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## EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Report to the Congress of the  
United States by the  
U.S. Commissioner of Education

AND

Background Papers Submitted to the  
U.S. Office of Education

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PREPARED FOR THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

OF THE

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VOLUME 1: REPORT TO THE CONGRESS OF THE  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Educators, legislators, and parents have long puzzled over the problem of educating gifted students in a public educational program geared primarily to a philosophy of egalitarianism.

We know that gifted children can be identified as early as the pre-school grades and that these children in later life often make outstanding contributions to our society in the arts, politics, business and the sciences. But, disturbingly, research has confirmed that many talented children perform far below their intellectual potential. We are increasingly being stripped of the comfortable notion that a bright mind will make its own way. Intellectual and creative talent cannot survive educational neglect and apathy.

This loss is particularly evident in the minority groups who have in both social and educational environments every configuration calculated to stifle potential talent.

The Congress of the United States expressed its interest and concern by passing a landmark addition to the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1969 (Public Law 91-230), section 806, "Provisions related to gifted and talented children." This amendment, unanimously passed in the House and Senate, provided for two specific changes in existing legislation. It explicated congressional intent that the gifted and talented student should benefit from Federal education legislation—notably titles III and V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the teacher fellowship provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1956. Section 806 directed the Commissioner of Education to conduct a study to:

1. Determine the extent to which special educational assistance programs are necessary or useful to meet the needs of gifted and talented children.
2. Show which Federal education assistance programs are being used to meet the needs of gifted and talented children.
3. Evaluate how existing Federal educational assistance programs can be more effectively used to meet these needs.
4. Recommend new programs, if any, needed to meet these needs.

This report is the Commissioner's response to that mandate.

The study was assigned by the Acting Commissioner of Education to the then Deputy Assistant Secretary/Deputy Commissioner for Planning, Research, and Evaluation (in the Office of Education), now the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Development. The study was planned, coordinated, and directed by Jane Case Williams.

Because this study represented an area of concern for both the Federal and non-Federal sectors, and offered the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) the opportunity to study an educational problem with



nationally significant, long-term implications for society, it was determined that the study would be done directly from the Office of Education. This arrangement enabled the Office to: (1) call on its large reservoir of expertise among staff people, (2) contract for technical services as needed, (3) utilize the regional offices of USOE, and 4) draw on nationally known experts in the field.

The plan developed for the study, as accepted and amplified by the informal advisory panel, consisted of five major activities:

1. Review of research, other available literature, and expert knowledge.
2. Analysis of the educational data bases available to USOE and the development of a major data base through the "Survey of Leadership in Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth" (*Advocate Survey*).
3. Public hearings by the Regional Assistant Commissioners of Education in each of the 10 HEW regions to interpret regional needs.
4. Studies of programs in representative States with long-standing statewide support for education of gifted and talented children.
5. Review and analysis of the system for delivery of Office of Education programs to benefit gifted and talented children.

This study began in August 1970 with the development and acceptance of the plan and concluded in June 1971 with the preparation of the final report, which is based on the findings and documentation from the five major activities.

Public Law 91-230, Section 806, states that the Commissioner of Education shall define "gifted and talented" for purposes of Federal education programs. The definition established by the advisory panel reads:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

1. general intellectual ability
2. specific academic aptitude
3. creative or productive thinking
4. leadership ability
5. visual and performing arts
6. psychomotor ability.

It can be assumed that utilization of these criteria for identification of the gifted and talented will encompass a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population.

Evidence of gifted and talented abilities may be determined by a multiplicity of ways. These procedures should include objective measures and professional evaluation measures which are essential components of identification.

Professionally qualified persons include such individuals as teachers, administrators, school psychologists, counselors, curriculum specialists, artists, musicians, and others with special training who are also qualified to appraise pupils' special competencies.

The advisory panel established three characteristics for a differentiated educational program:

1. A differentiated curriculum which denotes higher cognitive concepts and processes.

2. Instructional strategies which accommodate the learning styles of the gifted and talented and curriculum content.

3. Special grouping arrangements which include a variety of administrative procedures appropriate to particular children, i.e., special classes, honor classes, seminars, resource rooms, and the like.

This definition was subsequently tested through the *Advocate Survey* and in the research review.

It was determined early in the development of the study plan that inclusion in the Elementary and Secondary Amendments would delimit the study population to the elementary and secondary school age (5-17 years), although recommendations within the report have implications for early education of gifted and talented children (before age 5) and post-secondary education.

Because of the inadequacy of available data on education programs of other Federal agencies the study was limited to education programs administered by USOE.

#### FINDINGS AND ACTION STEPS

This study has produced recommendations on special programs and suggested priorities in planning individual programs, estimates of the professional support and teacher training required, and adjustments in legal definitions that would enhance the possibility of State and local fiscal support. Details may be found in the text and Volume II (appendixes). The major findings of the study—those with particular relevance to the future planning of the Office of Education—may be summarized as follows:

- A conservative estimate of the gifted and talented population ranges between 1.5 and 2.5 million children out of a total elementary and secondary school population (1970 estimate) of 51.6 million.
- Existing services to the gifted and talented do not reach large and significant subpopulations (e.g. minorities and disadvantaged) and serve only a very small percentage of the gifted and talented population generally.
- Differentiated education for the gifted and talented is presently perceived as a very low priority at Federal, State, and most local levels of government and educational administration.
- Although 21 States have legislation to provide resources to school districts for services to the gifted and talented, such legislation in many cases merely represents intent.
- Even where there is a legal or administrative basis for provision of services, funding priorities, crisis concerns, and lack of personnel cause programs for the gifted to be miniscule or theoretical.
- There is an enormous individual and social cost when talent among the Nation's children and youth goes undiscovered and undeveloped. These students cannot ordinarily excel without assistance.
- Identification of the gifted is hampered not only by costs of appropriate testing—when these methods are known and adopted—but also by apathy and even hostility among teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and psychologists.
- Gifted and talented children are, in fact, deprived and can suffer psychological damage and permanent impairment of their abilities to function well which is equal to or greater than the similar



deprivation suffered by any other population with special needs served by the Office of Education.

- Special services for the gifted (such as the disadvantaged) and talented will also serve other target populations singled out for attention and support.
- Services provided to gifted and talented children can and do produce significant and measurable outcomes.
- States and local communities look to the Federal Government for leadership in this area of education, with or without massive funding.
- The Federal role in delivery of services to the gifted and talented is presently all but nonexistent.

These findings, which are documented in Volume II, provide ample evidence of the need for action by the U.S. Office of Education to eliminate the widespread neglect of gifted and talented children. Federal leadership in this effort is required to confirm and maintain provisions for the gifted and talented as a national priority, and to encourage the States to include this priority in their own planning.

Recognizing these needs, the U.S. Office of Education is taking steps to meet them immediately. Ten major activities, under existing education legislation, will be initiated in 1971.

1. The Deputy Commissioner for School Systems will complete a planning report for the Commissioner on implementing a Federal role in education of gifted and talented children by February 1, 1972.

2. Assignment of continuing program responsibility for gifted and talented education within USOE will be made to the Deputy Commissioner for School Systems, with the expectation of further delegation to the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. A staff program group will initially consist of three professional positions with appropriate secretarial and staff support services.

3. A nationwide field survey will obtain information on successful programs and program elements, develop more precise cost figures, improve evaluation procedures, furnish the bases for model programs, and develop a clearinghouse on gifted and talented education.

4. USOE will utilize title V, ESEA and other authorizations, to strengthen State Education Agencies capabilities for gifted and talented education.

5. USOE will support in the summer of 1972 two national leadership training institutes to upgrade supervisory personnel and program planning for the gifted at the State level.

6. USOE will support additional program activities in major research and development institutions which have the interest and capacity to work on learning problems and opportunities among minority groups.

7. USOE will build on the career education models being developed by the National Center for Educational Research and Development by including program activities specific to employer-based career education for the gifted and talented.

8. The Commissioner has requested special attention in at least one of the comprehensive experimental school projects to the individualization of programs to benefit the gifted and talented students as a component of the comprehensive design to effect educational reform.

9. USOE will continue to encourage ESEA title III activities through communication with State education agencies, issuance of program guidelines, and cooperative assignment of USOE title III program staff to the Gifted and Talented Program Group.

10. One staff member will be identified in each of the ten Regional Offices of Education as responsible, at least part time, for gifted and talented education.

11. The existing OE programs relating to higher education will be carefully studied by the Gifted and Talented Program Group in order to optimize their potential for the gifted and talented population and teachers of these students.