



# The Role of Administrators in Supporting Gifted Students

*A Position Statement of the  
Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT)  
[www.megt.org](http://www.megt.org)*

## Purpose

The purpose of schooling is to provide consistent educational experiences for all students that ensure high levels of continuous academic achievement. All students includes gifted and talented, high achieving students.

Administrators, and in particular principals, play a crucial role in providing instructional leadership. Their leadership guarantees that curriculum and instructional practices include the rigor and challenge to support continuous academic achievement for all students.

This position paper provides administrators with rationale, current research, and best practices to support the growth and achievement of students who are gifted and talented. The goal is to present issues and make recommendations to guide administrators in developing and implementing appropriate gifted services so that all students can reach high levels of achievement.

## Issues

While gifted students may be proficient on statewide exams, research indicates they may not be adequately challenged. In response to NCLB, educators have increased efforts to close the achievement gap, forcing schools to concentrate on meeting minimum competencies. As a result, national data shows that students in the lowest quartile have demonstrated solid progress while students in the top quartile have not (Plucker, Burroughs, Song, 2010). The research on high achieving students in poverty suggests that progress in closing the achievement gap might be at their expense. Lower income students neither maintained their status as high achievers nor rose in the ranks of high achievers (Wyner et al, 2007). Additionally, in the Silent Epidemic (2006), Bridgeland et al point out that approximately two thirds of high school dropouts reported on the absence of rigor and relevance in their learning as rationale for dropping out.












Gifted learners enter the classroom with advanced knowledge and an ability to learn at a more rapid pace than their age peers. In order to demonstrate academic growth, they must have an appropriately challenging curriculum. They need to be stimulated by an advanced and enriched curriculum that is above their current level of functioning in each area of learning. When students are authentically engaged in meaningful, quality work, the likelihood for them to learn something new and to remember what was learned increases (Hancock & Betts, 2002). Without a rigorous curriculum, unengaged students may respond to a learning experience with compliance, rebellion, or withdrawal (Schlechty 2011).

Meeting the unique needs of gifted students is an obligation of every school. As an instructional leader, an administrator's major responsibility is to ensure that learning takes place in each and every classroom, for each and every student. Administrators create the climate and culture essential for the success of all students and their leadership has the power to positively impact the achievement of gifted learners.

Principals must ensure that teachers are well prepared to work with the wide range of students in their classrooms. It is crucial that teachers receive effective professional learning in the methodologies of gifted education, which research shows, builds the capacity of teachers to meet the needs of all learners. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), 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. Effective teacher development must stress the responsibility of teachers to address the varying cognitive and affective needs of academically diverse student populations.



## Recommendations

-  Include school improvement goals based on data that address the academic growth of gifted students.
-  Encourage professional learning about the characteristics of gifted learners and other gifted education issues; during PLC work, in-service opportunities, staff meetings, attending regional, state or national conferences.
-  Watch for effective classroom practice during observations including formative assessment, flexible grouping and regrouping, effective questioning at all levels of cognition, and differentiation, all which lead to an appropriate level of challenge for gifted learners.
-  Provide leadership in the implementation of rigorous curriculum which meets the needs of 21st Century learners; critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and inquiry.
-  Encourage professional development in gifted education for school leaders.
-  Dispel the myths and biases surrounding gifted education (see NAGC 10 myths).
-  Recognize that gifted learners have unique cognitive and affective needs.
-  Hire staff who understand the nature and needs of the gifted learner and are willing to address their needs.
-  Ensure that staff who work with advanced learners have the competencies and skills outlined in the NAGC teaching standards.
-  Use the National Association for Gifted Children's Pre K-Grade 12 standards as a guiding document when planning and evaluating programming for gifted students.
-  Advocate for funding for gifted education at building, district, state, and national levels.

## Resources

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