

**Key Question Three:**

*What must each local school system do in order to ensure that these goals are reached?*

---

**RECOMMENDATION 3.1.**

**LOCAL ACTION PLAN**

*Each LEA must develop a district plan describing its commitment to providing appropriate services for gifted and talented students and an annual action plan outlining identification procedures, services, staff development efforts, and evaluation processes for meeting the needs of these students K-12 across the content areas. This district plan must be consistent with the vision and guidelines established in the state mandate and implementation plan.*

---

**RECOMMENDATION 3.2.**

**LOCAL GIFTED AND TALENTED SUPERVISORY POSITION**

*In each LEA, a staff person trained in gifted and talented education should be appointed with responsibility for coordinating gifted and talented programs and services, conducting staff development activities, and monitoring the progress of gifted and talented students.*

---

**RECOMMENDATION 3.3.**

**COUNSELING SERVICES**

*In addition, there should be available to each school at least one staff member trained in understanding and managing the affective needs of gifted and talented students.*

---

**RECOMMENDATION 3.4.**

**TEACHER SELECTION**

*Each local school system should develop a procedure for selecting teachers with specific responsibility for identifying or providing services for gifted and talented students.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Question Three: What must each local school system do in order to ensure that these goals are reached?

LOCAL ACTION PLAN

*RECOMMENDATION 3.1: Each LEA must develop a district plan describing its commitment to providing appropriate services for gifted and talented students and an annual action plan outlining identification procedures, services, staff development efforts, and evaluation processes for meeting the needs of these students K-12 across the content areas. This district plan must be consistent with the vision and guidelines established in the state mandate and implementation plan.*

**PERSPECTIVE:** "The Maryland State Department of Education, as well as each local school system, must include in their annual plans for school improvement and excellence specific directives that provide for appropriate services to address the needs of gifted and talented students."

**RATIONALE:** Services for gifted and talented students vary widely from system-to-system from a minimal level of service in many areas to fully developed programs in some schools. It is unreasonable to say that a student of high ability has special needs only in grades 4 and 5 or in grade 8 and then leave that student to cope without support and without appropriately challenging curricula for the rest of his/her school career. It is equally unacceptable for students to be denied needed services and given a less-than-challenging education because of where they live.

In order to meet the needs of all highly able students, it is imperative that every LEA have a comprehensive plan on how to meet those needs. This plan should include:

- \* a statement of philosophy describing the system's commitment to providing appropriate services for gifted and talented students;
- \* an approach to identification that is consistent with the state definition;

- \* a description of the program options already available and those to be developed;
- \* efforts to train staff in how to identify students with special talents and ability, and strategies for meeting their educational needs;
- \* a method of identifying and communicating school and community resources available outside the regular classroom to supplement school-based services;
- \* a process to involve parents in the planning of their student's education;
- \* a description of plans for training teachers and others in the system; and
- \* a process for evaluating program implementation and student achievement.

Although each school system must reflect its own unique needs in this plan, it is important that the significance and intent of the recommendations adopted by the state and expressed in the mandate be maintained. There are a variety of ways in which students' needs can be met by a county, and the state should not impose a restrictive set of requirements on a system, nor should it expect that the level and type of services be the same across all counties. On the other hand, each county's plan should reflect a genuine commitment to providing an appropriately challenging and meaningful education for gifted and talented students by providing the following **minimal** services: (a) advanced academic classes at the middle and high school level; (b) opportunities for flexible pacing and acceleration options, such as those outlined in **Recommendation 4.3**; and, (c) flexible grouping options to facilitate these programming alternatives.

Without a comprehensive plan of services, these students are at risk of not meeting their potential. Contrary to what many believe, not all highly able students achieve at a level commensurate with their ability. According to Sylvia Rimm "between 10% and 20% of high school dropouts are in the superior range of tested ability...of the top 5% of our high school

---

## Renewing Our Commitment

# RECOMMENDATIONS

### Key Question Three: What must each local school system do in order to ensure that these goals are reached?

---

graduates, 40% do not graduate from college". This indicates that the structure of schools today does not provide adequate resources to meet the needs of these students. It is, therefore, imperative that every school system in Maryland develop and implement a comprehensive K-12 approach to meeting the needs of our most able and talented students.

In developing its plan, each system should include a process for the phase-in of the plan. It is also important to involve parents directly in this process, as well as a local advisory council convened specifically for this purpose or a group already in place for other purposes.

Each county's plan should include strategies for evaluating services and programs being offered. A comprehensive and meaningful evaluation process must:

- \* incorporate clear goals;
- \* include designs that address complex issues of measurement in programs for the gifted (e.g., the need for above-grade level testing);
- \* use multiple data sources;
- \* report to all appropriate audiences in a timely fashion; and
- \* be easily translated into corrective action, if necessary.

The evaluation process should use both quantitative and qualitative data, including but not limited to:

- \* test data, including the use of off-level testing so that gifted students will not top off the scale;
- \* surveys of students, school staff, and parents;
- \* curriculum audits; and
- \* other local or school data.

The final report on the evaluation should be shared with the local advisory council, parents, and other interested citizens in the community. When corrective action needs to be taken either at the system or the school level, all appropriate central area offices should work with the school(s) to make the necessary changes.

At the school level, a principal should regularly assess the extent to which teachers are addressing the needs of the students in their classes. This should apply to staff in special programs as well as staff in the regular classroom where gifted students spend most of their time. It is in the regular classroom where the consistency and quality of services to gifted students is most in question.

An appropriate and challenging education should be the right of every student. We need to make sure all students are achieving because of school, not in spite of it.

---

*"We know that high expectations produce higher achievement. Yet our expectations for most American students remain at minimum levels of academic competency...We fail to provide opportunities for students to perform at high levels...We can build world class schools; we can raise the ceilings of expectation for all students; and we can provide challenging opportunities for students with outstanding talent".*

National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent

---

**Key Question Three: What must each local school system do in order to ensure that these goals are reached?**

---

**LOCAL GIFTED AND TALENTED SUPERVISORY POSITION**

*RECOMMENDATION 3.2. In each LEA, a full-time staff person trained in gifted and talented education should be appointed with the responsibility for coordinating gifted and talented programs and services, conducting staff development activities, and monitoring the progress of gifted and talented students.*

**PERSPECTIVE:** "Providing a full range of services to meet the unique abilities and needs of our most able and talented students cannot reasonably be accomplished solely by individual classroom teachers or even individual school staffs. Within each local school system, there must be someone designated to provide leadership and direction in recognizing and programming for students with exceptional ability and talent."

**RATIONALE:** The majority of gifted and talented students in this country spend their school day in a traditional classroom setting with teachers who have neither the background nor the experience to meet their needs (Council of State Directors, 1991; Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented classroom survey, 1993).

Although local or state policy may support the needed gifted programs, little will change for talented students unless the focus is altered to give direct attention, training and support to the classroom teacher. The local school, therefore, must be encouraged to identify personnel who will be responsible for assisting classroom teachers to differentiate instruction, identify potentially gifted students, and design grouping practices and resource programs that will supplement the regular program and enable classroom teachers to meet the needs of highly able students. This person should have training and interest in gifted education, as well as the ability to work collaboratively with the school administration and community.

**In counties with a small student population and/or limited resources, it may be necessary for one coordinator to serve an entire county or for several adjoining counties to pool their resources and share a full-time staff person as the gifted coordinator.** In this case, a classroom teacher, principal, or counselor might serve as the local coordinator and liaison with the county or regional coordinator.

---

*"We need to be a strong voice that reminds all educators of the importance of challenging and nurturing the potentials of all learners, so that minimum competencies will not become maximum competencies. Without active dialogue and two-way communication between gifted education and other school change and improvement efforts, both will suffer."*

Donald Treffinger  
*School Reform and Gifted Education - Opportunities and Issues*

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

**Key Question Three: What must each local school system do  
in order to ensure that these goals are reached?**

---

**COUNSELING SERVICES**

*RECOMMENDATION 3.3: In addition, there should be available to each school at least one staff member trained in understanding and managing the affective needs of gifted and talented students.*

**PERSPECTIVE:** "Teachers and other educators — including administrators and counselors — must understand and anticipate the intellectual, emotional and social needs of gifted and talented students, as well as the challenges and pressures associated with those needs. Although these students are affected by many of the same developmental factors as their classmates, because of their unusual ability they may encounter social and emotional issues not faced by other students."

**RATIONALE:** Students possessing exceptional ability or talent may camouflage their potential for a variety of reasons. Social pressures due to gender or minority status, peer influences, or family dysfunction may cause a student to hide or reject high ability and/or achievement. The existence of an "anti-intellectual" and "anti-achievement" ethic is very real in many of our schools and communities and may cause a student to question greatly not only his/her abilities, but also the level of personal motivation needed to meet success in today's

academic arena. Sensitivity to these issues by trained counselors, teachers, and administrators may be the key to saving and nurturing talents and gifts that could enrich our community, our society, and our nation.

In addition, students with exceptional talent and ability often have difficulty "fitting in" to established peer groups. Their chronological peers may not be their intellectual peers, and this may result in students having difficulties relating to classmates. These students are often seen as different, and may experience feelings of isolation and even rejection. For this reason, some are at risk for significant social and emotional problems.

Because these students face unique psychological and personal issues, it is recommended that all staff be made aware of the special issues surrounding the affective needs of gifted and talented students. Because a child's social and emotional development are inextricably connected to her/his intellectual development and academic achievement, it is important for staff members in each school to be trained in understanding and managing the affective needs of gifted and talented students.

---

*"These unique needs exist, and counseling is a necessary component in the development of talent. Gifted youngsters live in a context of ambiguity about themselves and about the perceptions of others. A developmental counseling program...will help minimize such ambiguity and will help gifted students liberate their strengths."*

Colangelo  
*Counseling Gifted Students*

