

Accountability, Assessment, and Learning Growth for Gifted Students

Accountability Depends on Appropriate Measurement

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

Gifted Student Growth Cannot Be Measured on Many Assessments

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

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

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