Congress. Visit <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=3642> to learn more and to join.

Visit the “Legislative Update” section of the NAGC website to learn more about NAGC’s federal legislative agenda and how you can help. We also have compiled some “how to” advocacy strategies in the NAGC online advocacy toolkit.

Visit the “Myths about Gifted Education” pages of the NAGC website for information helpful to rebut harmful myths about gifted students and gifted education.



NAGC Policy Resources

NAGC has several publications to assist state and local advocates with key policy and practice issues. Visit the NAGC website at www.nagc.org for the following:

- 2010-2011 *State of the States in Gifted Education* (Report and data available on flash drive) — \$22.00/\$20.00
- *A Guide to State Policies in Gifted Education* CD-ROM — \$9.00/\$10.00
- *Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy* (downloadable .pdf)
- Position papers on key topics (www.nagc.org)
- Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards (www.nagc.org)
- NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards: A Guide To Planning And Implementing High-Quality Services — \$39.95/\$35.95



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