



GIFTED LEARNERS
IN THE
REGULAR CLASSROOM



A POSITION PAPER

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field.

The position papers support the organization's belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child's potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.



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An important goal of educators is the development and implementation of appropriate educational practices that motivate and challenge all students to achieve their potential. However, research has shown that fewer than 20% of gifted students are appropriately challenged in school. It is not enough to say that an appropriate educational opportunity is every student's right, educators must believe it and provide for the wide range of learners occupying their classrooms. To optimally provide for learners in any classroom the teacher must:

- create an environment that is responsive to the learners
- assess each learner's knowledge, understanding, and interest
- integrate the intellectual process including both cognitive and affective abilities
- differentiate and individualize the curriculum to meet each learner's needs
- evaluate both learning and teaching, reflecting on the information obtained to adapt the learning plan and improve the program

These are the basic components needed in any classroom and provide the basis for the best practices in teaching and learning.

In many school districts learners of all abilities share the same classroom. Research has shown that the learning needs of those who possess high levels of ability and talent differ from the needs of other students in the class. One way that the differences of gifted students become apparent is in the varied pace of learning they demonstrate. Rather than asking them to practice concepts they understood prior to the lesson, using them in the classroom as teachers' assistants, or giving them twice the workload of others, these students should be offered an appropriately differentiated approach. They deserve meaningful challenges to further their learning

Gifted learners have an insatiable appetite for knowledge and opportunities to discover new areas of information. To be effective, research indicates that schooling must be designed to nurture gifted students and their need for advanced challenge, in-depth thinking, and abstract conceptualization in classrooms that utilize a flexible, open-



ended, diverse range of options. A continuum of services should be offered within the school structure, including but not limited to program design and delivery of the curriculum. Classroom practice must be modified to meet the needs of gifted and talented learners if they are to realize their potential.

It is the position of the California Association for the Gifted that effective education for gifted students must be an integral part of the school day. Further, that if the regular classroom is to provide for the needs of gifted students, the learning opportunities must:

- include appropriate and flexible grouping
- provide significant interaction with intellectual peers
- include the students' interests and levels of knowledge and ability
- be differentiated to meet their needs for acceleration, complexity, and depth in the study of the curriculum
- provide for continuous progress that meets the students' needs and focuses on their areas of strength.

The informed support of policy makers, administrators, teachers, and parents can make essential and meaningful education possible for these students.

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