

Key Question Six:

What must the state, higher education, and local systems do to provide appropriate training for teachers and administrators in how to accommodate the needs of gifted and talented students?

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.

TEACHER TRAINING STANDARDS

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education should set basic standards for teacher training in talent development and gifted education.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS

Teacher preparation programs throughout the state should incorporate topics and issues related to identification of, and appropriate services for, students with exceptional gifts and talents.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3.

GIFTED EDUCATION CERTIFICATION OPTION

A Maryland Certification in Gifted Education should be developed and made available for teachers who wish to pursue this option.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4.

STATE-SPONSORED TRAINING CENTERS

The state should develop regional training centers for staff development in counties with small student populations.

RECOMMENDATION 6.5.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Local school systems should include talent identification, talent development and gifted education topics as part of in-service training for all staff.

Key Question Six: *What must the state, higher education, and local systems do to provide appropriate training for teachers and administrators?*

TEACHER TRAINING STANDARDS

RECOMMENDATION 6.1: The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education should set basic standards for teacher training in talent development and gifted education.

PERSPECTIVE: "The first involves training in recognizing students with special educational needs because of academic talent and/or unique abilities, and then training in appropriate programming and instructional strategies in response to these needs. The second deals with high levels of content expertise to enable these teachers to accommodate the advanced learning needs of talented students."

RATIONALE: A variety of opportunities exists for teachers to receive the training required for the successful implementation of advanced programs. However, the survey of school systems in Maryland conducted by the task force revealed that implementation of staff development programs in the area of gifted and talented education is very uneven. A number of systems requested assistance from the state both in defining what adequate staff

development in this area requires and in coordinating efforts across the state.

The Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education should define appropriate training in the area of gifted education and talent development, including the content of courses and a list of other appropriate training experiences for teachers of the gifted, including conferences, apprenticeships, mentorships, and practica.

Further, the Maryland State Department of Education's Office for Gifted and Talented Education should serve as coordinator of staff development services throughout the state. In addition to supporting opportunities for school systems to network in meeting training needs, MSDE should also provide leadership through efforts such as conferences and state-wide meetings.

"Teachers are the key to success in our vision of excellent education. They must be prepared to work with advanced materials and to use complex teaching strategies with a variety of students."

National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent

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

Key Question Six: *What must the state, higher education, and local systems do to provide appropriate training for teachers and administrators?*

**UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE
TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS**

RECOMMENDATION 6.2: Accredited teacher preparation programs throughout the state should incorporate topics and issues related to identification of, and appropriate services for, students with exceptional gifts and talents.

PERSPECTIVE: "Since all staff members are, in one way or another, responsible for recognizing and nurturing unique talents and abilities, they must be trained in effective strategies for accomplishing both goals."

RATIONALE: Accredited teacher preparation programs at the undergraduate and graduate level should include an emphasis on gifted education. Currently, teacher training programs are required to address the identification and needs of exceptional learners. However, because the federal and most state mandates relate only to disabled students, the needs of the gifted are often overlooked in teacher training. Identification and programming issues related to gifted students should be regarded as an essential component of all teacher training programs in the State of Maryland. Such issues include, but are not limited to:

- * understanding the nature of intelligence, as well as the characteristics of gifted students;
- * using a variety of means to find students with different talents;
- * recognizing talent and ability in students who come from socioeconomic backgrounds different from ones own;
- * recognition of talent among girls;

- * helping to locate appropriate outlets and recognition for talent.

Furthermore, **in-depth training** is necessary for teachers who have specific assignments in gifted education. Specifically, two types of in-depth training are recommended with linkages provided between these two types of training components:

- (1) characteristics and needs of the gifted, identification processes, curriculum development and differentiation, developmentally appropriate programming and teaching strategies for the gifted, underserved populations, and current issues and trends in gifted education; and
- (2) content expertise, for advanced courses at the secondary level and for teachers at the elementary and early childhood levels to enable these teachers to accommodate accelerated content-related needs of advanced students. A particular emphasis should be placed on developing expertise in the areas of math and science.

All training efforts, whether implemented by colleges or universities, the Maryland State Department of Education, or local systems, must include specific components to address the needs of, and programming for, traditionally underserved populations. This includes attention to the needs of ethnic minorities, the gifted learning disabled, and females in the areas of math and science.

(Note: The task force is aware of the recommendations contained in the 1994 report of the Teacher Education Task Force. While we believe that the recommendations contained in our report are not inconsistent with those of the Teacher Education Task Force, we recognize areas of potential conflict that will need to be addressed by those responsible for implementing the recommendations from both reports.)

"Teachers must receive better training in how to teach high-level curricula. They need support for providing instruction that challenges all students sufficiently."

National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Question Six: *What must the state, higher education, and local systems do to provide appropriate training for teachers and administrators?*

GIFTED EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

RECOMMENDATION 6.3: A Maryland Certification in Gifted Education should be developed and made available for teachers who wish to pursue this option.

PERSPECTIVE: "Additionally, the Maryland State Department of Education should work with the state's institutions of higher education and teacher certification agencies to develop programs within which teachers may earn a Maryland certificate in one or more aspects of gifted education."

RATIONALE: Many school systems in Maryland expressed support for an **optional** certification in gifted education in a recent survey regarding gifted and talented education. This certification would establish a state standard defining professional preparation in gifted education. Local school systems could use that standard as a guide in determining locally appropriate professional standards. Teachers with an intense interest in the field would also have the pursuit of this certification available to them.

"Recent review of requirements for certification or endorsement identified 21 states that report such requirements."

Karnes and Whorton
Teacher Certification and Endorsement in Gifted Education: Past, Present, Future

STATE-SPONSORED TRAINING CENTERS

RECOMMENDATION 6.4: The state should develop regional training centers for staff development in counties with small student populations.

PERSPECTIVE: "Finally, the Maryland State Department of Education should provide leadership to local systems in identifying state resources available for staff development, as well as facilitating regional (or other collaborative) staff development efforts."

RATIONALE: As part of the state's role in providing a staff development network for talent development and

gifted education, the establishment of regional staff development centers is needed. These regional centers need to be located in the counties with smaller populations where staff development efforts are restricted due to limited staff to provide the training. At least two of these centers are needed, one in the west (Garrett, Allegheny, Washington county) and one on the Eastern Shore.

It is evident from a review of the information provided in the task force survey of local school systems that the least effort is provided for training in the school systems with the smallest populations. The gifted students in these regions, in effect, become underserved by nature of their geographic location.

"One of the ironies of the educational reform movement is that at the same time that teachers are increasingly being asked to teach students how to solve problems, they are neither being provided the opportunity to solve problems themselves nor being equipped to do so by the institutions that train them."

Durden and Tangherlini
Smart Kids: How Academic Talents are Developed and Nurtured in America

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

Key Question Six: *What must the state, higher education, and local systems do to provide appropriate training for teachers and administrators?*

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION 6.5: Local school systems should include talent identification, development and gifted education topics as part of both pre-service and in-service training for all staff.

PERSPECTIVE: "The need for continuing staff development to ensure clear understanding of the best ways to recognize and then meet the needs of uniquely talented students is imperative."

RATIONALE: Understanding the needs of students with exceptional abilities and being able to implement appropriate instructional interventions to meet those needs is the responsibility of all teachers. Research indicates that the educational program for most gifted and talented students is presented in the regular classroom. Therefore, it is essential that all teachers understand the unique needs of these students and effectively use instructional strategies to address those needs. As the school reform movement continues to emphasize the improvement of learning opportunities for all students, the most highly able group of students must be included.

In addition to teachers, school system administrators, counselors and other professionals who interact with students need to receive training regarding the needs of these students and how to provide appropriate programs for them. The responsibility for

implementation of a successful instructional program is the shared responsibility of all within the school community. Principals, in particular, whose responsibilities include the evaluation of teachers, need to be aware of appropriate instructional strategies and curricular material to use with the highly able student. Others in the larger school community also share in this responsibility including parents, and business and community leaders.

A survey conducted in 1992 by the Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education, revealed that staff development was the second greatest area of need for program improvement in the state. In addition, a recent survey of local education agencies indicated great diversity in the degree of attention provided to the areas of staff development and teacher preparation across the state. Generally, the larger school systems provide fairly well-defined in-service programs, while many of the smaller counties rely on training opportunities provided by college and universities and through conferences. Some school systems provided no training.

If we are to achieve a world-class education for all our students, we must have a well-trained teaching and administrative staff in our schools. To achieve this will take the concerted effort of schools, communities, and state agencies.

"Beyond the classroom, there are a wide variety of other school personnel that may need some form of additional preparation if they are to play their roles most effectively in a program for gifted and talented students....The key to any good educational program is well-trained personnel and the proper administrative structure in which to put their training to maximum use."

James J. Gallagher
Teaching the Gifted Child