GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Strategic Multiples Committee of the Governor's Education Finance Task Force

Gifted Education Subcommittee Report
March 22, 2006

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Gifted Education Subcommittee Report to the Strategic Multiples Committee of the Governor's Education Finance Task Force

Part 1: Background and Overview

Introduction: A Rich History and New Opportunities

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite, ushering in a new competitive era of technological and scientific developments. The Soviet Union's early victory in that competition sparked the United States to re-examine its human capital and quality of American schooling, particularly for its most talented students who would profit from advanced math, science, and technology programming.

Four months later the Georgia House of Representatives passed HR-246, recognizing gifted students as a special needs population and providing funds and technical assistance for programs to increase "educational advantages for gifted children in the public schools of Georgia." With this legislation Georgia became the first state to provide funding and systematic support for its most capable students. The University of Georgia's internationally recognized program in Gifted and Creative Studies ensured a steady stream of extraordinary leadership in our public schools to sustain and build on that early commitment to quality Gifted Education programming.

Several giants in the field of Gifted Education called Georgia home, and, thus, our state continued to provide cutting edge research on giftedness and innovative programs to meet the needs of gifted learners. Dr. E. Paul Torrance, widely considered the father of creativity and clearly the most prolific researcher in the field, developed innovative assessment tools and curricula to help teachers recognize and nurture the creative abilities of their students. Dr. Julian Stanley had a profound influence on the way gifted teenagers in America are educated. Best known for his Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) to find young prodigies and help them achieve their potential, Dr. Stanley developed a variety of program models of advanced learning opportunities for gifted students.

It would be impossible to overstate the impact that Dr. Mary Frasier from the University of Georgia had on the field of Gifted Education here in Georgia and, indeed, around the world. In the early 1990's, six Georgia school districts participated in ground-breaking research led by Dr. Frasier for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Her research focused on finding better ways to identify gifted and talented students, particularly those who are underrepresented in our nation's gifted programs -- economically disadvantaged students, culturally and linguistically different students, students with disabilities, and certain ethnic minorities.

As a result of that project, a ground swell of support for reform in the field grew – a cry from educators across the state for a more theoretically sound, diagnostically useful and equitable way to identify children for gifted program placement. Teachers, administrators, and parents worked together to change state law and State Board of Education rules related to Gifted Education so that all Georgia schools could use the promising practices from the study. Educators across the state worked diligently to implement comprehensive evaluation procedures that were more sensitive to individual differences and to better match gifted program options to students' identified strengths.

Consequently, we are serving far more minority and disadvantaged students in Georgia's gifted programs. Since the implementation of our multiple-criteria rule in 1997, there has been a 206% increase in the number of African-American children and a 570% increase in the number of Hispanic children in Georgia's gifted programs! We are now beginning to see the impact of more inclusive identification and programming practices at the high school level, with many more students from underrepresented groups reaching the highest level of rigorous coursework: In the last four years alone, there has been a 71% increase in the number of Black students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Hispanic participation in AP courses has increased 180% in the same time period.

Georgia's eligibility rule is often recognized as a model. The Office for Civil Right's Senior National Attorney, Barbra Shannon, worked closely with Georgia educators during the development and early days of implementation of our multiple-criteria rule, and she now frequently refers policy makers from other states to the Georgia Department of Education for guidance on issues related to both equity and excellence in identification and programming. The National Association for Gifted Children honored the work of Georgia educators in 1994 when it awarded the Department of Education's Gifted Education Specialist its National Community Service Award, citing her work, and that of all Georgia advocates on behalf of gifted children who are typically underrepresented in gifted programs, as a superior example of education in a democracy.

Georgia's rich history in the field has prepared it to face new challenges confronting our state and nation. In an increasingly "flat" world, American students are falling behind their peers internationally on measures of math and science performance. James Gallagher (2005), Kenan professor of education emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, contends that, while Americans recognize the dual and desirable educational goals of student equity (ensuring all students of a fair shot at a good education) and student excellence (ensuring every student the right to achieve as far and as high as he or she is capable), the immediacy of problems associated with equity has meant that a focus on "adequacy" has often prevailed, and the struggle for scarce resources is won by equity.

New national security and defense issues, however, make it imperative that we also consider society's long-term goals by improving the pipeline of American talent so that American students are competitive with international students for seats in our most prestigious universities. To attract industries that use and develop advanced technologies, Georgia schools must provide rigorous programs of study that challenge our most capable

students and, therefore, nurture the intellectual resources of the coming generations. The twenty-first century has ushered in a new age of global competitiveness that will require a renewed commitment to excellence in Gifted Education here in Georgia and across the country.

Governor Sonny Perdue's *Governor's Education Finance Task Force* is charged with determining the programs and services needed in public education in order to achieve educational excellence. The remainder of this report will describe best practices in the field of Gifted Education, an important part of Georgia's commitment to the belief that education is a means by which all students, including those who are gifted and talented, have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Executive Summary

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) has adopted *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards* (Landrum & Shaklee, 1998). The Gifted Education Subcommittee of the Education Finance Task Force's Strategic Multiples Committee decided to use those standards as a framework for describing best practices in Georgia's Gifted Education programs (see Appendix B). Key recommendations are summarized below:

Program Design. The development of appropriate Gifted Education programming requires comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support. As we continue to move away from outdated one-size-fits-all programs, there must be adequate funding for a continuum of Gifted Education services; and these services must be an integral part of the general education school day. Program design must evolve from a sound base of community consensus on the purpose of Gifted Education programming and a clear mission statement. Policies should be in place that specifically add to the nature and operations of the general education program to address the needs of the school district's most able learners (e.g., early entrance, grade skipping, flexible grouping to facilitate differentiated instruction, achievement grouping, dual enrollment). Current funding formulas and Department of Education Regulations of Gifted Education Delivery Models encourage school systems to provide a variety of programming options. It should be noted that some of the program options that have the greatest effect sizes on student achievement (Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991), e.g., early entrance to school, grade skipping, achievement-grouped accelerated classes, and early college enrollment, are associated with little or no additional costs to schools.

Program Administration and Management. Appropriately qualified personnel must direct services for gifted students. Ideally, program coordinators would have certification and/or an advanced degree in Gifted Education. Gifted Education programs must be integrated into the general education program. The program coordinator must build and sustain positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as other professional educators in the local education agency (LEA). Program administration requires the careful management of requisite resources and materials to support all aspects of comprehensive Gifted Education programming. The current

funding formula (200 Gifted Education FTEs = one Special Education leadership allotment) is adequate. However, in many school systems the funds earned for Gifted Education leadership are not used for that purpose. To ensure program quality, it is recommended that at least a portion of Gifted Education leadership funds be protected, i.e., spent specifically on leadership for the gifted program.

Socio-emotional Guidance and Counseling. Exemplary services for gifted students include differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique socio-emotional and career guidance needs; and curriculum for gifted students should have an affective component containing personal/social awareness and adjustment, academic planning, and vocational/career awareness. Specialized guidance and counseling services are needed to help gifted at-risk students reach their potential and to address issues and problems related to underachievement. However, current funding formulas do not contribute funds based on Gifted Education FTE counts to district allotments of counseling positions. It is recommended that counseling services be considered as a funding need for excellent Gifted Education programs.

Student Identification. Gifted learners must be assessed through a comprehensive and cohesive process to determine appropriate educational services. The LEA should provide information about the program annually in a variety of languages regarding the process for nominating students for possible gifted program placement. On-going professional learning opportunities for regular classroom and special area teachers and annual screening of existing test data should be used to ensure broad-based talent search. Instruments based on current research and theory that measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs should be used to develop student assessment profiles of individual strengths and needs. Written procedures for identification should include assurance of access, provisions for informed parent/guardian consent for evaluation, and the LEA's continuation policy and appeals procedures. Over the last nine years, identification procedures have become much more comprehensive – and expensive – yet Gifted Education funding has remained far below that of the other five categories of Special Education, a situation that should be addressed by the Task Force in order to support best practice identification procedures.

Curriculum and Instruction. Gifted Education services must include curricular and instructional opportunities directed to the unique needs of gifted learners throughout their school careers. Current Georgia law and State Board of Education (SBOE) Rule require differentiated curriculum and program services for identified gifted students in grades K-12. In addition to formal Gifted Education services, regular classroom curricula and instruction must be adapted, modified, or replaced to provide gifted students with the rigor, pace, and complexity that challenge their advanced learning abilities. The provision of high-quality formal Gifted Education services and effective curriculum differentiation in the regular classroom require greater expenditure for instructional materials. Instructional pace must be flexible to allow for a variety of acceleration strategies as part of a continuum of curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials.

Professional Development. Gifted learners are entitled to be taught by professionals who have specialized preparation in Gifted Education, expertise in curriculum differentiation, and involvement in on-going professional learning activities to allow them to better meet the needs of highly able students. Excellence in Gifted Education requires a comprehensive professional learning program for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners. Faculty and other staff members must be provided with time and material support for the preparation and development of differentiated education plans, curriculum, and resources.

Program Evaluation. Commitment to excellence requires systematic study of the value and impact of Gifted Education services. Purposeful evaluation must be conducted regularly to examine information collected to address pertinent questions raised by all constituency groups. LEAs must allocate adequate time, financial support and personnel to conduct formative and summative evaluations of the Gifted Education program. State support (funds and technical assistance for program effectiveness evaluation) would help to ensure program quality.

Part 2: A Framework for Describing Excellence in Gifted Education

Program Design

According to Clark (1997), the primary goal of the gifted program is to meet the instructional needs of gifted learners that cannot be met in a regular classroom program. The gifted program is different from the excellent education program we want for all learners because gifted learners' needs are different.

Clark listed the following standards for a program for gifted learners that were developed by the Association for the Gifted (1989):

- "Programs for the gifted and talented are articulated with general education programs.
- Programs are comprehensive, structured, and sequenced across grade levels.
- Programs are an integral part of the school day and may be extended to other school and community-related settings.
- Administrative structures and program options are based on student needs.
- All gifted and talented students are assured programs commensurate with their abilities.
- Resources for program development and implementation are distributed equitably throughout the school district.
- Programs incorporate a blend of community resources and school-based support services in program development and delivery.
- Specialists in gifted child education are consulted in program policy development.
- Ongoing program evaluation activities are conducted for the purpose of continued program development." (p.201)

Maker (1982a) stated, "The phrase most frequently used to describe the appropriate school curriculum for gifted students is 'qualitatively different' from the program for all students." This statement implies that modifications to the basic curriculum must be of quality rather than quantity and build upon those characteristics of gifted students that make them different from other students. Although gifted students are expected to learn the same standards, themes, units and/or concepts as the rest of the class, opportunities should be provided on a regular basis for learning activities that require more depth and complexity (Winebrenner, 2001).

VanTassel-Baska (1998) emphasized that program development efforts for the gifted require careful planning, development, and implementation. NAGC (Landrum & Shaklee, 1998) developed a set of guiding principles to ensure that appropriate gifted education programming include comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical and empirical support. These guiding principles include:

1. **Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners.**
2. **Gifted Education must be adequately funded.**
3. **Gifted Education programming must evolve from a comprehensive and sound base.**

4. **Gifted Education programming services must be an integral part of the general education day.**
5. **Flexible grouping of students must be developed in order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.**
6. **Policies specific to adapting and adding to the nature and operations of the general education program are necessary for gifted education.**

The learning environment should focus on the students' ideas and interests rather than the teacher's (learning centered versus teacher centered), focus on students working to solve real problems (independence versus dependence), be accepting rather than judgmental, be complex and include a variety of resources. Grouping of children should be varied, flexible and mobile, based on the activities (Maker, 1982).

Changing the actual place where students work, allowing flexible time limits, providing opportunities for in-depth research, altering the teacher's expectations, and letting students work with mentors are examples of differentiating the gifted learning environment. Gifted students thrive in a challenging atmosphere in which individual differences are valued and nurtured (Winebrenner, 2001).

Administrative Delivery Models such as Resource Classes, Cluster Group Classes, and Advanced Content Classes are examples of direct services implemented to meet the needs of gifted learners. Indirect services may include the Collaborative Teaching Model, Academic Mentorship and/or Internships, and Dual Enrollment in a higher educational setting. Full-day programs including Magnet Programs and Gifted Academies may also be created to meet the needs of gifted learners. Ideally, Gifted Education programs should include a variety of administrative provisions, e.g., pullout enrichment opportunities, achievement grouping and acceleration, to address gifted students' advanced learning needs (Clark, 1997).

According to a report by Delcourt, Lloyd, Cornell, and Goldberg (1994), students in pullout, separate classes, and special school programs showed higher achievement than gifted students who were not in programs and those who were in programs provided only in the regular classroom. Acceleration strategies such as early entrance to school and grade skipping, which are associated with low program costs, typically have large effect sizes when student achievement is assessed (Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991).

Clark (1997) suggested that each district would be advised to have a wide variety of program options available for the range of services needed. "Because no one structure can meet the needs of all of the gifted learners in any district, providing a range of planned services would be the best practice" (p.214). Barbra Shannon, Senior National Attorney for the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, has frequently reminded Georgia educators that the ability to match appropriate instructional services to student profiles is as important an equity issue as using a variety of indicators of students' potential giftedness in the identification process (B. Shannon, personal communication, January 2003). Georgia's Regulations of Approved Delivery Models for Gifted

Education Services include all the approaches described above, and current funding formulas encourage school systems to provide a variety of programming options.

Program Administration and Management

As with any effort to promote excellence in education, a high quality Gifted Education program must adhere to the basic tenets of best practice in the field and utilize a variety of theories and principles to design and develop innovative instructional programs to meet the unique learning needs of gifted students. The premise that gifted learners will succeed without the benefit of such a specialized program of instruction is a myth that must be remedied by the implementation of organized and comprehensive gifted programming. These plans should include the establishment of a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing the delivery of gifted program services to students.

Historically, Georgia has been a national leader in the field of Gifted Education. Our multiple-criteria identification rule has been recognized as an equitable, theoretically sound method to identify students for gifted program participation. But once students are identified for participation, the real work begins with efforts to assure those students of a high quality instructional program that is matched to their identified strengths. One of the most important components of a quality Gifted Education instructional program is program administration and management.

NAGC, in a publication entitled *Aiming for Excellence: Gifted Program Standards* (2001), stated that appropriate Gifted Education programming must include an organized and comprehensive plan for designing, executing, coordinating, and revising services for the gifted. This plan must be administered by personnel that have appropriate expertise in the field and leadership skills needed to develop policies for administering program services. Although administration and funding of Gifted Education services must be considered independent of other school programs, related services for gifted students must be fully integrated with total school programming (Landrum, Cox, & Evans, 2001).

Aiming for Excellence outlined a set of guiding principles that are vital to high quality gifted program administration and management. These guiding principles serve as an organizing framework for best-practice program administration and management:

1. **Appropriately qualified personnel must direct services for the education of gifted learners.** Effective programming begins with a strong administrator who is an advocate for gifted children and who is knowledgeable about the research base and specific competencies unique to Gifted Education. He/She must be able to describe the needs and characteristics of gifted learners. Teachers also must be aware of the needs of these special students and the various options available for meeting those needs (Delcourt & Evans, 1994). Research findings have shown that persons without specific training in Gifted Education are often ineffective in meeting the educational needs of gifted learners (Tomlinson, Tomchin, Callahan, Adams, Pizzat-Tinnin, Cunningham, Moore, Lutz, Roberson, Eiss, Landrum, Hunsaker, & Imbeau, 1994). Professional learning on the special needs of gifted learners is essential for all staff members (Delcourt & Evans, 1994).

2. **Gifted education programming must be integrated into the general education program.** Gifted Education should be an integral part of the school district's general education plan and must make a meaningful contribution to the total school program. All educational programs benefit from the integration of Gifted Education into the entire school program. These positive spill-over effects of gifted programming result from the fact that integrated Gifted Education services are coordinated rather then perceived as extras (Renzulli & Reis, 1991; Kirchenbaum, Armstrong, & Landrum, 1999).
3. **Gifted Education programming must include positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as with compliance agencies.** Gifted Education programming must reflect collaboration and alignment with the major educational agencies and stakeholder groups at the district, regional, state, and national levels. Gifted program leadership must be able to work collaboratively with teachers, administration, parents, and the community. Services for gifted students should reflect standards for quality education along with best practices in Gifted Education (Tomlinson et al, 1996). In high quality programs, the Gifted Education staff facilitates the dissemination of information regarding policies and practices in Gifted Education to school personnel, parents, and community stakeholders (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001).
4. **Requisite resources and instructional support materials must be provided to support the efforts of Gifted Education programming.** Gifted Education services must be supported by materials and resources not typically included in grade level acquisitions. Most curricular and instructional materials used in K-12 education are developmentally appropriate for the average learner, but often do not meet the special and differentiated instructional needs of gifted learners (Westberg et al, 1993). In addition, teachers of the gifted need specialized training that is not usually offered in professional development efforts. School systems must provide the specialized professional development necessary to ensure that gifted program curriculum is rich, rigorous, and appropriate for Georgia's most able learners. It is especially important that gifted programming provide state-of-the-art technology to support appropriate services (Westberg, et al, 1993).

Attention to program administration and management is essential because gifted and talented students need well-supported programs that provide them with challenging curriculum and well-trained teachers who can inspire and motivate them to excel. Ensuring programming excellence cannot be left to chance. In Georgia more than 114,000 identified gifted students participate in Gifted Education classes; thousands more high-achieving students benefit from inclusive models like Advanced Content Classes, Cluster Grouping, and Collaborative Teaching that appropriately extend the pedagogy of Gifted Education to other bright, highly motivated students who can benefit. A recent survey of parents of gifted and other high-achieving students in a local school system revealed that successful gifted programs are critical to their decision to remain in public education (S. Jones, personal communication, March 10, 2006). Continually improving these special programs is an important component of stakeholders' perceptions about the success or failure of our public schools. With no federal mandate for Gifted Education or

federal funding for instructional services for gifted students, it is up to the state to support local efforts to provide exemplary Gifted Education programs.

Coordinators of Gifted Education programs are faced with daily challenges of designing programs to meet the needs of gifted youth within the structure of the LEA's commitment to all children (Fulkerson, 1995) and, more recently, in an environment of increased pressure to provide more assistance for struggling students as a result of the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). Educational programs for gifted students are subject to a wide variety of pressures, but especially those related to their financial cost (Mulhern & Morris, 1985). The Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) funding formula provides for one Special Education leadership position for every 200 Gifted Education FTEs. This would afford adequate program support if those earned positions were devoted to Gifted Education. However, that is rarely the case. For example, one large Metro area school system currently earns over 30 Special Education leadership positions from its Gifted Education FTE count (over 6000 FTEs); yet this system has a single Coordinator of Gifted Education to manage programming. Excellence in Gifted Education programming requires dedicated leadership. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this Subcommittee that a formula for funds that are dedicated to leadership positions be developed.

Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling

The QBE funding formula does not contribute funds earned through Gifted Education service (FTE count) to the allotment of counseling positions for Georgia schools. Yet gifted students place exceptional demands on counselors. They have unique socio-emotional and career guidance needs, and specialized guidance and services are often needed to help gifted at-risk students reach their potential and to address issues and problems related to underachievement. Gifted students have different academic planning needs (e.g., college and career choices related to advanced abilities and multipotentiality, scholarship and special program competitions), all of which place demands on the guidance office; yet our current funding formula does not help schools address these needs. It is recommended that counseling services be considered as a funding need for excellent Gifted Education programs.

An exemplary gifted program would incorporate appropriate services needed to support the unique social and emotional development of gifted learners, including the following:

1. **Differentiated guidance services and proactive counseling for the complete development of gifted students** (Colangelo, 2003; Reis & Moon, 2002; Nevitt, 2001). Counselors with formal training in working with gifted young people should be available to work with students through problems of perfectionism, isolation, and other vulnerabilities. Counselors with formal training in working with gifted young people are also able to work effectively with parents and teachers in understanding and addressing the social and emotional needs of gifted students.
2. **Career guidance services especially designed to address their unique needs** (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Hébert & Kelly, 2006; Nevitt, 2001).

Counseling strategies should be implemented that address the multipotentiality of gifted students. For example, counselors with formal training in working with gifted students should assist students in understanding their multipotentiality and assist them in making appropriate choices about career directions. Gifted students should have the opportunity to work with professionals in their career fields of interest through mentorship or internship experiences.

3. **An educational plan that addresses the guidance and counseling needs of gifted at-risk students who are more likely to experience barriers to academic progress and may need assistance to reach their full potential (i.e., children of poverty, minority students, gifted learners with disabilities)** (Colangelo, 2003; Nevitt, 2001; Olenchak & Reis, 2002). Excellent Gifted Education programming would provide time and resources for teachers and counselors to work with at-risk gifted students to address their diverse needs through differentiated instruction and counseling.
4. **An educational plan that intervenes for underachieving gifted students and contributes to a positive sense of self-efficacy and more positive adjustment** (Colangelo, 2003; Mandel & Marcus, 1995; Nevitt, 2001; Rimm, 1995). Gifted underachieving students should be provided a variety of interventions to reverse their patterns of underachievement: interest assessment, curriculum compacting, independent investigations, mentoring, support groups with school counselors, opportunities for acceleration, and training in time management and study skills.
5. **Learning opportunities that promote the following: self-awareness and self-understanding, positive peer relationships, intercultural knowledge, and leadership.** A school district's Gifted Education program should provide students with rigorous curricula that address their intellectual, motivational, and social and emotional needs. Gifted students should be taught how to advocate for themselves and solve some of their own academic problems. Curriculum for Gifted students should include instruction in understanding and respecting individual differences in positive ways (Betts & Kercher, 1999; Ford & Harris, 1999; Bean & Karnes, 2005; Nevitt, 2001; Tomlinson, 1999).
6. **Opportunities for gifted students to develop social interaction and coping skills to address personal and social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping** (Betts & Kercher, 1999; Ford & Harris, 1999)**.** Gifted students should be provided opportunities for pursuing social action projects within their schools and communities in order to address real problems that concern them.
7. **Educational experiences that support self-efficacy and lifelong learning** (Siegle & McCoach, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). Exemplary Gifted Education programs would involve educators, community members, and parents working together to provide a wide variety of opportunities for gifted students to explore their personal interests through independent investigations of problems or issues that concern them.
8. **Learning environments that allow gifted students to appreciate their own and others' language and cultural heritage** (Ford & Harris, 1999). School districts' Gifted Education curricula should consistently incorporate multicultural issues throughout the curricula's content. Exemplary Gifted Education curriculum helps students develop an awareness and appreciation of diversity.

Student Identification

To determine appropriate educational services, gifted learners must first be assessed. However, to get a hit, children must first get to bat, so effective identification procedures rely not only on exemplary testing practices, but also carefully implemented, research-based child-find procedures. In the last nine years (since the implementation of SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS, Georgia's multiple-criteria eligibility rule), gifted program educators have embraced the kinds of comprehensive assessment procedures that previously had been associated with Special Education referrals. Assessing students' strengths in several areas (mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation), using a variety of test and non-test measures, is much more expensive and time-consuming that the simplistic assessment practices used before; but the rewards have been (a) tremendous progress in the identification of gifted students from underrepresented groups and (b) the provision of a much greater variety of gifted program service options to meet students' varied learning needs.

Georgia's gifted eligibility rule requires student assessment for gifted identification to be organized, systematic, and ongoing. The primary goal is to identify student needs for the purpose of matching curriculum and programming options. Best-practice principles for identification of gifted students require assessment practices that: (1) identify different aspects of giftedness, (2) are reliable and valid, (3) use appropriate instruments with underserved populations, (4) use a multiple measure/multiple-criteria approach, and (5) identify and place students based on documented student needs and abilities. Sufficient resources (time, money, materials, translations, personnel, and teacher training) must be allocated for distribution of comprehensive, cohesive, and clear information regarding the LEA's nomination and identification procedures (Landrum & Callahan, 1999; Hansford, et al., 2001). It should be noted that while Georgia's Gifted Education professionals have implemented comprehensive multi-dimensional assessment techniques that are similar to those used to identify children with disabilities, the Gifted FTE weight has remained significantly lower than the weights for any of the other categories of exceptionality specified in Georgia law.

The following principles, from the *NAGC Standards for Gifted Education Programming* (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001) further describe excellence in identification practices:

1. **A comprehensive and cohesive process for student nomination must be coordinated in order to determine eligibility for gifted education services.** Nomination of students for Gifted Education services provides important information about all students' abilities. Strategies and procedures that promote involvement of all school staff, as well as students, parents, and community members, support student access to the gifted identification process and subsequent services. A comprehensive and timely nomination process provides opportunities for finding atypical student referrals from unlikely sources, e.g., the nomination of students with dual exceptionalities from special education teachers.

Nomination procedures and forms should be available in a variety of languages (Gagne, 2004).

2. **Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility for Gifted Education services must measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs in order to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strength.** Students are assessed to assure that differentiated services are aligned with the students' educational needs. Data collection strategies guide placement decisions, provide information for instructional decisions and expand conceptions of intelligence. A full range of procedures and evaluation instruments should be used to ensure equity for those from racial, cultural, and ethnic minority populations from low-SES environments, and those with disabilities, or for whom English is a second language. Assessments must be responsive to students' economic conditions, gender, developmental differences, handicapping conditions, and other factors that mitigate against fair assessment practices. Assessment procedures across all grade levels and areas of giftedness must meet high standards of professional practice (Maker, 1996; Frasier, 1993).

3. **A student assessment profile of individual strengths and needs must be developed to plan appropriate intervention.** Assessment profiles should reflect gifted learners' interests, learning styles, and educational needs. The construction and use of appropriate individual profiles for students requires collection of a variety of data, careful record keeping, and the ability to analyze and synthesize data. Sound instructional planning is based on assessment data in profiles of students' strengths and weaknesses. Identification data guides extensions and acceleration of curriculum and instruction. Sufficient resources must be allocated to accomplish the collection and analysis of data for individual students (Landrum & Callahan, 2001; Mendaglio, 2004).

4. **All student identification procedures and instruments must be based on current theory and research.** Student assessment data should represent an appropriate balance of reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative measures. The research literature from the fields of Gifted Education and psychology provides information about identification procedures and instruments that are continually changing. The use of assessment instruments should conform to professional standards for ethical use, as well as reflect current best practice and research for the specific use with gifted learners. Student assessment data should come from multiple, current sources and include multiple assessment methods (Maker, 1994; Rogers, 2005).

5. **Written procedures for student identification must include, at the very least, provisions for informed consent, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures.** Clearly articulated procedures guide student identification and placement practices. All procedures protect the rights of students and include criteria for screening, assessment, decisions related to placement, informed consent, and a process for appeal. Procedures should be in

written form in a variety of languages, and should be provided to parents and other stakeholders. District guidelines, procedures, and materials should be reviewed and revised annually (*Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services*, 2006).

For a sample of best-practice identification procedures, see Appendix C.

Curriculum and Instruction

The most basic goal of any educational endeavor is to academically stimulate and challenge each student through curriculum and instruction so that meaningful intellectual transformation results. Through this transformation, intellectual empowerment and the fostering of an intrinsic desire for life-long learning are achieved; in short, ***the student acquires a perpetual appreciation for the aesthetic of learning.*** Gifted Education aims to achieve this end for the student population that exceeds normal curriculum expectations, shows a need for greater intellectual challenge, and/or demonstrates an ability to master desired curricula at an accelerated rate.

NCLB promises children will read by third grade. This is a laudable goal, but as Tomlinson (2002, p. 1) has pointed out, "proficiency is not enough." What promises are being made to those students who are reading in kindergarten or to those in fifth grade who are ready for algebra? What do they learn? In reality, these students may never reach potential because they are not adequately challenged. They are not required or even given the opportunity to wrestle with complex tasks, nor do they develop the study skills required to support them as challenges increase at the university level. Students cannot learn unless they are taught something new, and to teach something new to our most advanced learners requires curricular and instructional practices that are neither rigid nor restrictive, but are flexible enough to meet the needs of individual learners (Davidson Institute, 2006). One-size-fits-all instructional practices do not meet the needs of gifted learners. If we are to provide an appropriate education for these students, we must provide a menu of instructional and curricular options.

Services for gifted learners make a significant difference for these students (Rogers, 2001), but services involve a variety of delivery models and curricula that are "qualitatively different from the program for nongifted students" (Maker, 1982b, p. 3). Curriculum and instruction appropriate for gifted learners requires more than a change in environment; it requires a substantial change in the content of lessons (Gallagher & Gallagher, 1993), in the materials and resources used, and in the complexity of the work required. Fortunately, researchers have been studying best practices of curricular and instructional design for gifted learners for several decades, and a solid research base exists that identifies the practices that are most effective with these students. Educators have a blueprint for designing educational programs for gifted learners, for planning and delivering programs that meet the unique needs of these students, and for fulfilling the promise of educational excellence.

1. **Gifted programming must be developed and articulated to span pre-k through grade 12 with differentiated curricular and appropriate instructional options that include not just academic courses, but those in the**

visual and performance arts as well. Gifted students are not gifted in one year but not the next. They need a continuum of challenge throughout their school experience. Because gifted learners have specific cognitive characteristics that present special learning needs, their educational experience must be based on a curriculum that is appropriately differentiated to meet those needs (Gallagher, 1992; VanTassel-Baska, 1998; Chandler, 2001). Differentiated components involve modification of one or more of the following: content, process, product, learning environment, or pace (Tomlinson, 1999), but a program must be more than random acts of differentiation. "If gifted students are to thrive, there must be . . . a coherent curriculum structure" (VanTassel-Baska, 2006), and the differences in the curriculum must be evident in the scope of the stated outcomes. In other words, students must be provided appropriate opportunities for sustained advanced learning across all grade levels and within all areas of study. Differentiation must provide opportunities in place of rather than in addition to the curriculum of the regular education program (Chandler, 2001). Standards, therefore, need to be organized across grade levels to ensure a continuous sequence of expectations and goals, a continuous sequence of new learning opportunities, and an unfaltering emphasis on higher level skills (VanTassel-Baska, 1998); and gifted learners need to move through those standards at a pace that reflects their level of knowledge and ability (Tomlinson, 2003).

NAGC identifies exemplary services to gifted learners as requiring a "curriculum scope and sequence that articulates . . . curriculum differentiation at each grade level" and includes connections to both the visual and performing arts (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001, p. 55). This element is critical because researchers have found that teachers, even very experienced teachers, make few accommodations for gifted students; differentiated instruction remains largely absent from classrooms (Archambault et al., 1993). It is required that educators keep in mind that no single approach will meet the needs of all gifted learners (Chandler, 2001); flexibility is required.

Fine and performing arts education is an example of programming that is able to achieve the aforementioned goal of fostering a love of learning and extraordinary levels of performance. Fine and performing arts curricula and instruction allow for students to work at their own pace, learn through collaboration, achieve immediate tangible results through performance, and do so by learning in classroom environments that are constructed by homogeneous grouping (by ability), regardless of age. Through the experience of this instructional model, the aesthetic of learning is embedded in each student, thereby garnering a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

It is interesting to look at the percentage of gifted students that flock to participation in the fine arts. Some contend that the reason behind the high rate of gifted student participation is due not to the satisfaction of the artistic result, but is due to the by-product; the aesthetic of learning. Nowhere is this phenomenon better observed than each summer at Georgia's Governor's Honors Program

(GHP). The longest running program of its type in the country, GHP, one component of Georgia's commitment to its most talented students, shows how exemplary Gifted Education programs might seek to harvest this "aesthetic of learning" from the fine arts teaching model and implement it into all gifted program instruction.

2. **Regular classroom curricula and instruction must be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.** Gifted students face a number of frustrations in regular classrooms: watered-down textbooks, repetition of content, and failure of teachers to appropriately differentiate curriculum and/or instruction (Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1992; Archambault et al., 1993). The level of materials used with gifted learners is crucial to ensuring that these students are exposed to the stimulation required to force thinking to greater depths and complexity (Gallagher, 1985; Shore & Delcourt, 1996). Educators must set high standards and provide on-going challenges for gifted learners to ensure continued intellectual growth (Dettmer, 1993). Modifications in curriculum will reduce boredom from redundancy, for gifted learners often already know a significant percentage of what is to be taught in a particular grade, subject, or course (Kulik, 1992; Chandler, 2001). Gifted learners show impressive gains when their curriculum is adjusted to their aptitude and cognitive levels (Kulik, 1992) and instructional materials are challenging and complex. The provision of high-quality formal Gifted Education services and effective curriculum differentiation in the regular classroom require greater expenditure for instructional materials.

3. **Instructional pace must be increased and opportunities for subject and grade skipping provided to allow for accelerated learning as appropriate.** Acceleration includes options such as early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, grade skipping, subject skipping, compacting, telescoping, early admission, dual enrollment, mentorships, internships, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate programs (Winebrenner, 2001; Rogers, 2001; Chandler, 2001; Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004; DeVries, 2005; Chuska, 2005; Olszewski, 2006). The research is unequivocal; to provide no recognition of the need for and no options for acceleration is to fail to meet the needs of gifted learners. In addition to acceleration options in programming, appropriate pacing within instruction also requires that activities move at a rate that matches the mental processing speed of the learners (Tomlinson, 1999; Chandler, 2001). Instructional pace and grade placement should not be dependent upon the age of the learner (Chandler, 2001; Heacox, 2002; Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). When instructional strategies, curricular options, and appropriate pace match the needs of gifted learners, these students make significant gains in achievement (Rogers, 2001).

Professional Development

Excellence in the education of gifted students in Georgia is in large part a function of excellence in professional development provided to educators and advocates of Georgia's

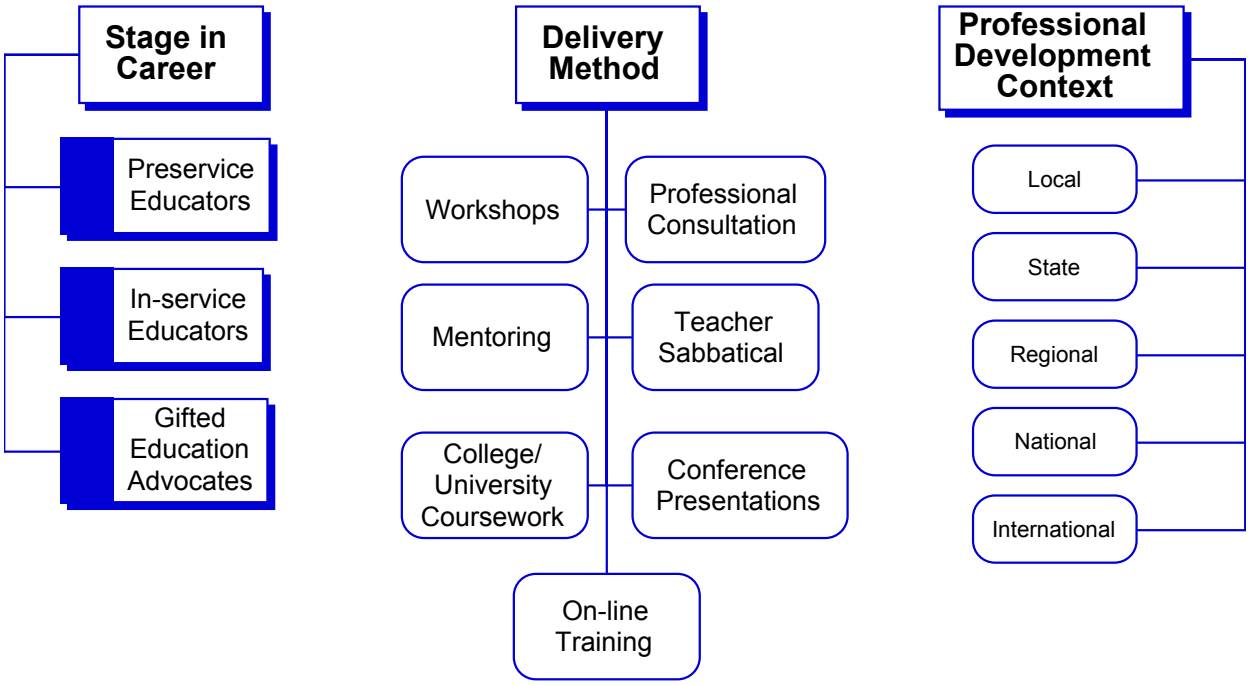
gifted programs. The major principles described in the NAGC standards for professional development (Landrum, 2001) include best practices needed to promote excellence in Gifted Education programs:

1. **A comprehensive professional learning program must be provided for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners.** Professional development is an ongoing, systemic process. School staff members enter and exit the enduring cycle of professional learning activities based on previous knowledge and experience and the need for information as it relates to their professional role in the education of gifted learners. Professional learning programs are costly, so ongoing funding is necessary. But the benefits for gifted learners and other students who profit from the expanded skills and sensitivities of teachers and administrators are great (Tomlinson, Bland, Moon, & Callahan, 1994).
2. **Only qualified personnel should be involved in the education of gifted learners. Gifted education is a specialized field of study.** Teaching gifted learners reflects particular knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Therefore, those who are most qualified to teach gifted learners are those who have participated in an advanced degree program in Gifted Education or a high-quality Gifted Education professional development program.
3. **School personnel require support for their specific efforts related to the education of gifted learners.** Most school staff has little or no specialized training in Gifted Education. Therefore, they must participate in professional development activities related to their area of expertise as it applies to gifted learners.
4. **The educational staff must be provided with time and other support for the preparation and development of differentiated education plans, materials, and curricula.** Gifted services requires collecting materials from outside of the traditional grade level or school, and it requires access to alternative resources, funds to purchase them, and planning time to develop individualized materials.

These guidelines serve as a framework for Gifted Education programs that are committed to excellence**.** On-going systemic processes must be in place to prepare educators to meet the Georgia Professional Standards Commission Gifted In-Field Endorsement or Gifted (P-12) Certificate. Highly qualified educators must be trained to meet the needs of gifted students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Funding for professional development supports initiatives that: (a) take into account career stage; (b) include multiple delivery methods, and (c) target a range of contexts (see Figure 1). Educators who participate in an endorsement or certification program have the opportunity to increase their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in Gifted Education. For example, through district-wide training, on-line instruction, or rigorous graduate level coursework that emphasizes gifted student characteristics, measurement and assessment, curriculum and strategies, and methods and materials, educators become qualified to best serve the needs of gifted students.

Support is also needed to assist the Department of Education's Gifted Education unit to continue its highly individualized work with local school systems, regional educational service agencies, colleges and universities, and international organizations to conduct professional development initiatives.

Figure 1. GADOE Gifted Education Program Professional Development Initiatives



Program Evaluation

Gifted Education reform efforts in Georgia over the last 10 years have focused primarily on identification and programming. Successes in those arenas have brought us to the point that we are ready to take on the next challenge: program effectiveness evaluation. Those efforts must be preceded by clarity of purpose – *Just what should we be providing for Georgia's most able students in addition to the excellent core curriculum we want for all students? What are the outcomes we expect of our gifted program, and what do they look like in terms of student behaviors?*

LEAs should be able to describe in clear, precise, measurable terms what it is that their gifted students are doing, learning, and accomplishing as a result of their participation in Gifted Education programming. Every school system must reach consensus on the purpose of its Gifted Education program, articulate the learning goals for gifted students at every grade level, and decide how to best determine the extent to which their program is accomplishing those goals. The best possible provisions for gifted learners will result from "careful collection of data regarding the context in which the services are delivered,

the adequacy and appropriateness of resources available, the quality of activities carried out, and, finally, the degree to which goals and objectives have been achieved" (Callahan, 2001, p. 77).

The following guiding principles for program evaluation suggested by Callahan (2001) will help to ensure excellence in Georgia's Gifted Education programs:

1. **An evaluation must be purposeful.** Effective program evaluation requires that all stakeholders are involved in decisions regarding programs for gifted students, that goals and objectives are clearly delineated, and that the time and money allocated for evaluation will provide useful and purposeful data. Tomlinson et al. (1994) found that the early involvement of a wide representative group in evaluation and planning and the clear articulation of evaluation purposes were associated with more effective evaluation designs and better utilization of results.
2. **An evaluation must be efficient and economic.** State support (funds and technical assistance) for program effectiveness evaluation would help to ensure program quality. LEAs could use Georgia Standards for School Performance (GSSP) data as a source of information for formative evaluation of their Gifted Education programs as part of total school reviews. Using GSSP to gather data regarding Gifted Education programs would be both efficient and economic, as the resource is available for use by all Georgia schools at no cost. Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) analyses would provide observation records and interview data regarding differentiation of instruction in the regular classroom, and the GAPSS procedures could be modified to be more gifted program specific. However, more specific evaluation activities would be needed for summative evaluation of program impact on locally adopted goals for gifted learners.
3. **An evaluation must be conducted competently and ethically.** Tomlinson, et al. (1994) found that evaluation procedures were stronger and better use was made of recommendations when the evaluation teams had expertise in both evaluation design and Gifted Education. Excellence in Gifted Education depends on the success of the evaluation team in collecting and analyzing pertinent data and building support of those who will act on evaluation findings to improve programs for gifted students.
4. **The evaluation results must be made available through a written report.** To maximize the potential for positive impact on gifted programs, evaluation results must be communicated in an easily accessible and readable report. Meaningful documents serve as a source for immediate referral and also for long-term planning.

Conclusions

Almost a half century after the launch of Sputnik awakened our nation to the need to invest in its most academically talented students, new challenges lie ahead for the state of Georgia and the country as a whole. The *Governor's Education Finance Task Force* has been asked to develop a new vision for Georgia's public schools, asking the important

questions, *"What does excellence look like for ALL Georgia's children? In what ways must we invest in educational excellence?"*

A half century of research, often lead by Georgia scholars and educators, has helped to answer many questions related to best practices in the field of Gifted Education. We have evidence of what it takes to have excellence in program design and management; in identification practices; in curriculum and instruction that provide appropriate rigor; in guidance and counseling to meet the needs of gifted students; in professional development for the educators who teach gifted learners; and in evaluation procedures to ensure continued improvement of gifted program services. We have learned that gifted students are not "going to learn it anyway." They are not sent to school by loving parents to serve as tutors. They arrive on our doorsteps filled with questions and excitement and an array of skills that are beyond those of their age peers. Too often, however, they are told to wait; they often get the message that their questions are inappropriate; they may be told by actions, if not in words, that they are less important than other children in school. Should we wonder that far too many gifted students tune out, drop out, and all too soon lose their insatiable desire to know? These, too, are Georgia's children – entrusted to us for an appropriate education. To provide them with educational programming that is less than that is to fail in our mission as public school educators.

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Appendix A

Committee Members:
Gifted Education Subcommittee of the Strategic Multiples Committee

Chair: Dr. Sally Krisel, Gifted Education Specialist, Georgia Department of Education

Linda Andrews, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Clayton County Schools; President, Georgia Association for Gifted Children; Co-president, Georgia Gifted Coordinators Consortium

Alison Bartlett, Co-president, Cobb County Chapter of the Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Cary Brague, Associate Director, Governor's Honors Program, Georgia Department of Education

Linda Calhoun, Program Manager, Analysis and Planning, Office of Teacher and Student Support, Georgia Department of Education

Dr. Bonnie Cramond, Associate Professor, Gifted and Creative Education, The University of Georgia; University Liaison, Georgia Association for Gifted Children; Board of Directors, National Association for Gifted Children

Dr. Annette Eger, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Gwinnett County Schools; Legislative Liaison, Georgia Association for Gifted Children; Co-president, Georgia Gifted Coordinators Consortium

Dr. Tarek Grantham, Associate Professor, Gifted and Creative Education, The University of Georgia; Newsletter Guest Editor, Special Populations Division, National Association for Gifted Children

Dr. Tom Hébert, Associate Professor, Gifted and Creative Education, The University of Georgia; Board of Directors, National Association for Gifted Children

Camille Hope, President, Bibb County Supporters for the Gifted

Dr. Barbara Hubbard, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Savannah-Chatham County Schools

Dr. Sharon Jones, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Atlanta Public Schools; Regional Representative, Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Mike Lindsey, Director of Student Learning, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Columbia County Schools; Regional Representative, Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Sonya Porcher, Coordinator of Gifted Education, DeKalb County Schools; Secretary, Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Dr. Ann Richardson, Coordinator of Gifted Education, Fayette County Schools; Past-president, Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Dr. Susan Squires, Director of Gifted Education, Muscogee County Schools

Sandy Swint, Co-president, Cobb County Chapter of the Georgia Association for Gifted Children

Dr. Hannah Tostensen, Retired Superintendent, Pulaski County Schools

Appendix B

Process for Development of the Gifted Education Subcommittee Report To the Strategic Multiples Committee

Following the meeting of the Strategic Multiples Committee of the Governor's Education Finance Task Force on February 23, 2006, Department of Education (DOE) Gifted Education Specialist, Dr. Sally Krisel, recruited a broad-based team of stakeholders to serve as the Gifted Education Subcommittee. These 18 individuals represent the state geographically and hold a variety of positions as they serve as advocates for Georgia's gifted children – university professors, local gifted program coordinators, DOE program managers, a recently retired school system superintendent, and leaders of local parent advocacy groups (see Appendix A). The professional educators on the Gifted Education Subcommittee have a combined 295 years experience in the field of Gifted Education! Among them, they hold 29 advanced degrees, 11 of those in the field of Gifted Education.

The Subcommittee met for the first time on March 3, 2006, and discussed the charge it had been given by Consultant Ed Keller. Members brainstormed key points to be made about excellence in Gifted Education and determined that the *NAGC Pre-K—Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards* would serve as a good framework for discussing what is required to have best practices in Gifted Education in Georgia schools. Subcommittee members volunteered to research sections of the report, write drafts of certain sections, and to seek additional input from a wider group of stakeholders.

Over the next two weeks, Subcommittee members talked with a number of experts and interested stakeholders:

- Barbra Shannon, Senior National Attorney, Office for Civil Rights
- Rick Eiserman, Director of Certification Policy, Georgia Professional Standards Commission
- Phil Blackwell, Director of Certification Operations, Georgia Professional Standards Commission
- Lasa Joiner, JLH Consulting, Decatur, GA, Legislative Consultant for the Georgia Association for Gifted Children (GAGC)

Timing of the Annual E. Paul Torrance Lecture (March 8) and the GAGC Annual Conference (March 9-10) at the University of Georgia allowed Subcommittee members to talk about best practices in Gifted Education and the challenges faced here in Georgia with many gifted program educators from across the state, as well as several national and international experts in the field:

- Dr. Robert Alan Black, creativity consultant and author
- Dr. Mark Runco, editor of *Creativity Research Journal*

- Dr. Jann Leppien, professor of Gifted Education, University of Great Falls, Montana; Board of Directors, NAGC and Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Student (AEGUS); co-author of *The Parallel Curriculum Model*

Subcommittee members conducted literature searches through ERIC; Galileo; the on-line research databases of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, NAGC, and the Davidson Institute for Talent Development; book chapters and books; and professional periodicals (e.g., *Roeper Review*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Gifted Child Today*). Many relied on literature reviews from their own research.

Local coordinators of Gifted Education met with staff members and faculty to get ideas for improving the Subcommittee report. Parent advocates sought input from local program coordinators, regular classroom and Gifted Education teachers, district-level administrators (e.g., Curriculum Directors, Assistant Superintendents, Budget Directors), local school board members, other parent advocates, and, perhaps most importantly, gifted students themselves!

All input and report contributions were returned to the Subcommittee Chair, Dr. Sally Krisel, who compiled (a) a draft to be shared with DOE personnel and, based on that input, (b) the final report.

Appendix C

Sample Talent Identification Procedures