

Collaboration among All Educators to Meet the Needs of Gifted Learners

Collaboration among gifted, general, special education and related services professionals is essential to meet the varied needs of today's diverse student population. Through a shared vision and passion for meeting the needs of all learners, specialized educators share their expertise and insights to plan for their students across programs and services.

Giftedness is a complex phenomenon impacting the development of the whole child. Many specialists must work together to address the diverse academic, social and emotional aspects of the development of children with gifts and talents. It is imperative that educators in gifted, general, special education programs, and related professional services collaborate with one another and with parents/guardians and community members to ensure that students are properly identified for services to address their diverse advanced learning needs.

Most children identified as gifted are in heterogeneous classrooms served primarily by general education teachers. Depending upon the specific needs and abilities of these learners, numerous collaborative partners are needed to design and provide a range of appropriate services. Comprehensive, coordinated services for students with gifts and talents require a shared commitment and ongoing collaboration between general and gifted education professionals and families. Additionally, gifted students may benefit from collaborative planning and support from special education and related service professionals, including counselors, school psychologists, and social workers. Such collaborative efforts draw on the strengths of all school personnel and community resources to address students' unique learning needs.

NAGC believes that high quality collaboration does not obviate the need for gifted education services or for gifted education specialists, but rather redefines the roles of educators in the plan for serving gifted and talented students. Collaboration calls for shared responsibility for recognizing indicators of giftedness and responding to those unique characteristics through more comprehensive and individualized programming options. Collaboration builds a community of insightful educators who create learning environments that are more challenging and engaging for all students, that better meet the needs of those who have been identified for gifted services, and that enable teachers to recognize potential giftedness in diverse populations.

Collaboration, then, should be part of a continuum of services provided from Pre-K through high school to meet the unique educational needs of gifted students. Examples of collaborative strategies that might be used to enhance the learning of students with gifts and talents include:

- Providing professional development for general education and special area teachers focusing on the characteristics of gifted learners and the varied manifestations of those traits and behaviors so that gifted learners, including those from diverse and underserved populations, are appropriately identified for services.
- Including special education teachers and school psychologists on gifted program evaluation teams to assist in diagnosis of and provision of appropriate services for twice-exceptional students.

- Providing ongoing support for general classroom teachers to assist with pedagogy designed to challenge all students, curriculum differentiation, and identification of advanced materials and to establish collaborative planning time with content specialists and gifted education specialists.
- Providing training and time for school counselors to work with gifted students and their families on issues such as affective development, social development, emotional adjustment, negotiating access to the next level of schooling early as appropriate, locating learning opportunities outside of school, providing information about scholarships, and college and career planning.
- Facilitating the connection between families and schools by providing practical suggestions for parents to help them work effectively with school personnel and by helping them locate community-based and other resources to support their children outside of school.

In today's diverse classrooms, collaboration enhances understanding and trust among educators, helps promote connections between services in all educational fields, helps develop more positive attitudes toward gifted education, and increases opportunities for all students, including those with gifts and talents.

Resources

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- Hughes, C. E., & Murawski, W. A. (2001). Lessons from another field: Applying co-teaching strategies to gifted education. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 45, 195-204.
- Johnsen, S. K., & Sheffield, L. J. (Eds.). (2012). *Using the Common Core State Standards in mathematics with gifted and advanced learners*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Landrum, M. S. (2002). *Consultation in gifted education: Teachers working together to serve students*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

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The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

All position papers are approved by the NAGC Board of Directors and remain consistent with the organization's position that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC Position Papers can be found at www.nagc.org.