



A CALL TO ACTION:

Supporting Equity, Diversity, and Access for Gifted Students



THIS DOCUMENT

In a diverse society, it is critical that we find and develop the gifts and talents of all children and youth in our nation. Equity, diversity, access, and excellence are essential to high-level academic achievement. Diversity has been a topic of discussion in America for decades. Embedded in discussions of equity, diversity, access, and excellence are race, culture, class, ethnicity, income, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic differences, and learning differences.



This call to action presents key data points, recommendations, resources to learn more, and research references in each of the six action areas. Developing the strengths of all gifted and talented and high-ability learners requires purposeful actions by all stakeholders to ensure a bright future for our nation and our world.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



After earning a certificate, licensure, or endorsement in gifted education, educational professionals typically participate in annual professional learning to increase their effectiveness and enhance learning for students with gifts and talents. Professional learning should bring awareness to disparities in identification and services and suggest actions to overcome them. Ideally, preservice teachers and all other educators would be offered similar professional learning because these students are gifted and talented all day long, every day.

EQUITABLE ACCESS



Despite considerable academic conversation and study, underrepresentation of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different (RCELD) students and those who are twice-exceptional (2e) persists in gifted and talented services and advanced courses. Although a few programs across the country are making strides in this area, the problem continues to be pervasive, and the performance divide is growing.

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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION



RCELD refers to students who are racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different—all historically underserved groups of children in the U.S. educational system (Artiles et al., 2010). They include students who are Black, Latinx, and Native American descent; English learners; and those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Their academic achievement in gifted services relies on instructional and curricular support provided by classroom teachers. RCELD students and students who are twice-exceptional (2e) need curriculum and instruction that develop and hone their strengths. Current research, action steps, and resources can be used to incorporate culturally responsive curriculum and instructional support for diverse populations receiving gifted services.

RESEARCH IN EQUITY AND DIVERSITY



Equity and diversity in gifted education are currently in the limelight as states are restructuring or even eliminating gifted education services altogether. Claims that services are inequitable and facilitate racial and ethnic segregation in education are the crux of the issue. Misdiagnosis and underidentification of children and youth with gifts and talents, in general, occur for many reasons and are especially prevalent among learners from RCELD populations and students who are twice-exceptional (2e). Dreilinger (2019) reported that “in addition to the 3.3 million U.S. public school children identified as gifted, there are as many as 3.6 million gifted children being overlooked in school” (para. 1). Although these issues are clearly known within the field of gifted education, there is little research establishing evidenced-based practices to address them.

PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Potential giftedness in racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different (RCELD) children as well as children who are twice-exceptional (2e) are often overlooked or misinterpreted (Henfield et al., 2014). As a parent, then, being aware of common gifted characteristics is especially important (Luckey Goudelock, 2019) as is understanding the nature and needs children with gifts and talents. Seminal research by Dr. Mary Frasier and her colleagues at the University of Georgia explain how traits and behaviors can look different in different populations (Frasier et al., 1995). Parent and community members need to understand the nature and needs of RCELD and 2e children in order to partner with schools more effectively.

POLICY



Effective policies can make a significant impact on closing Excellence Gaps and increasing access so that students from all populations can thrive. States and districts that have implemented specific policies to address access have seen marked progress toward their goals in advancing equitable access to students who are racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different (RCELD) or students who are twice-exceptional (2e) (Patrick et al., 2020).

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