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Nation's Infrastructure to Support Gifted Students is Crumbling, Survey Finds

Low-Cost and High-Impact Solutions Exist to Enhance Access

WASHINGTON (November 9, 2011) – Despite repeated pleas from national leaders to better develop the nation's most talented students, most states lack the critical infrastructure necessary to ably identify and teach our high-ability and high-potential students, a new survey has found.

Inadequate teacher preparation and professional development, little to no public accountability and widely inconsistent access to services are examples of the shortcomings found in the [National Association for Gifted Children's](#) 2010-2011 *State of the States in Gifted Education*, released today. The report was produced in concert with the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted.

"The nation's infrastructure to serve our high-ability and high-potential students is in disrepair and in urgent need of attention," said NAGC President [Paula Olszweski-Kubilius](#), a professor of education at Northwestern University.

"Unless the nation redoubles its effort to identify and serve our high-potential and high-ability students, we will fail to ensure our future competitiveness, security and prosperity," she added.

The survey, completed by 44 states and one territory, paints a picture of limited accountability of district gifted education programs and of little to no training and professional development for teachers.

Limited Accountability & Support

More than one-quarter of states have no statewide policy requiring identification and services for high-potential and high-ability students, leaving such decisions up to each district, and 20 states reported that they do not monitor district gifted and talented programs.

Limited accountability also translates into limited to no resources – 10 states reported providing no state funds to support gifted education, and 14 states decreased their funding for high-ability and high-potential students over the past two years.

Of the 31 states that require districts to provide gifted education services, only four fully fund the requirement, with nearly 20 providing partial support but placing the onus on local districts.

Little Teacher Training & Preparation

Most classroom teachers, including those working with high-ability students, are not required to receive any specialized training in gifted and talented education. More than half of the states do not require annual professional development in gifted and talented education for teachers working in such programs, and 24 states do not require any specialized credentials for such teachers.

State of the States found that only six states require all teachers to receive some training in gifted education before they enter the classroom even though most high-ability children spend the bulk of their school days in the regular classroom setting,

"Without properly trained teachers able to spot and support gifted students, our system is like a sieve with an untold number of kids falling through the holes," Olszweski-Kubilius said. "The acute need for appropriately trained teachers is particularly critical given that most of these students spend the majority of their time in regular classrooms."

A Patchwork Quilt

The survey also found that most states are silent on important gifted education policy issues, leaving key decisions to districts. This dynamic yields a patchwork quilt of services with sharply varying levels of access to programs and services, and it perpetuates inequities, particularly for students living in disadvantaged and underserved settings. For example:

- 23 states have no policies on academic acceleration strategies.
- Ten states prohibit students from entering Kindergarten early, and 24 leave such decisions to local districts.
- Eight states prohibit middle school students from enrolling in high school courses at the same time, and 24 states leave those decisions to districts.

"Removing barriers to identification and services, such as bans on early entrance into Kindergarten and dual enrollment, are examples of low-cost but high-impact policy changes that should be high on the agenda of every lawmaker," Olszweski-Kubilius said.

"I urge policymakers throughout the nation and in Washington to carefully review *State of the States* and to enact policy changes that will begin to repair our nation's infrastructure before it is too late," she added.

The national overview of the report, *State of the Nation*, is available at <http://bit.ly/rNVj5Q>

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