



Responding to the Needs of Gifted Learners in Rural Settings, PK–12

A Position Statement of the Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT)

Purpose

Gifted learners are located throughout all geographic regions and cultures as well as within all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups. They are also found in various types of communities—urban, suburban, and rural. It is difficult to formulate a definition of “rural” that reflects both regional diversity and the unique characteristics of rural areas. For the purposes of this position statement, the intent is to capture the spirit of rurality rather than confining “rural” to a narrow definition. In broad terms, “rural” can be defined as “non-metropolitan” with respect to population, geography, or culture. The purpose of this position paper is to acknowledge the challenge of educating gifted students in a rural setting. The goal is to ensure that the cognitive and affective needs of all gifted learners are appropriately and consistently addressed.

Issues

While there are many positive aspects of rural living, such as the quality of life, independence, opportunities for leadership, and a sense of community, there are barriers in rural settings for gifted learners who deserve rigorous and challenging programs and services. These issues include:

-  a lack of programs with a sufficiently challenging curriculum
-  a lack of accessibility to enrichment opportunities
-  a sense of isolation
-  few or no role models/mentors in certain fields
-  few or no personnel trained in gifted education
-  a lack of awareness about gifted learner’s needs
-  limited resources (time, personnel, space, materials)

Recommendations

The following research-based guidelines are intended to support gifted learners in rural settings. Our recommendations are:

-  Gifted learners must be provided with an appropriate and intellectually challenging curriculum on a consistent basis.
This recommendation can be met through the use of a variety of strategies including curriculum differentiation, content acceleration, individual learning plans, and grouping practices. Methods of service delivery could include the use of independent study, web-based technology, video-link technology, dual enrollment programs, and cooperative classes with other districts.
-  Gifted learners must be provided with opportunities to participate in co-curricular enrichment activities, and academic competitions.
This recommendation can be met through participation in local, regional, and state programs, such as creativity competitions, inventors’ fairs, mathematics leagues, writing conferences, and summer academies (see Resources).



-  Gifted learners must be provided with an environment that supports their emotional and social needs. This recommendation can be met by providing opportunities for gifted learners to spend time with intellectual peers for support and affirmation of their uniqueness and strengths. Opportunities for interacting with educators, counselors, and mentors who help them develop social skills, coping strategies, and career awareness are essential.
-  Educators who serve rural gifted learners must receive professional development experiences that include information about gifted students' characteristics and needs, curriculum differentiation, various grouping practices, and appropriate programs and services. This recommendation can be met by providing networking and collaborative experiences, distance-learning opportunities, on-site training, and regional conferences and meetings.
-  Rural gifted learners must have programs that are consistently supported. This recommendation can be met through adopted school board policy that provides adequate funding, trained staff, ample materials, and appropriate instructional spaces.

References

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Resources

Academic Programs and Competitions, Including Web-Based Programs

- Links to Several Academic Programs:
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/academic.htm>
- Links to Summer and Saturday Gifted Education Programs:
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/tag-sum.htm#susa>
<http://www.nagc.org/summer/sumprog01.htm>

Grants and Funding

- Funding sources from the U.S. Department of Education:
<http://www.ed.gov/funding.html>
- Funding sources from the U.S. Office of Educational Technology:
<http://www.ed.gov/Technology/edgrants.html>
- Non-governmental funding sources in the Northwest:
<http://www.col-ed.org/fund/nongov.htm>
- Funding information from the MN Department of Children, Families, and Learning:
<http://www.educ.state.mn.us/wrkgrnt.html>
- Information on grants listed with the MN Council on Foundations:
<http://www.mcf.org/>
- Information on public and private funding sources in the U.S.
<http://www.pitsco.com/p/Respages/grants.html>

Gifted Education in the United States

- <http://www.nagc.org>
<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/gift.htm>

Gifted Education in Minnesota

- <http://www.ties.k12.mn.us/~megt/>
<http://www.mcgt.net/>

