



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
**Gifted Children**

## **Turning A Blind Eye: Neglecting the Needs of the Gifted and Talented Through Limited Accountability, Oversight, and Reporting** *2014-2015 State of the Nation in Gifted Education*

Laws, policies, and funding to support the nation's high-achieving and high-potential PK-12 students continue to vary sharply between states with only a fraction of states meeting their obligations to these students. The majority of states:

- » conduct little reporting and oversight of the gifted and talented student population;
- » provide minimal to no state funding to support gifted and talented student services;
- » have laws or policies that hinder student access to services; and
- » focus minimal efforts on educating teachers to work with gifted and talented students.

The *State of the Nation in Gifted Education*, a longstanding collaboration between the National Association for Gifted Children and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, covers the 2014 to 2015 academic year and includes full or partial responses from 41 states plus the District of Columbia.

As in past years, the survey reveals an **uneven delivery system with fragmented policies** that inhibit rather than strengthen access to services. The onus to fund programs to identify and serve high-potential and high-achieving students, support teacher training, and develop critical policies on identification and service models is often placed on local school districts. The resulting variabilities raises **serious questions about equity and quality**.

The most striking challenge brought to light in the new data is that very few states are appropriately measuring and reporting on the annual academic progress of gifted and talented students and on the level of services available to such students. This **lack of public accountability** means that parents, teachers, administrators, and decision makers have **little information on program quality and effectiveness** and, most important, whether all eligible students are receiving services.

## Limited Public Accountability

In Most states there is limited to non-existent levels of reporting and oversight of what school districts are doing to serve high-ability students.

- 28 states have no gifted education performance indicators on their report cards.
- 19 states do not monitor or audit local gifted programs, 22 do not require districts to submit gifted education plans, and only 11 produce an annual report on gifted education services in the state.
- Only 7 states require school districts to report on gifted student achievement/performance.
- Fewer than half of the states reporting have at least one employee in their state department of education dedicated full-time to gifted education engaged in important tasks like fielding district or parent inquiries and conducting oversight of districts.
- Efforts to better identify and serve students from populations historically underrepresented in gifted education are hampered by a lack of data. Only 20 states report race and ethnicity data for gifted students, and even fewer identify students from low-income settings (12) or who are English Language Learners (10).

## Barriers to Access & Services

A number of real and de facto barriers continue to obstruct high-ability students from moving through school at a pace matching their ability. State laws may restrict access to certain services or, more frequently, they are silent or explicitly place such decisions exclusively in the hands of local school districts.

- Only 12 states have policies that require school districts to accept gifted identification from another district within the same state.
- 5 states have explicit policies that do not allow their schools to accept gifted education eligibility granted in another state, and nearly 30 states leave such decisions to local school districts.
- 13 states expressly prohibit students from entering Kindergarten early and 19 states leave such decisions to the local school district.
- 2 states prohibit students from being dually enrolled in both middle school and high school while 26 leave such decisions to the school districts.
- 4 states prohibit proficiency-based promotion or the advancement of students by subject, and 14 states leave decisions to school districts.

## Teacher Preparation & Training

Training requirements for gifted education teachers continue to vary widely and most general education teachers have no training in working with gifted students before entering the classroom or through ongoing professional development. This reality makes it more difficult to properly identify such students in the general classroom setting.

- 19 of 29 responding states require teachers in gifted programs to hold a specialized credential or endorsement.
- Only 10 of 40 states report requiring school districts to have a dedicated gifted and talented administrator.
- Only 1 state (Nevada) statutorily requires all teachers to receive training in gifted and talented education through a separate course before beginning their classroom service.

## Some Encouraging Signs

The *2014-2015 State of the Nation in Gifted Education* shows progress toward ensuring high-ability students are served using specialized strategies. For students in upper elementary school, the **three most commonly used delivery methods were cluster classrooms, resource rooms, and subject acceleration**. This marks a change from prior year surveys where regular classroom instruction ranked second at all levels.

The survey also found that while only **4 states fully fund their gifted education obligations** and 12 provide no funding, **14 states increased funding**, 5 maintained funding, and only 2 states reduced funding during the covered period.

Finally 25 states reported having discussions about **strengthening pre-service licensure requirements for all teachers** that require increased exposure to the knowledge and skills needed to identify and serve gifted students. This is an encouraging sign upon which states can build going forward to implement changes.





## Call To Action

The *2014-2015 State of the Nation in Gifted Education* highlights deficiencies in a number of important areas including public accountability, access to services, funding, and teacher preparation and training. To address these gaps, NAGC makes the following specific recommendations:

- » Update federal law to **standardize state and district-level reporting** on how gifted and talented students are served and how they are progressing year over year. Provisions to increase the amount of information about who is achieving at the top level is included in the bipartisan TALENT Act (S. 363 and H.R. 2960), as well as within the Senate-passed bill to update the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- » Update federal funding guidelines to **require teacher training and professional development** to ensure that all teachers are able to identify and serve high-ability learners. These provisions are also included in the TALENT Act and Senate-passed ESEA rewrite.
- » Sustain and grow federally supported **applied research into how to best identify and serve students from populations that have traditionally been underrepresented** in gifted education programs by increasing the annual federal appropriation for the Jacob Javits Gifted Students program, funded at \$10 million in Fiscal Year 2015.
- » Update state laws and policies to **remove impediments that restrict gifted students** from accessing appropriate services, such as restrictions on dual enrollment and early entrance to Kindergarten, as well as differing identification and eligibility policies among school districts.
- » Update state licensure requirements so that **all teachers and counselors are required to have greater levels of pre-service preparation** in how to identify and serve gifted learners before entering the classroom, as well as access to ongoing professional development in how to work with such learners.



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