



POSITION PAPER – PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

The ***Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented*** supports preparing all pre-service teachers to work effectively with gifted learners as a crucial element in our Colorado schools.

As such, CAGT has adopted the following National Association for Gifted Children's (NAGC) Preparing All Pre-Service Teachers to Work Effectively with Gifted Learners position statement in its entirety.

The role of pre-service education programs in preparing educators to work effectively with a wide range of learners is critical to student success. In addition to meeting the challenge of an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student population, general education classroom teachers are expected to be primary service providers for students who comprise the full range of academic diversity, including students who are advanced well beyond their age peers. There is evidence that providing pre-service teachers with coursework and practicum opportunities to transfer knowledge to practice increases awareness of the differentiated needs of gifted and talented students and confidence in adjusting instruction for them (see e.g., Bangel et al, 2010). However, most teacher licensure programs are not preparing teachers to meet the needs of high-ability students; the majority of schools and colleges of education do not offer separate coursework in the area of gifted education. Instead, the needs of gifted and talented students are typically addressed as part of a required special education or exceptionalities course, which means that new teachers enter the classroom having had little, if any, instruction on how to identify and respond to students who are ready for instruction above the student's grade level. Indeed, 65% of classroom teachers report that they have received little or no training on working with gifted students (Farkas & Duffett, 2008). In order to increase the effectiveness of all teachers in working with gifted and talented students, NAGC calls on pre-service teacher preparation programs to include coursework for all their teacher candidates on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students.

Specifically, NAGC believes all teachers entering the classroom should be able to:

- Recognize the learning differences, developmental milestones, and cognitive/affective characteristics of gifted and talented students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and identify their related academic and social-emotional needs; and
- Understand how to differentiate curriculum and instruction, including modifying instructional strategies, materials, and assessments, in response to the learning needs of students who have mastered key concepts earlier than their classmates.

As new national education standards in teacher preparation and accreditation call for increased attention to the diversity of students in the classroom (CCSSO, 2011), it is imperative that preparatory programs respond in ways that ensure pre-service teachers have more than a cursory look at the nature and needs of gifted and talented students. NAGC recognizes that even with improved pre-service instruction, the general education teacher may not have the full range of knowledge and skills needed to serve all gifted students in every setting. Schools need teachers with advanced training in gifted and talented education who are able to provide a continuum of services to meet student needs.

As the nation becomes increasingly diverse and as teachers and schools are being held accountable for the learning gains of all students, it is imperative that teacher-training programs ensure that all teachers are prepared to maximize the potential of all students, including those with gifts and talents.

References & Resources

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