



June 1, 2009

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) are the largest national organizations of teachers, administrators, parents, and others concerned with the education of children with disabilities, giftedness, or both. We write to draw your attention to the national impact and effectiveness of the Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act (Javits). The recent White House Termination Notice for this program contained several inaccuracies that we would like to correct in advance of the committee's consideration of the fiscal year 2010 budget.

For more than 20 years, the Javits program has been the only federal program dedicated to the development of gifted and talented students and determining ways that school districts can identify and serve them. Created partly in response to national panels and reports that called for more information about how best to support our nation's most promising learners, the Javits program has developed important new knowledge about the needs of gifted and talented students and whether those needs are being met in the classroom. Unfortunately, for a host of economic and other reasons, the needs of these children go unmet in many school districts far more often now than even a decade ago. And, for advanced students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the picture is even bleaker as the achievement gap at the top continues to widen. Nevertheless, thanks to the Javits research, we have many successful strategies for increasing access to gifted education services for high-ability minority students and students who are English language learners, from low socioeconomic backgrounds, or who have disabilities should school districts choose to focus on these populations of advanced students.

Contrary to the impression created by the Termination Notice, the Javits program was not designed to be a funding mechanism for local gifted education programs and services. The Javits Act supports the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) and a series of demonstration grants that focus on underserved populations in order to create a bank of "best practices" on which districts can draw. For at least the last decade, the grants have required control groups -- comparison classrooms or schools -- in order to evaluate the project outcomes. Several projects have employed random assignment, the gold standard in educational research. Thanks in part to the Javits program, we know more about what is happening with gifted learners in classrooms across the country and teachers have a range of strategies to support their talent development. Several highlights include:

- Research conducted at the NRC/GT in the early 1990s resulted in the development of a "multiple criteria model" for identifying gifted children that changed the way schools nationwide evaluate students for gifted and talented services. First implemented in Georgia, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights approved the multiple criteria model for use in the state with diverse student populations.
- Several research-based, demonstration grants have used rigorous curriculum to increase student achievement in four content areas (reading, science, math, and social studies). These studies have shown that not only has the achievement of participating gifted students increased, but so has the achievement of non-gifted students in the same classrooms where the projects were being implemented. The curriculum developed in numerous Javits projects is now being used in hundreds of school districts nationwide, is being published by commercial publishers, and in at least one case, has been supported by the National Science Foundation as a scale-up project.
- Other research conducted by the NRC/GT on classroom practices that is known to work effectively with advanced students, including curriculum compacting, is included in the Department of Education's *What Works Clearinghouse*, making the results of that research available and appropriate for use nationwide.

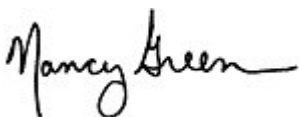
Research conducted under the auspices of the Javits Act has also contributed to the knowledge base about the characteristics, needs, and challenges in serving special populations of gifted children, and has resulted in numerous strategies to prepare teachers, to change attitudes and expectations of school personnel about the nature of giftedness, and to incorporate gifted education pedagogy into regular classrooms to improve total student achievement. While all these research efforts have relied heavily on cooperating school districts, the Javits program has never been a funding stream for local gifted education programs and services.

Recognizing the need to build on the research developed through the Javits program to directly impact teaching and learning, Congress established a new grant program through the Javits Act, in the last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, to assist states in building their capacity to serve gifted and talented students. This was intended to make a modest investment stretch as far as possible by funding statewide projects that expand services to gifted and talented students. Unfortunately, funding for the Javits Act in recent years has fallen to a level where even this small attempt to address a national problem has been left unfunded.

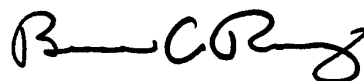
Instead of reducing or eliminating the Javits program, Congress should increase its funding. The nation, and talented children from underserved populations in particular, would then continue to be served by this effective research program that has a consistent record of creating proven strategies for finding and serving more highly able students from disadvantaged backgrounds, building a research-based set of effective curricula that has improved performance of gifted children and their non-gifted classmates, changing attitudes and expectations of school personnel about the nature of giftedness, and incorporating gifted education pedagogy into regular classrooms across the country to improve total school achievement. We are heartened to learn that the Administration supports gifted and talented education and we look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to address ways in which the federal government can support our most promising students. The Javits program has already proven its value to school districts across the country and the Congress has consistently supported it. We urge your continued support and ask that you provide \$20 million in fiscal year 2010. Now more than ever, this population of students needs our help.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions please contact Jane Clarenbach, Director of Public Education with the National Association for Gifted Children, at [janec@nagc.org](mailto:janec@nagc.org), 202-785-4268 or Deb Ziegler, Associate Executive Director for Policy and Communication Services, Council for Exceptional Children at [debz@cec.sped.org](mailto:debz@cec.sped.org), 703-264-9406

Sincerely,



Executive Director  
National Association for Gifted Children



Executive Director  
Council for Exceptional Children