



# POSITION PAPER – SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS

The *Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented* supports the social and emotional needs of gifted learners as a crucial element in our Colorado schools.

Legislation in Colorado (ECEA) exists that mandates affective (social-emotional support) and programming for gifted learners. The need for such programming should drive what happens, not legislation. It is the responsibility of schools to identify and serve gifted learners in their cognitive and talent areas of strength, as well as their social-emotional needs.

According to research, gifted learners may experience tentativeness and instability in social contexts because a student's cognitive development is often out of sync with that of his/her emotional development; "Complexity in thinking can also exacerbate social relationships in untold ways, causing a sense of being stigmatized" (VanTassel-Baska, Cross, Olenchak, 2009). As the level of intellectual difference increases, social difficulty may also increase. Additional concerns such as perfectionism, hypercriticism, inadequacy, and not living up to the expectation of others may also lead to low self-concept, underachievement, and depression (Penzel, 2000). Damasio's (1999) and Goleman's (1993) findings also support this research. A healthy emotional state leads to a more positive life and success.

The following recommendations regarding serving the social-emotional needs of gifted learners include:

- Consider specific needs of specific sub-populations when customizing programming and services;
  - o Twice-exceptional
  - o Multi-cultural
  - o Linguistically diverse
  - o Young Gifted Learners (Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2) o Other subgroups as appropriate
- Facilitate support of gifted students by providing teacher and counselor training in awareness of characteristics and social-emotional needs, for example underachieving learners, selective consumers and over-excitabilities, sensitivities, perfectionism and asynchrony.

Social-emotional programming and support that is specific to individual sub-populations and unique needs must be provided for gifted students. By identifying and addressing the needs for such support, teachers, administrators, counselors, and the students themselves can proactively develop and nurture those skills.