



Responding to the Affective Needs of Gifted Learners

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

Purpose

Gifted learners have accelerated and complex intellectual development, often leading to unique social and emotional needs. In order for each gifted student to fully develop his or her potential, it is critical that the school community be capable of providing appropriate support. The purpose of this position paper is to identify and address the unique affective needs of gifted learners. Our goal is to increase understanding of these social and emotional needs, provide relevant information, and help educators develop strategies to address these needs so they can implement effective services.

Issues

The affective needs of gifted learners may arise as a result of interactions with external stimuli (family or school settings, culture, world events) as well as from intellectual and personality attributes that characterize gifted students. The main areas of concern regarding gifted students' affective needs are described below.

- ✻ Gifted learners' intellectual development may surpass their psychomotor or emotional development. This uneven development, known as asynchrony, can lead to frustration and unrealistic expectations from self and others.
- ✻ Gifted learners' high intensity often results in inner conflict, such as perfectionism, feelings of inadequacy, relentless self criticism, extreme sensitivity, and struggles with setting unrealistically high goals.
- ✻ Gifted students may experience difficulty relating to peers, teachers, and others, due to problems arising from their precocity.
- ✻ The intense emotional and physical sensitivity associated with being gifted may result in heightened empathy for global issues, causing frustration with an inability to affect change.
- ✻ Gifted students resist being treated as if they are all the same, regardless of individual needs.
- ✻ School climate and peer culture may be indifferent or hostile to intellectual achievement.
- ✻ Students may be frustrated when involved in curriculum that is insufficiently accelerated and complex.
- ✻ Curriculum often fails to include career guidance as it relates to the needs of gifted learners.
- ✻ Due to a lack of awareness, administrators, school board members, and other educational stakeholders fail to consider the affective needs of gifted students when making educational decisions that are likely to affect them.

Recommendations

- ✻ Facilitate proactive discussion groups for gifted students where they can engage in conversation with their intellectual peers.
- ✻ Offer opportunities for gifted students to learn appropriate communication skills, social skills, organization and study skills, and coping strategies.
- ✻ Design community service opportunities for gifted students to empower them to address world issues. Provide activities within the regular classroom that encourage the acceptance of individual differences.



-  Include academic planning and vocational and career awareness in the curriculum.
-  Early educational choices and career guidance should be available to gifted students as one layer of their school program.
-  Ensure that curricular decisions are made with the affective needs of gifted students in mind, whether for the selection of materials, decisions about grouping choices, or individual services.
-  Provide professional development opportunities addressing the affective needs of gifted students to all educators, counselors, and administrators.
-  Create a staff development cycle to meet the needs of new and changing staff.
-  Provide support for parents and the community in understanding the needs of gifted students.
-  Advocate for continued financial support for resources equitable to other educational services.

References

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