



TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS



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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To provide an appropriate education for gifted children and youth, it is most important that their teachers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of gifted students and the field of gifted education. They should also have an in-depth knowledge of their individual curricula. The most effective teachers of gifted learners have other distinctive characteristics including:

- passion for learning that is consistently modeled in the classroom
- genuine concern for and enjoyment in teaching gifted learners
- respect for individual differences and tolerance of divergent behavior
- willingness to be a risk taker
- flexibility and openness
- a sense of humor
- a secure sense of self
- willingness to place the child's needs above bureaucratic demands

Not surprisingly, the teacher characteristics listed above parallel those found in the research as most preferred by students. They want a teacher who:

- cares about them and understands them
- has a good sense of humor
- is intelligent
- can make learning meaningful and challenging
- is patient and firm
- is cheerful
- is flexible



To add to the personal characteristics, important knowledge and understanding must be attained through ongoing professional development. Comprehensive and well-planned course work in gifted education is an important part of any professional development program as it provides an in-depth understanding of and experience with the issues that

are important in the education of gifted learners. Teachers must gain through their professional development:

- the knowledge and understanding of:
 - the nature and nurture of high levels of intelligence in all of its aspects creativity and its nurture
 - cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, needs, and problems found with gifted students as a result of their atypical development
 - cultural differences and the responsiveness necessary to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds
 - assessment and evaluation strategies that support high level learning, provide choice and alternative evidence for showing mastery, and include the learner as evaluator

- the ability to create and implement a learning environment in which gifted

learners:

- feel safe to use their strengths, explore their personal and interpersonal development, and risk new areas of thought and action
- are encouraged to think critically about questions they find interesting and provocative
- can try, fail, receive feedback, and try again without always facing formal evaluation

- the ability to provide flexible, individualized, differentiated curricula that are

appropriate to meeting the unique needs of gifted learners and that:

- challenge their high levels of cognitive development and creativity o cross disciplines and teaches students how to think as disciplinarians o show thorough understanding of the concepts of depth, complexity,
- acceleration, and novelty, and the role these factors play in differentiating
- curricula and the classroom environment
- teach intellectual rigor and leadership
- use higher-order questions and open ended assignments



- nurture social responsibility as well as moral and ethical awareness

These characteristics of effective teachers of gifted children, both those that are individual and those that are essential to be learned, are consistently found in the research, surveys, and authoritative texts in the field. The California Association for the Gifted believes that these characteristics and qualifications are essential for any teacher who is given the responsibility for meeting the needs and nurturing the potential of gifted students. When such qualifications are not already developed, it is incumbent upon the district to provide teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities for the attainment of such qualifications to ensure the success of the gifted program.

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