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## **Report Confirms Neglect of High-Ability Students is Leaving Talent on the Table**

WASHINGTON (September 20, 2011) – As many as half of all students identified as high-achieving lose this designation later in their academic careers and cost the nation an untold amount of talent, according to a report released today.

The study, *Do High Flyers Maintain Their Altitude?* by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Northwest Evaluation Association, paints a picture of schools failing to cultivate between 30 to 50 percent of all high achieving students, causing the abilities of these students to atrophy and their performances to drop.

"The findings of this report are disappointing but should not be much of a surprise since federal education policy has long disregarded the performance of our high achieving and high-potential students," said Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, president of the National Association for Gifted Children and Director of the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University in Chicago.

"It is my hope that this report debunks, once and for all, the absurdity that high-achieving students will do fine without appropriate services delivered by teachers trained in gifted education strategies. On the contrary, high-achieving students need support, and the surest way to ensure this is provided is by applying the same accountability measures that have helped improve our lower-performing students," Olszewski-Kubilius added.

The report concluded that even a relatively modest decline from the ranks of high-achievers can negatively impact a student over the long term, particularly regarding access to advanced programs and services and merit aid opportunities. It also placed primary blame for the problem on a lack of accountability in education policy to increase the performance of high-achieving students.

"As politics tops our daily news coverage, it's common to hear candidates ask voters if they are better off today than they were four years ago. Unfortunately, the nation's focus on attaining grade-level proficiency alone has left high-achieving students far worse today than 10 years ago," Olszewski-Kubilius said. "Closing the achievement gap is an important goal, but it must not be closed by pulling down the performances of our top students."

NAGC is urging Congress, as part of its rewrite of the nation's K-12 education law, to enact legislation known as the TALENT Act that would hold states and districts accountable for what they are doing to identify and serve high-potential and high-ability students. This includes measuring the year-to-year academic progress achieved by these students, including how well they perform above their present grade level, and reporting the results on annual state report cards.

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