



# POSITION PAPER – ASSESSMENTS

The *Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented* supports assessments as a crucial element in our Colorado schools.

The Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented (CAGT) supports the use of multiple forms of valid and reliable assessments to identify gifted students, (including young learners), monitor their learning progress, and determine the effectiveness of gifted education programming in the state. CAGT also supports the recommendations of CEC-TAG (Council for Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted) regarding the use of growth models for monitoring student progress. In addition, CAGT supports the development and use of more psychometrically sound instruments directly linked to specific outcomes for gifted and talented students.

The use of valid and reliable assessments, matched to student learning outcomes provides the core of instruction for all gifted students. Students benefit from quality assessment by acquiring new information and processes, increased motivation, developing metacognition of their strengths and weaknesses, and taking ownership of their own learning. Teachers benefit by being able to better determine student progress and to assess the effectiveness of their curriculum and instructional strategies. (Heacox and Cash, 2014) Parents benefit by being informed about the progress of their students. Dissemination of the assessment results to all stakeholders is essential to promote collaborative development of students' gifts and talents.

## BACKGROUND

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (2010) states “knowledge about all forms of assessment is essential for educators of students with gifts and talents.” (p. 9) The use of multiple forms of assessment provides information for educators to identify students with gifts and talents, provides feedback to guide the instructional process, and determines to what extent students have demonstrated learning progress within a gifted program. In Colorado these uses of assessment are described in more detail in the Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA).

## RESEARCH

### *Assessment in Identification*

In the NAGC position paper “The Role of Assessments in the Identification of Gifted Students” (2008) the following are the implications for best use of assessments in identification:

- the identification process and the assessments used are aligned with the program’s definition of giftedness
- the process includes the use of multiple assessments that are combined in a reasoned way that is not biased against any particular subgroup of students (VanTassel-Baska, 2007)
- the types of assessments used have sufficient psychometric evidence supportive of decisions about students’ readiness for gifted programming
- all individuals involved in the assessment process have sufficient training in the administration and use of the assessment
- administrators are fully informed about best practices in the field of testing as well as the latest research regarding the identification of gifted students
- there is a process in place whereby the identification process is periodically evaluated to ensure it is reflective of best practices in the identification of gifted students. (p. 4)

### ***Assessment and the Instructional Process***

The use of ongoing assessment to measure student achievement and growth is an essential part of differentiated programming for gifted students. The student outcome for learning progress stated by NAGC (2010) is “students with gifts and talents demonstrate advance and complex learning as a result of using multiple, appropriate, and ongoing assessments.” (p.9) Pre-assessment, formative, and summative assessments integrated into the instructional process provide information to guide student-learning progress in academic skills, thinking skills, and social-emotional development. Use of an assessment model that measures growth over time and that emphasizes student learning beyond minimum proficiencies is advocated by the Council of Exceptional Children-The Association for the Gifted (CEC-TAG, ) in their joint position paper with NAGC (2009) “Growth in Achievement in Advanced Students”.

VanTassel-Baska, (as cited in Johnsen, 2012) advocates that a variety of approaches to assessment be used to monitor student learning. These include pre-assessments of the current year’s curriculum, performance-based assessments embedded in the curriculum, product- based assessments, portfolios, and pre/post assessments of thinking skills. The use of off-level testing such as the College Board achievement tests, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, Talent Searches and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program also effectively assess outcomes of gifted student learning. Studies supporting the effectiveness of these approaches are also cited by VanTassel-Baska in this chapter.

### ***Assessment and Evaluation of Gifted Programming***

In Colorado the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), including the practices of response to intervention (RtI), of ongoing assessment and problem solving is used to determine desired learning outcomes for gifted students. Appropriate tiered interventions are recorded in an Advanced Learning Plan, which is collaboratively developed with all stakeholders. (ECEA Rules). Ongoing monitoring and yearly formal review determine the effectiveness of the gifted programming for each student. Disaggregation of student achievement and growth data from mandated statewide assessments and the use of school wide and classroom assessments are used to assess the “quantity, quality, and appropriateness of the programming and services provided for gifted students.” (NAGC, 2010, p. 9) A monitoring system for gifted student education is shared between administrative units and the state through local program evaluation and the Colorado Gifted Education Review (CGER), (ECEA Rules).

## **REFERENCES**

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