



HIGHLY AND
PROFOUNDLY
GIFTED CHILDREN



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.



HIGHLY AND PROFOUNDLY GIFTED CHILDREN

The California Association for the Gifted recognizes three levels of giftedness in children - moderately gifted, highly gifted, and profoundly gifted - and affirms that the educational needs of each group differ significantly. The choice of appropriate educational options for gifted students is a complex decision and should be based on area and level of giftedness, learning style and interests, access to suitable resources and programs, emotional and social compatibility, family dynamics and comfort level, and the preferences of the student being served. The unique needs of these students often requires creative and customized solutions for maximizing their potential.

Researchers have noticed significant differences between moderately gifted, highly gifted, and profoundly gifted children on every cognitive and affective trait, especially in their degree of intensity and energy. For the highly gifted the desire to know and create structure and organize data is greater and more efficient than for the moderately gifted. The profoundly gifted are children of rare genius. They seem to have a different value structure and tend to be invested in universal issues.

Highly gifted students are defined as scoring three standard deviations above the mean of standardized intelligence tests, while profoundly gifted children are often defined as those students who score at or above four standard deviations on tests of intelligence, or who are prodigies in a particular domain such as language or mathematics.

While there is a vast range of learning differences among gifted children, those differences that are most commonly found among highly and profoundly gifted children that can be even more intense and problematic than with moderately gifted students include their need to

- learn at a highly accelerated pace;
- process material with great depth;
- learn not by logical, sequential steps, but randomly or through awareness of inner patterns and structures, making connections that may not be apparent to others; and
- learn in a safe environment in which they can express their emotional intensity and moral and existential concerns that are characteristic of these children.



The unique needs of highly and profoundly gifted children make it difficult for them to gain from the traditional classroom experience. They are often better served by magnet schools, charter schools, private schools that provide for gifted students, well planned independent study, radical acceleration, mentors, university-based on-line or site programs, tutoring, or homeschooling. The higher the intellectual ability, the more difficult it will be to find a match for the student in traditional school programs.

Due to their high cognitive abilities and high intensities, highly and profoundly gifted students experience and relate to the world in unique ways and often find limited points of common experience and interest with their age peers. Research shows that situations commonly found in school programs that significantly affect the highly and profoundly gifted students by creating intellectual and emotional problems include,

- lack of compatible reading groups and challenging, interesting learning opportunities in reading;
- limited programs to develop advanced writing skills at an early age and to give opportunities for advanced writing while necessary physical skills are
- still immature;
- limited availability of useful modifications when, upon entry to a class, the student has mastery of the material to be taught;
- lack of opportunities in the early grades to engage in play with math, critical thinking, and problem solving at their level of knowledge and ability;
- lack of opportunities to develop friendships with children of like intelligence, independence, creativity, and similar interests; and
- social pressure on the student to moderate achievements or face isolation. Doing so could lead to conforming behavior.

Therefore, it is CAG's position that to meet these needs, school programs intended to serve highly and profoundly gifted students must provide appropriate educational challenges in settings that recognize and value their unique and continuing growth. Appropriately trained and qualified teachers are an essential component to ensure the success of such programs.



References:

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