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FINAL REPORT

of the

COMMISSION ON FUNDING AND SERVICES

for

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

2001

Parris N. Glendening
Governor, State of Maryland

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COMMISSION ON FUNDING AND SERVICES FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

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The Maryland Commission on Funding and Services For Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland

October 31, 2001

The Honorable Parris N. Glendening
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Glendening:

On behalf of the members of the Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland, I am happy to provide you with the enclosed copy of the Commission's final report, as required by the legislation, HB 572-2000, which established the Commission. Let me assure you the work has been intense but the experience very rewarding. I am sure that all Commissioners join me in thanking you for this opportunity to serve.

We make three main points:

- Far too many Maryland gifted and talented children are overlooked and underserved.
- Maryland needs consistency in standards and quality for defining, identifying, and teaching gifted and talented children throughout the State.
- To guarantee a fair and equitable framework for addressing these first two points in local schools, the State needs to increase its financial assistance, not astronomically, but significantly.

Throughout its deliberations, the Commission has been cognizant and appreciative of the tremendous personal and political commitment you have made to gifted and talented education in Maryland as Governor. We applaud that. And we recognize it may be very hard to reach our projected need in the immediate future. But we do believe it is a worthy, reachable, and appropriate goal for the next legislative term to provide this State support so gifted and talented children everywhere, from all walks of life, in all appearances and guises, get the educational attention they deserve and society needs them to have.

Yours truly,

Karl K. Pence
Commission Chair

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Report of the Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland

What a nation values it will sustain.
-- Plato

Call to Action

This report is a call to action to make the education services provided to Maryland's gifted and talented students consistent with the longstanding recognition by the State that the well being of all citizens is significantly tied to how well its most promising young people are prepared for life and further education. More than a quarter century ago, the Code of Maryland Administrative Regulations (COMAR) adopted regulations to define gifted and talented students, to recognize the fact that gifted and talented students need different services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to develop their potential, and to encourage each local school district to develop and implement programs for gifted and talented children. During the nearly three decades since these regulations were adopted, the Maryland State Department of Education and many local school districts have attempted to provide high-quality services to gifted and talented students. Valiant and sincere as these efforts have been, they have suffered from insufficient funding, inconsistent processes that identify gifted and talented students, an absence of professional development for the educators who are responsible for gifted education, and a lack of accountability measures for the services provided gifted and talented students.

Educators have learned a great deal about gifted and talented education since COMAR first included a definition of gifted and talented students. We know that gifted and talented students are uniformly distributed throughout the State without regard for geography or socioeconomic status of a school district. We know how to identify gifted and talented students. We know how to program high-quality educational services for these students. We know how to evaluate programs and services provided to gifted and talented students. We also know that the cost to bring Maryland's gifted and talented education up to a standard of excellence is both modest and affordable.

Maryland is privileged to have both a concentration of able professional educators and sufficient wealth to achieve a nationally-recognized standard of performance in gifted and talented education. The balance of this report is a call to action that will define, hold accountable, and fund educational services for gifted and talented students.

To give a fair chance to potential creativity
is a matter of life and death for any society.
It is all-important because the outstanding creative ability
of a fairly small percentage of the population
is mankind's ultimate capital asset.
- A. Toynbee

> [E]xcellence in education is essential for excellence in business. . . .
> Businesses (especially those thriving in today's information age)
> look for communities where they can find a high-caliber work force.
>
> The bottom line: quality education is important to cities and towns
> As they seek to attract, retain, and develop businesses (McCall, 1997).

Background

Maryland HB 572 (2000) established the Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland. The legislation directed the Commission to review the status of gifted education in Maryland and to make recommendations "to ensure that all local school districts have appropriate advanced learning opportunities for gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12."[1]

During the course of its work the Commission reviewed the following:

- The legislative history of the gifted and talented education law:
  - Chapter 692 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 1975, codified in § 106F of Article 77.
  - Education Article, Chapter 22, Acts 1978, Subtitle 2: Gifted and Talented Children, § 8-201- § 8-204.
- *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Program Guidelines.* (1983). Maryland State Department of Education.
- Maryland State Performance Program Report Card, September 1999.
- Local Education Agency (LEA) responses to the letter to superintendents from the Commission chair requesting the amount of local funds expended on gifted and talented student education.
- State grant funding for gifted and talented student education in Maryland
- Gifted and Talented Education Programs in Maryland – A Survey of Local Education Agencies 1998/99.
- "Renewing our Commitment to the Education of Gifted and Talented Students: An Essential Component of Educational Reform, Recommendations for Gifted and Talented Education in Maryland," Report of the Maryland Task Force on Gifted and Talented Education, 1994.
- "Recommendations for Gifted and Talented Education in Maryland: A Review by the Task Force Recommendations Sub-Committee of the Maryland State Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education," January 2000.
- Oral and written testimony before the Commission, May 2001.
- Experience and knowledge of the Commission members regarding gifted and talented student education in Maryland and elsewhere.
- National Assessment of Educational Progress: "Maryland Profile," June 2001.

[1] The complete charge to the Commission is found in Appendix A.

Summary of General Findings Regarding Gifted and Talented Student Education

Decades of research have demonstrated that:

- Gifted and talented students who do not receive appropriate educational services frequently do not develop to their fullest potential. Underachievement among gifted students is a significant problem, as Rimm (1997) notes:

  > The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) reported that half of [our] gifted students do not perform to their tested abilities. High school dropout studies found that between 10 and 20 percent of those who do not complete high school are in the tested gifted range (Lajoie & Shore, 1981; Nyquist, 1973; Whitmore, 1980). Underachievement of gifted students emerges dramatically again in college. Of the top 5 percent of this country's high school graduates, 40 percent do not complete college (DeLeon, 1989).

- Appropriate educational programming targeted to the special needs of gifted and talented students will help these students realize their full potential. The *Education of the Gifted and Talented: Report to the Congress of the United States by the U.S. Commissioner of Education* (1972) and the U. S. Office of Education report *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1973) provide extensive documentation of the importance of appropriate programming to meet the unique learning needs of gifted and talented students.[2]

Gifted and talented learners are found in every region of every state, in rural areas, in towns of every size, in suburbs and in cities, in every county and in every local education agency. Gifted and talented learners are found in all cultural groups and across all economic strata. It has been widely demonstrated that particular attention must be given to identification of and programming for students in traditionally under-represented groups including, but not limited to, minorities, non- and limited-English proficient students, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.[3] According to Roberts (2001), the problem is that identifying these children has not been a priority and that the end result [of not identifying all children as needed] is under-achievement. If students are not identified early, poor habits develop that, compounded by historically low performance expectations of poor students, for example, result in their minimal interest in school and low levels of learning, as well.

The 2001 State of the States Report, a publication of the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, indicates that the states typically identify 5-15% of their students as gifted and talented learners. The mean for the states reporting their gifted and talented student population is 12.5%.

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[2] See also: VanTassel-Baska, J. (1998).
[3] See, for example: Ford, D.Y. (1996).

The extensive research and experience in gifted and talented student education has led to the development of nationally-accepted standards for gifted and talented student education. These standards have been articulated most recently in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) publication *Aiming for Excellence: Gifted Program Standards, Annotations to the NAGC Pre-K—Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards.* (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001).

Summary of Findings Regarding Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland

A comprehensive review of national and Maryland data on gifted and talented student education showed the following:

- Maryland is one of fourteen states reporting in the State of the States Report 1999-2000 that it has no mandate for educating its gifted and talented students. Twenty-six other states reported having a full or partial mandate for educational services for gifted and talented students.
- Data reported in the 1999-2000 State of the States Report show a mean of 12.5% of all states' total student population was identified as gifted and talented. Maryland reported that 21% of its total student population was identified as gifted and talented.
- Currently, there is no documented evidence of consistently well-developed continua of services for gifted and talented students K-12 throughout LEAs in Maryland. Receiving appropriate educational services only sporadically means that a child may lose important momentum in his or her intellectual and academic development.
- Services and resources for the gifted and talented vary dramatically from LEA to LEA in Maryland. Many of Maryland's gifted and talented students do not have access to the programs and services they need.
- Efforts are being made in Maryland to identify and provide appropriate educational services for traditionally under-represented groups, including but not limited to minorities, non- and limited-English-proficient students, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty.
- Services are particularly sparse for gifted and talented students who have additional special educational needs such as physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and other impairments such as attention deficit disorder.
- Maryland is home to a number of recognized specialists with experience and education in the education of gifted and talented students. However, there are very few preservice undergraduate and graduate programs that address specifically the education of gifted and talented learners.
- The Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), which was established to assess the degree to which Maryland students were progressing along a continuum of State-approved curricula, remains one component of a multi-faceted assessment program that spans a range of both qualitative and quantitative data sources.
- Maryland's population has increased since 1990 by more than half a million people and is projected to increase by another 400,000 to a total of more than 5.2 million by the year 2010. As jobs that once centered on manufacturing capabilities now demand highly-skilled workers, Maryland is struggling to keep pace with its efforts to prepare its students to meet the challenges of these jobs. The State's job growth rate is strong and in 1999 exceeded the overall U.S. rate, ranking Maryland ninth in the nation.

- Although funding at the state level and in some LEAs for gifted and talented education programming has increased in recent years, the current level of funding is not sufficient to ensure fully-developed programs K—12 for all of Maryland's gifted and talented students.

Lack of adequate funding is often given as a reason for the lack of adequate services for gifted and talented education services. However, funding is not the only obstacle to providing services for gifted and talented education. The following obstacles exist to a varying degree in LEAs throughout the state:

- **Myths about gifted and talented students and their education.** For example:
  - The belief that "these children will make it on their own" without special services

    > Underachievement is an issue among gifted [children] that has several dimensions. In the first instance, the term applies to students who display distinct evidence of above-average ability but are not performing academically up to expectations. But there is now frightening evidence that there are children and adolescents of above-average ability who are never recognized as gifted or [who are] underachieving due to factors that mask their potential--low expectations for performance due to their race or socioeconomic level, learning and other disabilities and differences, and ineffective measures of ability (Emerick, 2001).

  - The belief that children need to learn with their age peers rather than their intellectual peers and that gifted and talented students should not be accelerated.
  - The belief that enrichment activities are synonymous with a gifted and talented program.
  - The belief that gifted education is anti-democratic and that equity means the same opportunities for all students.

- **Administrative obstacles to appropriate programming for gifted and talented students.** For example:
  - School day schedules preclude or limit the widespread implementation of appropriate opportunities for gifted and talented students. (Example: A 2nd grade student is not able to go to 5th grade class for math because the two classes do not have math at the same time.)
  - Bright children are separated intentionally so that classes are "balanced" in terms of student ability.
  - The lack of statewide accountability standards and measures for gifted and talented education programs makes it impossible to collect reliable and valid data regarding educational programming for gifted and talented students. Therefore, it is not possible to assess accurately and completely the unmet needs in Maryland.

Based on its findings, the Commission concludes that . . .

Maryland has a significant group of students who are underserved: our gifted and talented students. Maryland's policymakers and educators need to address with a sense of urgency the unmet needs of this sector of our school population. There are academic, intellectual, social and economic costs associated with the failure to educate gifted and talented students to their fullest potential. Maryland will not achieve excellence in education until appropriate educational services are provided for all Maryland gifted and talented students at all grade levels pre-K – 12 and in all subject areas.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that appropriate educational services are provided to gifted and talented students throughout Maryland, the **Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland recommends that:**

Recommendation 1.0: The Maryland State Board of Education adopt into regulation the federal definition of "gifted and talented students." This definition is based on the definition used in the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988 and is found in *National Excellence . . .* (1993).

> *Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.*
>
> *These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools.*
>
> *Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.*

Recommendation 2.0: The Maryland State Board of Education adopt into regulation for Maryland nationally-accepted standards for gifted and talented student education.[4] By adopting the federal definition and the standards for gifted and talented student education, Maryland will align itself with nationally-accepted standards of excellence.

Further and more specifically, in building appropriate educational services for Maryland's gifted and talented students, the Commission recommends that priority be given to the following recommendations, which are aligned with nationally-accepted standards.

[4] Current nationally-accepted, state-of-the-art standards in gifted and talented student education are discussed in M. S. Landrum, C. M. Callahan, & B. D. Shaklee (Eds.). (2001).

Recommendation 3.0: Identification of gifted and talented students be implemented by the LEAs in accordance with clearly-delineated and research-based principles. Identification of a gifted and talented child's educational needs is the first step to providing appropriate educational services (Cooper, 2001). Nationally-accepted standards for identification of gifted and talented learners require that:

- Identification processes be in place in each school system at the time of a child's first engagement with the system.
- Identification be ongoing from early childhood through grade 12.
- All professional staff be trained to recognize children who have exceptional abilities toward high performance according to the State definition of the gifted and talented student.
- Identification processes use multiple qualitative and quantitative criteria to identify student strengths.[5] Identification of student strengths/needs is requisite to providing appropriate, research-based services to develop student talents.
- No student be denied the opportunity for needed services on the basis of any single assessment or criterion.
- Specific plans be implemented for identification of gifted and talented students who are frequently overlooked, such as minorities, girls, underachievers, economically disadvantaged, non- and limited-English-proficient students. With a projected 7,600 additional students in our schools by the year 2005, the current level of diversity will also increase from both net migration from Washington, DC, and from foreign immigration.[6]
- Specific plans be implemented for identification of gifted and talented students with other special educational needs including but not limited to physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and/or health impairments such as attention deficit disorder.

Recommendation 4.0: Local education agencies (LEAs) develop gifted and talented student education programs based on nationally-accepted standards adopted into regulation by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSDE). The precise design of a program for gifted and talented student education will vary from LEA to LEA and from school to school depending on the specific school population. However, all programs should be developed according to nationally-accepted standards. These standards require that:

- Gifted and talented students be provided with educational opportunities and services appropriate to their educational needs. Programs need to include ongoing assessments of gifted and talented student performance so educators can document what students know and can create opportunities for students to move at a faster pace and/or explore topics in

[5] These criteria include but need not be limited to: nominations of remarkable ability (as compared with other students of comparable age and experience); samples of the student's productivity both in and out of school; evidence of artistic talent; academic and/or psychological data, such as achievement or intelligence tests; problem-solving ability; creative thought processes; learning styles; consideration of other relevant factors, such as a learning disability or economic disadvantage that may be masking the student's gifts.

[6] U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Data prepared by the Maryland Dept. of Planning, Planning Data Services, 2001.

greater depth and sophistication than what is appropriate for the majority of the students' chronological peers.

- Gifted education instruction for gifted and talented learners be available during the regularly-scheduled school day.
- Program services for gifted and talented students include appropriate instructional opportunities and a curriculum well articulated in scope and sequence for all grade levels and subject areas.
- Schools and school districts provide for flexibility in grouping to allow for acceleration, in-depth study and other strategies appropriate for gifted and talented students and to allow gifted and talented students to work with their intellectual peers in their areas of strength as well as their chronological peers in other disciplines.
- Particular attention be given to delivery of appropriate services for traditionally under-represented groups, including but not limited to minorities, non- and limited-English proficient students, students with disabilities and students living in poverty. Failure to meet the educational needs of these populations can be particularly devastating. For example, the Final Report on Minority Achievement in the State of Maryland (September 1998; pp. 63-64) noted:

> When there is a downward relation in students' academic gain compared to their prior academic achievement, a phenomenon termed "shed pattern" is often occurring. When this detrimental pattern is observed, instruction is being paced and directed to the needs of the previously-lowest achievers in the classroom, resulting in retarded academic growth for the average and previously-above-average students...Shed patterns can be observed within suburban, rural and urban schools, but they are observed disproportionately within urban schools serving disadvantaged populations of students (Sanders, 1998).

- Particular attention be given to delivery of appropriate services to gifted and talented students who have other special educational needs including but not limited to physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and/or health impairments such as attention deficit disorder.
- Programs include specific provisions to address the unique socio-emotional needs of gifted and talented learners. Research and experience have shown that appropriate counseling and guidance is particularly important to the development and success of gifted learners who are minorities, non- and limited-English proficient, living in poverty, and/or who have other special educational needs such as physical disabilities, emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and other health impairments such as attention deficit disorder. [7]
- Programs include a comprehensive evaluation process that includes program design, implementation, and accountability as well as student outcomes.

[7] See, for example, Ford (1996) and Ramirez (1983).

Recommendation 5.0: Professional development and support in gifted and talented education be increased in Maryland. Professional development is the cornerstone of an effective educational program. If "success for all students" is to become a reality in Maryland, comprehensive professional development must include instruction on gifted education and be integrated with overall school, LEA and State goals. Yet preservice bachelor's-level education often does not address the intellectual, academic, social and emotional needs of gifted and talented learners. Research indicates that personnel without training in gifted education are less effective in meeting these students' needs (Moon, Callahan, & Tomlinson, 1999). Competencies improve, however, when educators receive purposefully-planned professional development in gifted education (Tomlinson, Bland, Callahan, & Moon, 1994).

National standards require appropriate training for all school staff involved in identification of and programming for gifted and talented learners. Training must be differentiated for staff with differing levels of experience and/or need. This requires that:

Recommendation 5.1: Annual and ongoing basic training in identification of and programming for gifted and talented learners be given to all staff members, including administrators and counselors. Administrators and counselors with responsibility for large numbers of gifted and talented students will need additional training.

Recommendation 5.2: New staff members complete 12 hours of state-approved staff development in gifted and talented student education.

Recommendation 5.3: Teachers regularly assigned to instruct students identified as gifted and talented learners obtain an endorsement as a Teacher of Gifted and Talented Students.

Recommendation 5.4: Supervisors/coordinators assigned to supervise or assist educators assigned to work specifically with gifted and talented students and/or to advise administrators or board personnel obtain an endorsement as a Specialist in Education of the Gifted and Talented. Funding for endorsements, once adopted by MSDE, will become part of the current funding ratio within LEA guidelines for reimbursement of approved coursework

Recommendation 5.5: School system personnel with responsibility for gifted and talented learners receive adequate resources and support in order to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted and talented learners. This includes funds for curriculum development, materials, training, mentoring, and regularly-scheduled released time as needed.

Recommendation 6.0: MSDE, in collaboration with the LEAs, develop both programmatic and student performance accountability benchmarks for gifted and talented education programs in accordance with nationally-accepted standards. These standards require that:

> **Recommendation 6.1: Identification procedures and program design be evaluated for congruence with national standards.**
>
> **Recommendation 6.2: Student achievement be evaluated using a portfolio of quantitative and qualitative measures tailored to the population being served.**

Recommendation 7.0: Continue the State Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education. The Commission recognizes the initiative of the State Superintendent of Schools in establishing this State Advisory Committee in 1994 and urges her to continue it in the future. This Advisory Committee can play an important role in implementation of the recommendations of this Commission.

Recommendation 8.0: MSDE, in collaboration with LEAs, develop a uniform instrument for data collection on gifted education services in Maryland. The data collected will be important in sharing successful programs and program elements and in avoiding duplication of efforts among the LEAs. The data collected will also serve as an important guide to program planners and policy makers.

Recommendation 9.0: The MSDE budget for the Gifted and Talented Education Office be increased to allow MSDE to expand its role in providing technical assistance relating to gifted and talented education services to LEAs.

Recommendation 10.0: State of Maryland funding to LEAs for gifted and talented education programming be increased to $36.7 million annually, specifically earmarked for local infrastructure and identification of and programming for gifted and talented students.

- **In order to receive State funds, LEAs must have adopted nationally-accepted standards for education of their gifted and talented students and must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to implementing those standards.**
- **State funds must be used to supplement, not supplant, local funding for gifted and talented student education. LEAs must demonstrate significant local effort to educating this population of its students.**

Local funding should enhance the State contribution to ensure that programs are effective and students are served.

Maryland is currently contributing only about $6.3 million, including the $1 million direct grant to Baltimore City schools and the $2 million grant to Montgomery County schools, far less than the $36.7 million recommended.

This Commission recognizes that funding for gifted and talented student education is part of the larger context of Maryland's state educational funding. Further, we know that reaching a six-fold increase in a State program may require a phase-in schedule to achieve. Finally, we acknowledge that it takes time to build a high-quality gifted and talented education program and that LEAs and schools across the state will be starting from very different points of awareness and current programming for gifted and talented students. But we fully believe that the State's adequate support for the infrastructure of local gifted and talented education programs will make every local dollar much more powerful in helping each child reach his or her fullest educational potential. Spreading too few dollars too thinly or ignoring entirely the legitimacy of gifted and talented student education costs Maryland more in lost potential than these $ 36.7 million would earn.

> What educators and psychologists recognize as giftedness in children is really *potential* giftedness, which denotes *promise* rather than fulfillment and *probabilities* rather than certainties about future accomplishments. How high these probabilities are in any given case depends on the match between a child's budding talents and the kinds of nurturance provided (Passow, p. 24).

Priority in implementing the Commission recommendations should be given to building capacity of LEAs and schools with an infrastructure of LEA leadership committed to a program defined by a strong, theoretically-sound continuum of defensible gifted and talented education services to nurture children's budding talents appropriately. It is critically important, moreover, that this leadership be given sufficient time to both build and administer its program of services and to plan effective staff development to implement it effectively and match student talents with the services required to develop them.

The importance of state funding and leadership to high-quality, sustained local programs for gifted and talented student education is well-documented. As Baker (2001) has noted:

> [Current findings]...consistently suggest that discretionary opportunities, including advanced course offerings and gifted programs, will remain disparate across districts and endangered, even nonexistent, in poor rural, and poor rural communities until further steps are taken by states to remedy these disparities.

The Commission derived the $36.7 million figure in part by examining the situation in our State's smallest school district, Kent County, and estimating the amount required to ensure that the State's contribution would, in fact, build a high-quality structure for gifted and talented student education. For example, a high-quality program that would meet the minimum requirements as set forth in the NAGC's 2001 standards, *Aiming for Excellence: Gifted Program Standards,* demands that the following be in place:

- A system coordinator to build and administer the program;
- A professional to deliver services at school sites;
- Effective staff development for identification of students needing this service, nature of services needed, and delivery of instruction;
- Development of curriculum and activities appropriate to students' needs; and
- Materials and experiences appropriate to student needs.

Let us look, then, at Kent County to build our model. Kent has 2,795 students. Our 12.5% mean (see State of the States Report, 2001) suggests that 349 Kent County students need and deserve gifted and talented student education services. Considering, conservatively, staff positions at $68,000, the cost of training and time for 200 teachers, and curriculum development, materials and experiences, we estimate that Kent County needs, at a minimum, $120,000 for gifted and talented student education, or an additional $344 for each of the 349 eligible students. (Currently, Maryland is providing only $9,000 to Kent County.) Extrapolated for a statewide basis, we need to be spending at least $36.7 million, in current dollars, as opposed to the $6.3 we currently provide.

The Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland communicated its findings and recommendations, including the specific funding recommendation, to the Maryland Commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence, and asked that Commission to incorporate specific funding for gifted and talented student education in the amount of at least $36.7 million annually in its final report.

Conclusion

Defensible, targeted services for gifted and talented student education are an essential component of the spectrum of educational programming for Maryland's students; they are not an educational frill or an optional add-on to be considered in good economic times. Decades of research and practice have demonstrated that multi-faceted identification of and needs-based, high-quality programming for gifted and talented students are integral to a school system's responsibility to help each student reach his or her full potential.

We urge the State of Maryland, its leaders, its policy makers, and its educators, therefore, to move forward with dispatch to adopt and to provide funds for the implementation of the nationally-accepted standards for gifted and talented student education now available in this field. Gifted and talented learners in Maryland schools in every LEA, without regard for color, creed, gender, economic status, or disability, need and have the right to an appropriate education that nurtures their talents in a challenging environment that meets their unique needs and develops their potential fully.

The State of Maryland will not achieve equity and excellence in education until the educational needs of all Maryland students, including the gifted and talented, are met.

Appendices

Appendix A: House Bill 572

Appendix B: Identification Process and Defensible Services for Gifted and Talented Students

Appendix C: References

Appendix A

House Bill 572

Unofficial Copy
F1

2000 Regular Session
01r 1265

By: **Delegates Hubbard, Rily, Conroy, Hubers, Montague, Grosfeld, Cadden, Kopp, Rosso, Flanagan, and James**
Introduced and read first time: February 7, 2000
Assigned to: Ways and Means

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: March 25, 2000

CHAPTER_____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student
3 Education in Maryland-Establishment
4

5 FOR the purpose of establishing the Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and
6 Talented Student Education in Maryland; providing for the membership and duties of the
7 Commission to submit certain reports to the Governor and the General Assembly by
8 certain dates; requiring the Commission to be appointed and meet by certain dates;
9 requiring the Governor to use certain criteria to the extent possible in appointing
10 members to the Commission; requiring the Department of Education to staff the
11 Commission; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the
12 Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in
13 Maryland.
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22 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
23 MARYLAND, THAT

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2

3
4

5 (a) There is a Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented
6 Student Education in Maryland.

7 (b) The Commission shall consist of 23 members as follows:

8 (1) the Governor, or the Governor's designee, who shall serve as the
9 Chair of the Commission;

10 (2) a member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
11 the Senate;

12 (3) a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, appointed by the
13 Speaker of the House;

14 (4) the Secretary of Education, or the Secretary's designee;

15 (5) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's
16 designee;

17 (6) a representative of the Higher Education Commission with expertise
18 in education for gifted and talented students, appointed by the Secretary of Higher
19 Education; and

20 (7) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

21 (i) a member of a local board of education;

22 (ii) a county superintendent of schools;

23 (iii an associate superintendent of instruction and curriculum from
24 a county board of education;

25 (iv) a local gifted and talented education supervisor;

26 (v) a representative of the Maryland State Teachers Association;

27 (vi) a representative of the Baltimore City Teachers Union;

28 (vii) two representatives of the Maryland Coalition for the Gifted
29 and Talented;

30 (viii) a representative of a local gifted and talented student education
31 advocacy organization;

1 (ix) a representative of the Maryland State Parent-Teachers
2 Association;

3 (x) a parent of a gifted and talented student with special learning
4 needs

5 (xi) a representative of the Center for Talented Youth at Johns
6 Hopkins University;

7 (xii) a member with expertise in learning disabilities and other
8 special education needs;

9 (xiii) a representative of the Suburban High Tech Council;

10 (xiv) a representative of the Greater Baltimore High Tech Council;

11 (xv) a nonsenior representative of the Maryland Association of
12 Student Councils; and

13 (xvi) a member of the Governor's Commission on Education Finance,
14 Equity, and Excellence.

15 (c) The Commission shall review the status of funding and services for gifted
16 and talented students in major academic areas, the arts, and leadership and make
17 recommendations to:

18 (1) ensure that there is adequate funding for services, teacher
19 learning opportunities for gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade
20 12;

21 (2) ensure that there is adequate funding for services, teacher
22 preparation, counseling, and other support for meeting the needs of gifted and
23 talented students;

24 (3) develop accountability standards for gifted and talented education
25 services in Maryland;

26 (4) ensure that the identification of, and delivery of appropriate services
27 for, traditionally under-represented groups, including but not limited to minorities,
28 non- and limited-English proficient students, students with disabilities, and
29 students living in poverty;

30 (5) services ensure appropriate for gifted and talented students with
31 special learning problems, including but not limited to learning disabilities, limited
32 English proficiency, emotional disabilities, and deficit disorder; and;

33 (6) eliminate administrative obstacles to appropriate services, including
34 obstacles prohibiting dual concurrent enrollment options in middle and high schools;
35 and high schools and colleges, the lack of information about services, the lack of

1 access, including transportation, to services, and the ability of schools to report
2 information and test scores to families.

3 (d) The Commission shall be appointed by August 1, 2000 and begin meeting
4 by September1, 2000.

5 (e) In appointing members of the Commission, the Governor shall ensure
6 regional, ethnic, economic, and gender diversity to the extent possible.

7 (f) The Department of Education shall provide staff support for the
8 Commission.

9 (g) (1) On or before January 1, 2001, the Commission shall provide an
10 interim report to the Governor and, subject to § 2-1246 of the State Government
11 Article, the General Assembly.

12 (2) On or before November1, 2001, the Commission shall provide a final
13 report containing the findings and recommendations of the Commission to the
14 Governor and, subject to § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General
15 Assembly.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
17 June 1, 2000. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 7 months
18 and, at the end of December 31, 2001, with no further action required by the General
19 Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Appendix B

Identification Process and Defensible Services for Gifted and Talented Students

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Identification

Rationale

Before an identification process can be implemented, the purpose, or rationale, for serving the identified student in the first place must be defined. To what end is the school district identifying a particular student?

The purpose of special services for gifted and talented students is to provide these exceptional students who have outstanding talent with the opportunities needed to nurture that talent in an atmosphere conducive to high-level student performance and steady progression along a novice-to-expert continuum, of growth and creative expression. Since these bright students display varying types and degrees of gifts and talents, both the identification process and menu of services must be sufficiently comprehensive to address individual abilities and resulting needs-be they intellectual, creative, artistic, and/or reflect unusual leadership capacity or excel in one or more academic fields.

In all cases, special services for gifted and talented students use the real-world problem-solving milieu. Students become thoroughly immersed in bona fide research or other advanced-level study of a topic or issue of great significance to them personally and learn as professionals in their field of interest rather than learning about that field from a distance.

Federal Definition

The current federal definition of gifted and talented students is as follows and is consistent with recently-released national standards for educating this population:

> Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.
>
> These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, create, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools.
>
> Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001).

Identification Process

Access to the pool of nominees for services is culturally fair, equitable, and open to all students. Often, students in circumstances that may mask their gifts and talents are overlooked and their gifts not given an opportunity to unfold, or develop. Maryland's identification process seeks to find every child's strengths, or talents, and leave no one behind.

To find these exceptional students, multiple data sources must be used. These include the following:

1. Nominations of remarkable ability
   - Teacher
   - Parent
   - Student (self-nomination)
   - Others knowledgeable about a particular student's talents

2. Samples of a student's productivity and resulting impact
   - Classroom performance
   - Accomplishments outside of school

3. Artistic talent
   - Complexity of concept, design, technique
   - Exhibits-type, date, location
   - Plans for further development

4. Psychometric data (as compared with agemates, others of similar background)
    - Academic (e.g., content-area achievement)
    - Psychological (e.g., WISC-3 intelligence test)

5. Problem-solving ability
    - Degree of complexity, sophistication, authenticity
    - Application of intuition, reasoning skills
    - Level of impact on others sharing a genuine interest in/knowledge of the student's talent

6. Creativity
    - Fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration represented in thought processes, problem solving
    - Makes novel connections between and among ideas
    - Transfers alternate approaches to new situations

7. Learning styles
    - Style Inventory
    - Observations

8. Other relevant factors
    - Has a learning disability with his/her giftedness
    - Is diagnosed ADD and/or ADHD
    - Speaks English as a second language

Multiple sources of information about students provide more accurate assessment of abilities and needs. However, since students differ widely in their gifts and talents as well as any extenuating circumstances that must be considered, also, only those data sources that appropriately illustrate a student's strengths (gifts and talents) are to be used in the identification process.

> EXAMPLE: To identify Joe, a learning disabled gifted student who has difficulty with reading and writing but who solves authentic problems more creatively than students much older than he, his accomplishments outside of school, problem-solving ability, and creativity will be reviewed, certainly, but achievement test data will not be gathered in this case.
>
> The former three sets of data will show Joe's strengths (gifts and talents), but not so achievement data. Additionally, unless he has a classroom teacher trained in gifted education, Joe most likely will not be nominated, thereby leaving his talents to wither and his self-esteem, already low, to disintegrate.

Notes on Identification

More than a decade ago, a giant in the field of gifted education, A. Harry Passow, scholar and researcher at Teachers College, Columbia University, wrote that an individual's talent was, indeed, an essential factor in giftedness, a construct he defined as "the potential for becoming either an outstanding producer or performer, not just a consumer, spectator, or amateur appreciator of ideas (1985, p. 25). His assertion about talent development was as follows:

> What educators and psychologists recognize as giftedness in children is really **potential** giftedness, which denotes **promise** rather than fulfillment and **probabilities** rather than certainties about future accomplishments. How high these probabilities are in any given case depends on the match between the budding talent and the kinds of nurturance provided. (p. 24), (emphasis added).

The benefits of a sound identification process that are listed below reflect Passow's passion for matching the student's type and degree of talent with the specific service(s) the student needs in order to realize his or her potential in that area of strength.

Benefits of Identification

1. A comprehensive, cohesive, and coordinated process for student nomination results in a more accurate and equitable identification of gifted students.

2. The use of multiple sources of information can yield important information about students' abilities that can be overlooked using only objective data.

3. Comprehensive nomination processes can allow opportunity for consideration of potentially gifted students who might otherwise be screened out of further assessment or consideration for services.

4. Participation in nomination processes may lead to better understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of gifted students.

5. A comprehensive nomination process provides opportunities for finding atypical student referrals from unlikely sources. For example, the nomination of students with dual exceptionalities (like Joe mentioned in the example above) from special education teachers.

6. The use of assessment instruments and procedures that provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate strengths can result in more equitable identification and resulting access to services for children previously overlooked.

7. Data that provide specific information on student strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments, and prior responses to instruction will make instruction more effective and efficient.

8. Information obtained through appropriate screening and identification processes can inform educational decision making and enable a closer alignment of educational needs to services.

9. Use of current theory and research to aid decision making about student identification procedures and instruments ensures that district procedures are appropriate for their students.

10. Current research includes new or modified procedure and instrumentation that may improve the likelihood that traditionally-overlooked gifted learners will be appropriately assessed for giftedness.

11. The articulation of specific procedures for student identification, placement decisions, informed consent, and appeals can result in more equitable and appropriate identification and placement of students.

12. Providing those procedures in written form to all stakeholders, including parents, can support the educational decision-making process.

These benefits of a carefully-planned and meticulously-implemented identification procedure merit the time and energy invested by the State and its school districts to design it. The benefits listed above are excerpted from the national standards developed for and distributed by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). See the References section for the complete citation.

National Standards on Identification

The compendium of national standards for gifted and talented education referenced above (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001) include both minimal and exemplary standards. The exemplary standards on the topic of identification are excerpted here.

1. The school district should provide information annually, in a variety of languages, regarding the process for nominating students for gifted education programming services.

2. The nomination process should be ongoing, and screening of any student should occur at any time.

3. Nomination procedures and forms should be available in a variety of languages.

Defensible Services
for
Gifted and Talented Students

Rationale

If, as said earlier, the purpose of special services for gifted and talented students is to provide them with purposefully-designed opportunities in which their gifts and talents can develop and flourish, these opportunities must be sufficiently advanced to challenge these bright students in a meaningful way. "More of the same" curriculum, which is appropriate for some agemates, is unequivocally unacceptable as are the sporadic, uncoordinated events and experiences frequently offered students in a haphazard manner. Defensible, qualitatively-different curriculum bridges the intended student outcomes and the student potential to achieve them. Said another way, the qualitatively-differentiated curriculum for bright, talented students transforms student potential into power (Cooper, 2000).

Gifted children have specific behavioral characteristics in the cognitive and affective realms that present special learning needs that must be addressed by curriculum differentiation (Van Tassel-Baska, 1998). Differentiation provides a means of addressing the particular characteristics and promoting the continual growth of students in an environment that is respectful of individual differences (Tomlinson, 1999).

Since the earliest research on educating the gifted and talented, service for this population have shared two common denominators: (1) lifelong personal growth, and (2) contributory social interaction (Ward, 1961). The goal of differentiated curriculum for the gifted was defined as "an optimally developed, continually becoming person, free and responsible universalized human mind and character, educated for social and cultural interaction (Ward, 1965). Thus, the modern constructivist approach to immersing bright students in their learning of authentic curriculum with undeniably rigorous performance expectations (Tomlinson, 1995) employs the two common denominators that have withstood the test of time with respect to serving gifted and talented young people.

Services for gifted and talented students must clearly make the match, as Passow (1985) admonished us to do, between a child's budding talent and the nurturance the child needs in order to develop that talent. We have a compelling obligation to structure learning experiences within a milieu that is at once inviting, genuinely stimulating, and conducive to learning at the highest level of which a student is capable at a particular time. Students must become thoroughly versed in the concepts, principles, precepts, and themes connecting these components in an organizational infrastructure. Detail of this magnitude is essential to knowing a discipline from within-of being a part of the discipline instead of being apart from it (Cooper, 1998).

> The aim is to involve students in the discipline, not just in the subject matter. If I grind glass, study the refraction of light waves through it, and make a pair of spectacles, I am involved in the discipline of optometry; if I simply read about the process, I am involved only in the subject matter. Thus, students need . . . to conduct genuine scientific inquiry, not simply experiments with known answers. **They need to do what people involved in a discipline actually do.** (Arnold, 1982, emphasis added)

It must be remembered, however, that, due to the significant variance in type and degree of talent within a population of gifted and talented students, services that are uniquely appropriate for some gifted and talented students are not necessarily the best match for others. Some students, for example, may have such a well-developed foundation in their particular strength (talent) area that they require highly-advanced learning opportunities in that discipline, accessible only through accelerated placement in that given field. (In other disciplines, these same students may not require such radical differentiation and need to be placed in ability-appropriate settings as needed by each individual.

The level of curricular materials and the related instructional methods are crucial for meeting the needs of gifted learners. "The emphasis in the special programs for gifted learners is on the stimulation of the thinking processes of creativity, originality, problem solving, and of increasing the content depth and sophistication (Gallagher, 1985). While these elements should certainly be present in programming for all children, the difference for gifted learners is related to the need for a greater depth, complexity, and so forth.

Gifted learners require multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas and expressing what they learn (Tomlinson, 1995). Specific strategies for supporting curricular options include: acceleration, ability grouping, high-level curricular materials, career education, and program provisions that influence academic and affective outcomes (Shore & Delcourt, (1996). However, no single format for programming can effectively meet the needs of all gifted and talented learners. Therefore, a continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials must be available to meet the needs of the diverse learners within the population of gifted and talented students.

Other services to be considered include in-depth research opportunities in which the student becomes the principal investigator in an area of his or her personal interest. Learning to be the professional while conducting his/her own research is a particularly stimulating and challenging way to delve into the content and apply the techniques and resources used by professionals active in the field under study.

In summary, then, an effective approach to programming for gifted and talented learners should be seen as a combination of three elements: (1) accelerative approaches, in which instruction is matched to the competence level of the student; (2) enrichment approaches, in

which opportunities for the investigation of supplementary material are given; and (3) individualization, in which instruction is matched specifically to the learner's achievement, abilities, and interests (Feldhusen, 1998). The instructional strategies listed below can be used to implement the talent development curriculum.

- Elementary level
  - Inquiry learning
  - Problem-solving
  - Small-group "think tanks"
  - Simulations
  - Dramatizations
  - Applications of technology
  - Enrichment clusters
  - Community mentorships
- Secondary level
  - Socratic Seminars
  - Comparative analyses of issues, topic, problems, themes
  - Debates of "big ideas"
  - Mentorships with highly-reputable authorities
  - Small- and large-group discussions of metacognition, other abstract concepts
  - Seminars on ethics as applied to various aspects of daily life
  - Simulations
  - Fellows in Residence (students become experts on topics of their choice)

Benefits of Well-designed Services

As with identification, effective services for gifted and talented students require an intense regimen of teacher training, collaborative planning, discussion about student performance expectations that take student products beyond the school walls and into the real world, and teacher ownership of the decisions made. Some benefits of designing these services for gifted and talented students are as follows and are excerpted from the compendium of national standards mentioned above.

1. Curriculum and instruction modification and adaptation must occur in order for gifted and talented learners to realize their full potential and may reduce boredom from redundancy for these students.

2. Continual progress for gifted and talented learners is promoted when differentiated curricula and instruction span all grade levels, providing for early mastery of content and skills..

3. Gifted and talented learners' entry and exit points in the general curriculum are different at all levels of development; therefore, curriculum differentiation provides for necessary modifications at all grade levels.

4. Teachers benefit from well-designed services in terms of their professional growth, as they develop skills and methods of working effectively with gifted and talented learners.

5. Teachers who modify and adapt curricula and instruction will assess student progress in order to establish new learning goals.

6. When the instructional pace is flexible, accelerated, in-depth learning may occur because less time is spent on basic skills and concepts, allowing for an optimal match among instructional purposes, curriculum, setting, and student needs.

7. Acceleration permits gifted and talented learners to compact the basic curriculum and progress at a rate commensurate with their readiness and need when they are socially and emotionally ready.

8. Subject and grade skipping are options that allow a gifted and talented Learner to be placed at the appropriate instructional level.

9. Multiple approaches to curricular modifications are available to provide the most appropriate curricular experiences for gifted and talented learners.

10. A continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials supports varying student interests, learning styles, and abilities.

National Standards on Services (i.e., Curriculum and Instruction)

Among the newly-released national standards for gifted and talented education are several standards that address effective and defensible services. This list includes the following, adapted to be consistent with plans for moving gifted and talented education forward in Maryland:

1. A well-defined and implemented curriculum scope and sequence should be articulated for all grade levels and all subject areas.

2. District curriculum plans should include objectives, content, and resources that challenge gifted and talented learners in the regular classroom.

3. Teachers should be responsible for developing plans to differentiate the curriculum in every discipline for gifted and talented learners.

4. Gifted and talented learners should be assessed for proficiency in all standard courses of study and subsequently provided with educational opportunities that are more challenging.

5. Appropriate service options for each student to work at assessed level(s) and advanced rates should be available.

6. Documentation of instruction for assessing level(s) of learning and accelerated rates of learning should demonstrate plans for gifted and talented learners based on specific needs of individual learners.

7. When warranted, continual opportunities for curricular acceleration should be provided in gifted and talented learners' areas of strength and interest while allowing sufficient ceiling for optimal learning.

8. Possibilities for partial or full acceleration of content and grade levels should be available to any student presenting such needs.

9. Differentiated educational program curricula for students PreK-12 should be modified to provide learning experiences matched to students' interests, readiness, and learning styles.

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