

Key Question Nine:

How should the state implement these recommendations and assist local school systems in developing, implementing, and monitoring their efforts?

RECOMMENDATION 9.1.

GIFTED AND TALENTED ADVISORY COUNCIL

The State Board of Education should appoint an on-going Gifted and Talented Advisory Council to develop fair and equitable timelines for implementation of the recommendations in this report, provide technical assistance to local school systems, and monitor the development and delivery of services for gifted and talented students across the state.

RECOMMENDATION 9.2.

STATEWIDE DATABASE

The Maryland State Department of Education should develop a database that contains a list of resources and educational options at the state and national level for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.

RECOMMENDATION 9.3.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

In order to ensure that the recommendations of this report are fully implemented, a state initiative should be established to develop resources and provide technical assistance to local school systems.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

Key Question Nine: *How should the state implement these recommendations and assist local school systems in developing, implementing, and monitoring their efforts?*

GIFTED AND TALENTED ADVISORY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION 9.1: The State Board of Education should appoint an on-going Gifted and Talented Advisory Council to develop fair and equitable timelines for implementation of the recommendations in this report, provide technical assistance to local school systems, and monitor the development and delivery of services for gifted and talented students across the state.

PERSPECTIVE: "Most importantly, it requires a tangible commitment at the state level symbolized by a decisive plan accompanied by appropriate resources, as well as clear implementation deadlines."

RATIONALE: A thoughtful and effective implementation of the recommendations found in this report is essential for ensuring the continuing and equitable provision of services for gifted and talented students across the state. A representative group of informed and committed individuals should be available to support local school systems in developing and implementing concrete plans. On-going monitoring of the resulting plans and services will ensure that these recommendations will continue to make a difference for students across the state.

The responsibilities of the State Gifted and Talented Advisory Council would include:

- * drafting fair and reasonable timelines for full implementation of the recommendations in this report;
- * assisting LEA's in developing, implementing, and monitoring/evaluating their action plans;
- * assisting MSDE in reviewing and providing feedback about the ongoing implementation of task force recommendations;
- * preparing annual reports during implementation of task force recommendations;
- * developing a biennial status report on gifted and talented education and presenting it to the State Board of Education and the public.

This advisory council should include representatives from the diverse groups that will be affected by these recommendations.

"We must ... be concerned with continued advocacy for gifted programming, creating and maintaining exemplary programs and practices that can serve as models of what can be accomplished for high ability students. ... To lose our quest for excellence in the current move to guarantee equity will undoubtedly result in a disappointing, if not disastrous, education for our most potentially able children."

Renzulli and Reis
The Reform Movement and the Quiet Crisis in Gifted Education

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

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STATEWIDE DATABASE

RECOMMENDATION 9.2: The Maryland State Department of Education should develop a database that contains a list of resources and educational options at the state and national level for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.

PERSPECTIVE: "A state-wide, annotated database providing information to any school or individual on the resources available will ensure widespread dissemination of available options."

RATIONALE: A database of educational resources and options readily available to school personnel, students, and parents would assist parents and schools in more fully meeting the variety of needs presented by all students, but especially talented students. Such a database should be constantly revised, all constituencies informed of its contents, and information made available on how to access it.

In addition, MSDE should provide leadership in recognizing outside-of-school experiences such as internships, opportunities to work with experts or mentors, or academic coursework at a local college or in a summer program such as those conducted by universities and colleges as legitimate educational options that supplement and enrich a school's attempts to meet the needs of its most able students. Schools should be strongly encouraged to integrate such experiences into a student's full educational program, and award credit if legitimate academic work is successfully completed. At the very least, schools should be required to consider such experiences when placement decisions are made. The MSDE can take an active leadership role by not only encouraging such activities at the local level, but also by facilitating such actions through information and guidelines on how a school can integrate such extracurricular activities into its ongoing attempts to assist talent development.

"Communities must establish learning opportunities for students both inside and outside the regular classroom and both inside and outside the school building."

National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

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STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

RECOMMENDATION 9.3: In order to ensure that the recommendations of this report are fully implemented, a state initiative should be established to develop resources and provide technical assistance to local school systems.

PERSPECTIVE: "We strongly believe that appropriate programming for gifted and talented students, while only one component of the total reform necessary to improve the quality of academic environments for all children, is a crucial, non-negotiable element of that reform."

RATIONALE: It is imperative that the mission and, thus, the recommendations of the Task Force on Gifted and Talented Education be translated into direct action through a purposeful, systematic and thoughtful process. Although each school system must be allowed to reflect its unique needs in its local choices for how best to provide the most appropriate and necessary educational services for its students, these choices should not be in conflict with the intent of the recommendations in this report. If the recommendations of the task force are to be substantively implemented in a timely fashion and in a manner that is consistent with the mission conveyed by the task force, the Maryland State Department of Education must take a strong leadership role.

Local school systems need direction, support, and assistance in implementing these recommendations. A systematic plan to assist systems, clearly articulated and backed by necessary funds is essential. Both short- and long-range goals must be developed to provide the time and funding required for these changes to occur. Most importantly, the Maryland State Department of Education must provide leadership in establishing the philosophy and

mission, as well as the standards necessary to ensure that the educational needs of Maryland's gifted and talented students are fully recognized and accommodated in every Maryland school.

Fiscal resources and technical assistance, as well as guidelines, must be available on a need basis to assist each school system in assessing its needs, developing priorities, and developing a plan of action. There must be a recognition that local plans must reflect local needs and resources, as well as widely differing services currently available from one system to another. A commitment to appropriately serve gifted and talented students, a reasonable plan in response to this commitment, and demonstrated action in moving forward in this regard should, however, be required of every local system.

To support the mission conveyed in this report, the Maryland State Department of Education should undertake a major initiative designed to establish the support, funds, and resources needed. In addition to the actions contained in the task force's recommendations, the following activities are recommended.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

The state will:

- * Hold regional meetings to inform the public and all affected constituencies of the task force's recommendations.
- * Revise the document "Criteria for Excellence" that defines gifted and talented students and provides guidelines for appropriate identification and programming.

Renewing Our Commitment

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

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- * Develop a self-assessment instrument for schools to use and provide assistance in the use of the instrument to assess needs and discrepancies related to task force recommendations.
- * Conduct a statewide conference on gifted and talented education with workshops and presentations designed to clarify state guidelines and demonstrate how systems can translate recommendations into services and programs.
- * Seek funding from sources such as the legislature, Department of Education, and/or foundations to support the implementation of recommendations.
- * Establish a clearinghouse and statewide network for exemplary practices currently in existence.
- * Evaluate the implementation efforts of local systems.

"The goal of education must be to develop a society in which people can live more comfortably with change than with rigidity. Such a goal implies, in turn, that educators must themselves be open and flexible, and must be effectively involved in the process of change..."

Carl Rogers
On Becoming a Person