

Resources

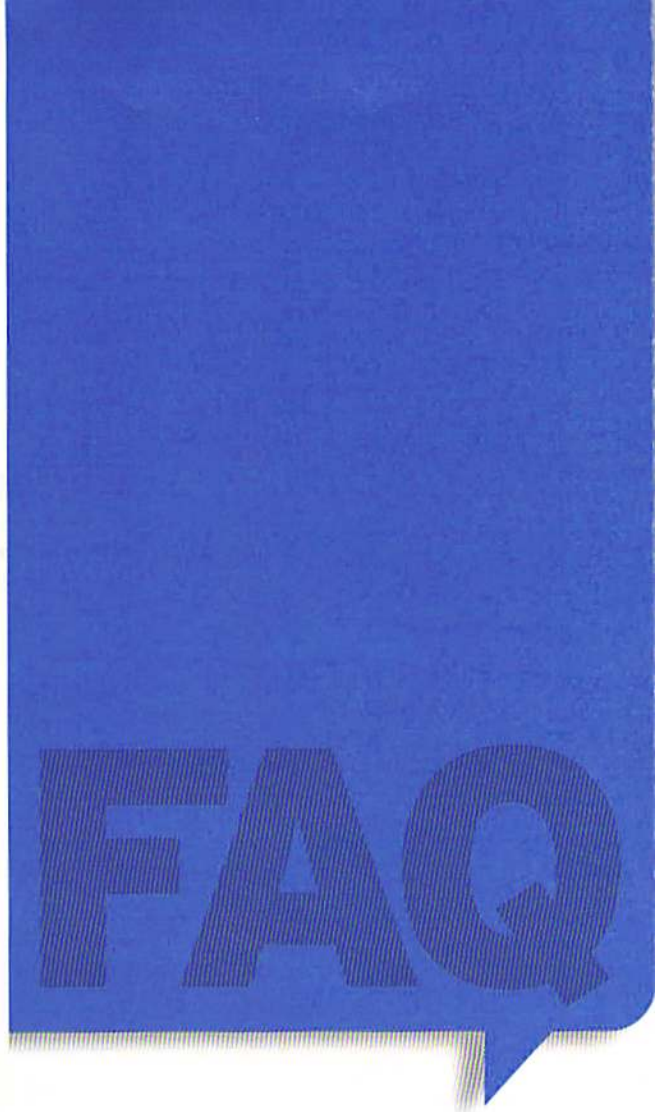
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About NAGC

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is a nonprofit organization of parents, teachers, educators, and community leaders who work to expand support for 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 support.



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Maximizing Student Achievement

Identifying and Serving Gifted Students
in Elementary School

What are the consequences of failing to meet the needs of gifted and high-potential students?

When high-ability elementary school students are not challenged, they begin to think that being smart means that they don't have to work hard, leading to poor learning skills and eventual underachievement and even failure in school.

Some families concerned about the availability of challenging content and rigorous instruction seek alternate options such as home- or private-schooling. Low-income students, however, are dependent on the public schools to meet their educational needs, meaning they may not be able to reach their true potential without services from their school.

Factors to consider:

- ▶ The "Excellence Gap," is growing between groups of students achieving the advanced level on the NAEP exam. For example:
 - ▶ In grade 4 mathematics, the percentage of white students scoring at the advanced level increased by 5% between 1998 and 2007; the percentage of Black and Hispanic students increased by only 1%.
 - ▶ The percentage of students eligible for free school lunches scoring at the advanced level in grade 4 mathematics increased by 1 percentage point to 1%, while the students not eligible who scored at the advanced level increased by 5 percentage points to 9%.
- ▶ Fewer than 1 in 4 teachers (23%) say that the needs of advanced students are a top priority at their school; 32% say that they are a low priority.
- ▶ Only 56% of children from low socio-economic backgrounds who are considered high achieving when they enter school, remain high achieving by the end of 5th grade.
- ▶ Underachievement can be reversed with appropriate, strength-based interventions in student achievement, attitude, or behavior.



- ▶ Effective differentiation requires regular training and access to updated data on which to make decisions. One national study revealed that when gifted children are in a regular classroom, gifted students received differentiated instruction just 16% of the time.
- ▶ Flexible ability grouping in content areas has been shown to be effective in increasing achievement of all students, provided that the curriculum has been calibrated to each group's ability.

Serving gifted children does not have to be overly complicated or expensive. The NAGC website – <http://www.nagc.org> – contains much of the information needed, including National Gifted Education Programming Standards and research-based strategies upon which to build effective programs and services.

▶ How can we identify gifted students in our school?

Advanced academic performance alone or a single test score is an insufficient indicator for identifying high-ability students.

The use of multiple measures, including achievement and/or aptitude test scores; teacher, parent, and student nominations; as well as students' grades and work, also should be used in the selection process. It is also critical that the identification process and selection criteria used be appropriate for both the population of the school and for the type of programs and services offered.

Factors to consider:

- ▶ To determine eligibility for gifted education services, educators should use multiple assessments that measure diverse abilities, talents, and strengths that are based on current theories, models, and research.
- ▶ To ensure that gifted education services reflect the district's student population, educators should use



non-biased and equitable approaches for identifying students with gifts and talents, which may include using culturally sensitive checklists and locally developed norms or assessment tools in the child's native language or in nonverbal formats.

- ▶ Families are valuable partners in the identification process and should be included in all decisions made concerning assessment and services. Families can provide key information about children's interests and potential outside the classroom.

▶ How can we serve gifted and talented students in our school?

There is a wide range of research-based gifted programming models and services that can be used to meet the needs of gifted students. Many of the strategies used with gifted students can be extended to more students leading to increased achievement school-wide.

Most experts recommend a continuum of services across content areas that take into account a broad range of talents and are vertically aligned with middle and high school offerings to ensure a smooth learning transition. Extracurricular options provide additional opportunities to challenge and support advanced students. Critically important to program and service success is to have teachers and administrators who have received specialized training to address gifted students' learning needs.

Factors to consider:

- ▶ Gifted elementary students frequently know 40-50% of the curriculum before they start school.
- ▶ A guiding principle for academic decision making is to match instruction to student ability rather than to age.
- ▶ Service options should consider the social and emotional needs of gifted students who may underachieve, display perfectionism, experience negative peer pressure, or have extreme sensitivities and high levels of intensity. An accepting school environment where gifted students are allowed to express themselves without fear of bullying or ridicule by other students, teachers, or staff is important to their success.
- ▶ 65% of teachers report that their pre-service education focused very little or not at all on how to best teach academically advanced students.

The nation's 3 million academically gifted and talented students depend on school leaders and classroom teachers to recognize their learning needs and to respond with a continuum of services that follows and grows with them throughout their school years.

Numerous misperceptions surrounding gifted learners impede services for many of our most academically promising students — such as gifted students are always the top performers in the classroom, or that gifted students can succeed on their own. The reality is that the gifted student population is very diverse, that talent within this population doesn't develop at the same time or rate or in every subject, and social and emotional issues may get in the way of learning. This means that schools must be vigilant in searching for advanced ability and flexible in their service delivery options.

Fortunately, gifted education services do not have to be expensive. However, they do require a leadership commitment to ensure that student engagement and achievement are the greatest priority. Creating a culture of excellence requires providing a challenging curriculum, well-trained teachers, and a clear school or district plan that ensures appropriate services. Gifted education strategies not only increase the achievement of gifted students, but also have been shown to increase achievement levels of all students, making their deployment well worth the investment.

NAGC provides comprehensive information to help those who are considering how to provide programs and services for gifted students so that the students may stretch their minds and reach for the highest levels of achievement.

Visit NAGC at www.nagc.org

❑ How do we know that there are gifted students in our school?

There are gifted and talented students – those who perform or have the ability to perform at a level above and beyond their age and grade peers – found in every cultural and economic group, from all backgrounds, and in all elementary schools and they require services to maximize their potential.

It is sometimes difficult to recognize these students because at a very early age, some high-ability students are exhibiting advanced performance in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas while others are just beginning to develop their intellectual capacity and emotional maturity. Because of language issues, disabilities, and the impact of poverty or unchallenging elementary school programs, many diverse students have been overlooked for gifted and talented services. Additionally, behavior issues, such as failure to do homework or lack of school academic or activity participation disguise the potential and hinders identification of some gifted students for appropriate educational programming. However, all students who



process information quickly, ask complex questions, have long attention spans, good memories, strong vocabularies, or are very creative and curious should be assessed for giftedness.

Factors to consider:

- ❑ An estimated 6-10% of the student population is academically gifted. Additional students may possess other forms of giftedness, such as creativity, the visual or performing arts, and leadership.
- ❑ Approximately 9% of special education students are also gifted in one or more areas.