



National Association for Gifted Children
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TO: NAGC Members
RE: Federal Stimulus Funds – Gifted Education Advocacy

NAGC and its advocacy firm, B&D Consulting, developed the following information to assist its members in advocating locally for using federal stimulus funds to support gifted and talented education.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides \$53 billion for education and training and another \$48.6 billion for state and local fiscal stabilization for education and health services. Though none of the money is specifically reserved for gifted and talented education (GT), there are opportunities to use funds to support gifted and talented students. The goals of ARRA are to quickly save and create jobs while investing in education, long term, in ways that improve overall student achievement and close the achievement gap. Below is a description of how three funding mechanisms in ARRA could be used to support GT programs and services.

(1) State Fiscal Stabilization Fund

The State Stabilization Fund is a one-time appropriation of approximately \$48.6 billion that the U.S. Department of Education will award to Governors to help stabilize State and local budgets in order to minimize and avoid reductions in education and other essential services. With this program the U.S. Secretary of Education is attempting to advance reform in four areas:

1. making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly students who are most in need;
2. establishing pre-K-to-college-and-career data systems that track progress and foster continuous improvement;
3. making progress towards rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable for all students, including limited English proficient students and students with disabilities; and
4. providing targeted, intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

Distribution of Funds

The U.S. Department of Education will disburse the funds to Governors in two parts. Governors must use the funds to restore the levels of State support for K-12 education and for public Institutions of Higher Education to the greater of the FY 2008 or FY 2009 levels of state support. The Governor calculates the amount of funding allocated to local educational agencies (LEAs) based on the State's primary education funding formula. LEAs that participate in the program are required to submit an application to the Governor in order to receive funding under the Education Stabilization funds, **but** neither the Governor nor the State Education Agency may restrict the ways in which LEAs use the funds.

Opportunities for Gifted and Talented Education

LEAs receiving funds under the Education Stabilization Fund have enormous flexibility in using the funds. According to ARRA, LEAs may use funds for any activities authorized under ESEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; and the Carl D. Perkins Career and

Technical Education Act of 2006. According to the official guidance offered by the U.S. Department of Education, LEAs may use the funds to "support programs designed to address the educational needs of children at risk of academic failure, limited English proficient students, children with disabilities, and **gifted students**...".

(2) Title I Funds

ARRA provides \$10 billion in funding for Title I Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This is in addition to the \$14.5 billion in Title I Part A funding included in the regular FY 2009 appropriation. The purpose of these funds is to provide assistance to LEAs and schools that have high concentrations of students from families that live in poverty to improve teaching and learning and close the achievement gap. Like the Education Stabilization Fund, ARRA Title I money is one-time funding.

Distribution of Funds

The U.S. Department of Education disbursed 50 percent of the ARRA Title I funds to States on April 1, 2009. The funding flows from State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to eligible LEAs through existing Title I Targeted Grants and Education Finance Incentive Grants formulae. Remaining funds are expected to reach states by September 30, 2009.

Opportunities for Gifted and Talented Education

According to ESEA, the purpose of Title I is to ensure that all children have "a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments." Funding under Title I aims to compensate for the educational challenges associated with children who are economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, migrant children, or English language learners.

Schools serving high concentrations (40 percent or more) of students from low-income families may participate in the "schoolwide program" model of Title I. Under the schoolwide program, these schools may consolidate Title I funds with other Federal, State, and local funds to improve the entire educational program within the school. Schools participating in Title I schoolwide programs should use the funds to strengthen the core academic program of the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time, provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, and improve instruction by highly qualified teachers. The strategies that are highlighted as suggested uses of funds in the law are effective ways to meet the needs of gifted and talented students in schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families.

(3) Higher Education Opportunities Act Title II Grants

There is \$100 million in ARRA funds to support the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) Grant program in Title II of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA). HEOA was modified in 2008 to require a series of teacher preparation reforms, including ensuring that pre-service candidates have the necessary teaching skills and understanding of how gifted and talented children learn and skills to differentiate instruction for them. The TQP grants provide the first real opportunity to begin exposing all teacher candidates to the needs of gifted children before the candidates reach the classroom. The grant competition will begin later this spring; details will be posted on the Department's website at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/grantapps/index.html?src=rt>

Role for Gifted Education Supporters

There are numerous ways that supporters of GT programs and services can advocate for investing ARRA funds in gifted and talented students in their local school districts.

- Attend public hearings to ask questions about how local decision makers plan to spend the ARRA funds. Be sure you point out that ARRA funds may be spent to support gifted and talented students, whether or not the district currently offers gifted education services.

- Reach out to your local Superintendent and Board of Education in person or by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper explaining the importance of new or continued investment in gifted and talented education. Points to make include:
 - We need to invest in excellence: Our nation's ability to compete tomorrow depends on how well schools challenge advanced students today.
 - The achievement gap between "at risk" students and their more advantaged peers grows roughly two-times faster for students who begin school at an advanced level as it does for those who enter high school performing at a low level.
- If your district already supports gifted education, be sure to explain how an expansion of the program would impact more subjects, grade levels, teachers, and most importantly, students.
- Finally, let colleagues in higher education know about the TQP grant opportunity

Other information about the value and benefits of gifted education can be found on the NAGC website at www.nagc.org. Detailed guidance documents from the Department of Education on the uses of the stabilization fund and Title I funds, as well as a host of other information is available from <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html#apps>