NAGC Advocacy Messages

Giftedness among Underserved and Disadvantaged Populations

Messages:

- When gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds lose ground year after year, our nation is leaving students behind.
- For gifted learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, the achievement gap can become a chasm that's impossible to cross.

Description: High-ability learners span all cultures, races, classes, and backgrounds. However, our nation often fails to identify and serve the gifted students who are the most disadvantaged. As a result, the achievement gap between the highest-performing students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent peers grows at a faster rate than it does for students at the opposite end of the achievement spectrum.

Why meeting the needs of gifted "Underserved and Disadvantaged" students is an issue:

- When they enter school, high-ability children are represented equally across all demographic and geographic groups. But as they advance in school, lower-income high-ability students drop further and further behind. [1]
- Our schools are not providing low-income students with the tools they need to fulfill their potential. Only 56 percent of the lower-income students (compared to 69% of higher income children) who were classified as high-ability students when they entered first grade are no longer classified as such by the time they reach fifth grade. [2]
- At the current pace, the "excellence gap" – differences between subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement – could take more than a century to close.[3]
- Our nation is wasting some of its most valuable resources. High-achieving, lower income students drop out of school *twice as often* as high-achieving students from higher income families. [4]
- While gifted students come from every socioeconomic background, high-achieving, lower income students are less likely to attend selective colleges, less likely to graduate from college, and less likely to receive a graduate degree than high-achieving, upper-income students. [5]
- Low-income students are dependent on our schools to meet their educational needs. Unfortunately, many low-income districts cannot afford to support gifted programming, leaving high-ability poor children with no access to services in schools, and without the family funds to purchase services privately. [6]
- The achievement gap grows roughly twice as fast for students who begin school at an advanced level as it does for those who enter high school performing at a low level. [7]

Meeting the Special Learning Needs of Gifted Students

Messages:

- Gifted students don't just learn more, they learn differently.
- Failing to provide appropriate instruction to high-ability students can hinder their development, just as treating an illness with the wrong medications can be harmful to patients.

Description: Just as our nation recognizes that we need to make an investment in students with special needs, we must make a similar commitment to addressing the unique needs of our high-ability learners. Every student deserves the opportunity to make continuous progress in the classroom; a student's ability to get an A on his/her report card doesn't mean that learning is occurring. Far too many schools continue to ignore the special learning needs of high-ability learners.

Why "Student Need" is an Issue in Gifted Education:

- Regular classroom time is often a *waste of time* for gifted learners. Many gifted elementary school students *already know between 40 and 50 percent* of the material to be covered in their current grade prior to the start of the school year. [1]
- Studies have shown that gifted students' thinking skills are less well-developed than typical students when the daily classroom assignments are too easy for them. Left unchallenged, gifted students can find themselves unprepared for the rigor and academic independence of college. [2, 3]
- The regular classroom is reported to be one of the top 3 delivery models across the states for gifted students in PreK-grade 8. [4]
- *Sixty four percent* of classroom teachers reported receiving very little or no training in meeting the needs of advanced students during their college preparatory programs. [5]
- General education teachers in 39 states are not required to have any training on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students at any point in their careers. [6]
- Nearly *one-third* of teachers (32%) state that the needs of academically advanced students at their school is a low priority. [7]
- Despite numerous studies showing the benefits of acceleration, *only 9 states* have policies that specifically permit acceleration; 32 states leave the decisions to local school districts. [8]
- Of every $100 that Congress allocated for K-12 education in FY 2007, less than *2 cents* were invested in programs to support gifted and talented students. [9]
- Forty percent of teachers say that the content and curriculum of honors and accelerated classes is “too often watered down and lacking rigor.” [10]
- While NAEP scores improved substantially between 2000 & 2007 for the lowest achievement students, students at the 90th percentile have made little or no progress during that time. [11]

Global Competitiveness

Messages:

- Invest in Excellence - An investment in gifted education is an investment in America's future.
- Our nation's quest to remain "First in the world" depends on developing America's greatest minds.
- Our nation's ability to compete tomorrow depends on how well schools challenge advanced students today.

Description: Our nation's ability to compete tomorrow is dependent upon the brightest students sitting in our classrooms today. The United States will only remain the world's economic leader if we equip our high-ability students with the tools necessary to innovate, compete, and lead in the 21st century.

Why "Global Competitiveness" is an Issue in Gifted Education:

- If we continue teaching to the middle, even our best students will place no better than the middle of the pack when compared to the best students from other countries. On the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) exam, 9 percent of U.S. students scored at the top level compared to the world average of 13 percent in mathematics. In science, 7 percent of U.S. students scored at the top level compared to the world average of 8 percent. In reading, the percentage of U.S. students scoring at the top was equal to the world average of 8 percent. [1]
- A majority (64%) of Americans and 84% of college faculty believe that our gifted students are not being sufficiently prepared to compete against the best-educated scientists and engineers in the world. [2]
- In fields such as science, confining gifted students to the regular classroom and making them use a standard curriculum has proven to be among the *least effective* means of promoting their learning. [3]
- Only 15 states have public, statewide math-science high schools for advanced learners. [4]
- Thirty percent of science and engineering graduate students in U.S. schools in 2011 were foreign-born. [5]
- Only 1% of 12th grade students scored at the advanced level on the science portion of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam. [6]

The Argument for Gifted Education

- Investing in gifted education benefits general education. Gifted education has served as a testing ground for many advanced learning strategies that have found their way into the regular classroom. Curriculum models (AP, Wm & Mary Curriculum) and program models (SEM) developed in gifted education allow for flexible grouping and academic rigor that benefit all students.

- Training teachers to work with gifted learners benefits all students. Teachers who have received training in gifted education are more likely to foster higher-level thinking, allow for greater student expression, consider individual student strengths and weaknesses, and provide a variety of learning experiences to challenge students. [1] The most significant gains by students participating in *Project Breakthrough*, a Javits grant-supported program in South Carolina that focuses on training teachers to utilize creative instructional approaches, were made by those students that had previously been categorized as "low achieving." [2]

- Gifted programs encourage students to enter the STEM fields that are vital to our nation's competitiveness. For example, 52 percent of the 2005 participants in *Project SIS*, a Javits grant-supported high school program, [3] identified science as a career of focus, and over 50 percent of students enrolled in specialty math and science schools go on to pursue advanced degrees in science or mathematics.

- Investing in gifted education allows us to identify our nation's brightest minority students. In the nine years after implementing a multiple criteria model for identifying gifted learners, Georgia saw a 206% increase in the number of African-American children and a 570% increase in the number of Hispanic gifted children participating in gifted education programs statewide. [4]

- Gifted programs foster the intellectual growth of our nation's brightest young women. Acceleration programs that allow advanced high school students to enroll in courses at universities have proven successful in encouraging our nation's brightest young women to take advanced math and science courses. [5]

- Gifted programs allow our brightest students to achieve their true potential. Talented students from accelerated classes outperform students of the same age and IQ who are not accelerated by almost one full year on achievement tests, and students from enriched classes outperform initially equivalent students from conventional classes by 4 to 5 months. [6]

A Call to Action

The time is now to make a greater investment and in our nation's brightest children.
Our nation's future depends on it.

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