

Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
Superintendent
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Dear Dr. Grasmick:

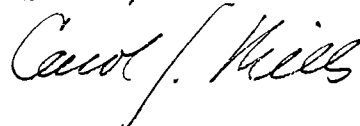
We are pleased to send you the report of the Task Force on Gifted and Talented Education.

Over the past 14 months, the task force addressed each of the objectives that were included in the original charge. The work of the committee and preparation of the report involved much research, data gathering, and deliberation, as well as national, state, and local review.

The report includes a mission statement in "A Vision for Gifted and Talented Education in Maryland" and a discussion of current debates that affect the delivery of educational services to gifted and talented students. The recommendations are organized around 10 key questions that guided our deliberations. Source material and other pertinent information related to the study are in the appendices and bibliography to the report.

The task force believes that the implementation of these recommended initiatives will provide a foundation for a world-class educational system in Maryland — one in which academic excellence is both recognized and nurtured. It requests that you carefully consider these recommendations and take the appropriate steps to make them operational.

Sincerely,



Carol J. Mills, Co-Chairperson



Russell Beaton, Co-Chairperson
Maryland Task Force on Gifted
and Talented Education



**Renewing our Commitment to the Education
of Gifted and Talented Students:
An Essential Component of Educational Reform**

**Recommendations for
Gifted and Talented Education
in Maryland**

Maryland Task Force on Gifted and Talented Education

**Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Instruction
Arts and Sciences Branch
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201**

**The printing of this report was funded through a grant from
the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) of Johns Hopkins University, November, 1994.**

October 1994

Dear Colleagues:

In the United States, responsibility for education has always resided with individual states, and not with the federal government. At first glance, education's status as a project of the states may seem to indicate a neglect of the critical domains of teaching and learning. But we in education know that, on the contrary, it is local control inspired by local understandings that holds the promise of reforming education.

Education is about real children, their needs, their aspirations, and their struggles along the way to meeting those aspirations. Thus, education is grounded in particulars, in the unique characteristics of individual students, schools, and school systems. At the local level, educators remain sensitive to these specifics. At the federal level, these particularities often go unnoticed or are diluted into broad bureaucratic goals and language.

The more personal observations made by local educators often lead them to develop convictions about necessary directions in our field. Because of their hands-on role in real-life educational endeavors, their assessments are valuable and must be expressed. Indeed, a willingness to confront complex and controversial issues in the field of education is among educators' most critical responsibilities. Chief among the observations educators with local practices have made is that each child is unique. This statement may seem trite or predictable, but it is actually profound and unpredictable in its ramifications. For if every child is unique, every child requires particular academic accommodations.

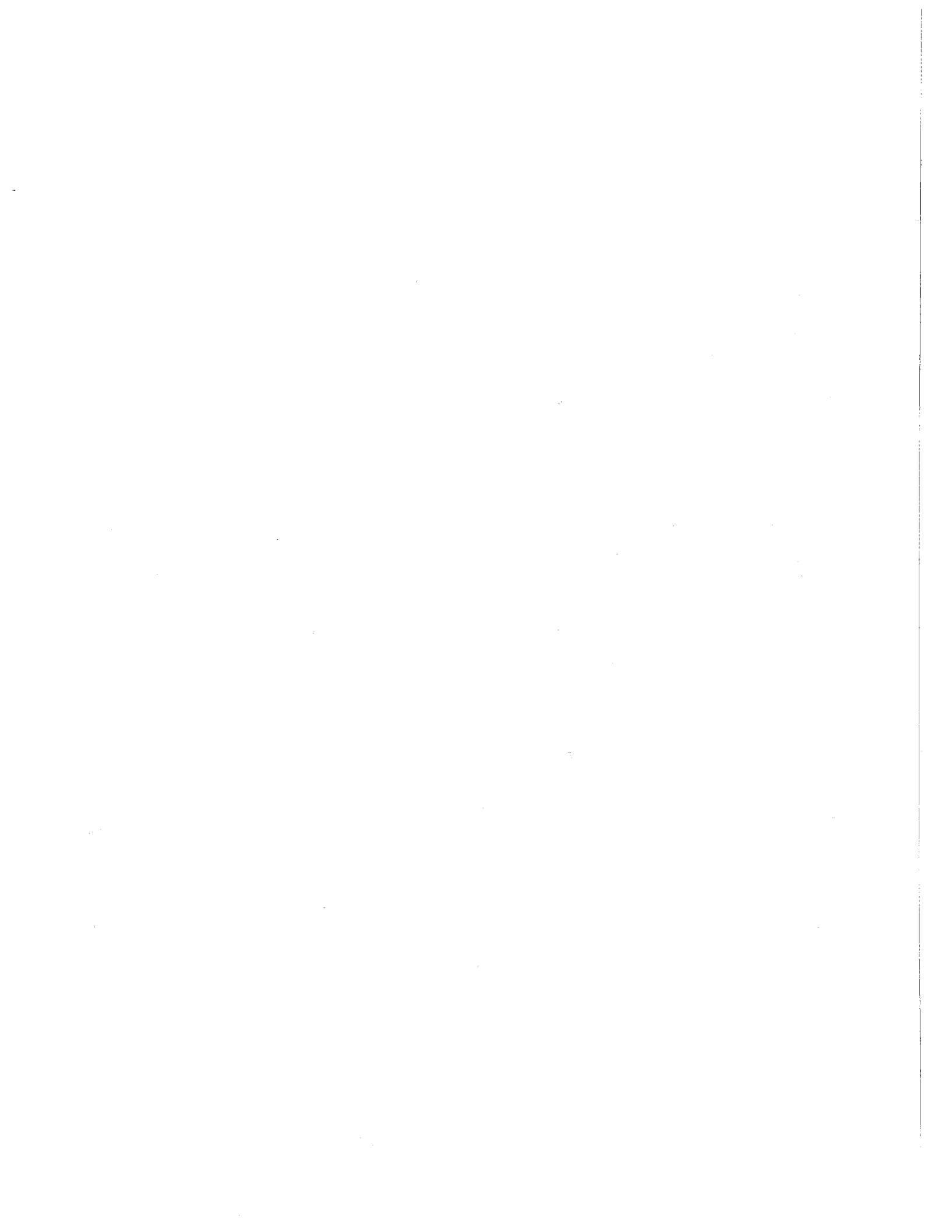
Our nation's treatment of gifted and talented students provides us with stunning evidence that the uniqueness of each child and his or her needs is most likely to be overlooked. Educators have become party to a frightening cultural tendency to hold the talents of highly able students in low regard, and to resist special provisions to nurture these students' abilities. The impulse towards an anonymous homogeneity in academic programming damages all children, for it denies their individual nature. Gifted and talented students, possessed of fragile constellations of abilities and enthusiasms, are clearly vulnerable to the insidious effects of the philosophy and practice of undifferentiated education.

Education is concerned with the possibility of excellence. Whatever additional aspirations we choose to embrace, we must continue to support each child in a quest for his or her "personal best," his or her highest potential for academic achievement. Our responsibility to students who already manifest exceptional academic potential is a true, tough, and telling test of our commitment to the unique learning capacity of each and every child. It is in the spirit of that commitment that this report is presented.

Sincerely,



William G. Durden, Ph.D.
Special Consultant to the Task Force on
Gifted and Talented Education
Director of The Johns Hopkins University
Center for Talented Youth



Renewing Our Commitment

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In September 1993, the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools established the Maryland Task Force on Gifted and Talented Education. The charge to the task force was "to study the current status of gifted and talented education across the State of Maryland and make appropriate recommendations..."

Co-chaired by Carol Mills, Director of Research at the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) of The Johns Hopkins University, and Russell Beaton, Curriculum Specialist for Gifted and Talented Education/ Communications Specialist for Frederick County Schools, the task force was composed of representatives from local boards of education, parent groups, local school systems, students, research and higher education, as well as State Department of Education staff.

The study and preparation of the report of the task force took place over a 14-month period. During that time, the task force developed a mission statement and a set of principles for improving gifted and talented education that are reflected in the recommendations of the group.

Recommendations are organized around key questions that address issues pertaining to appropriate and effective services for gifted and talented students. The initiatives contained in the recommendations, in the judgment of the task force, will not only result in an exemplary educational program for our most able students, but also have the potential for improving educational services for all Maryland public school students.



