

The Principal's GT Handbook

A consolidated resource

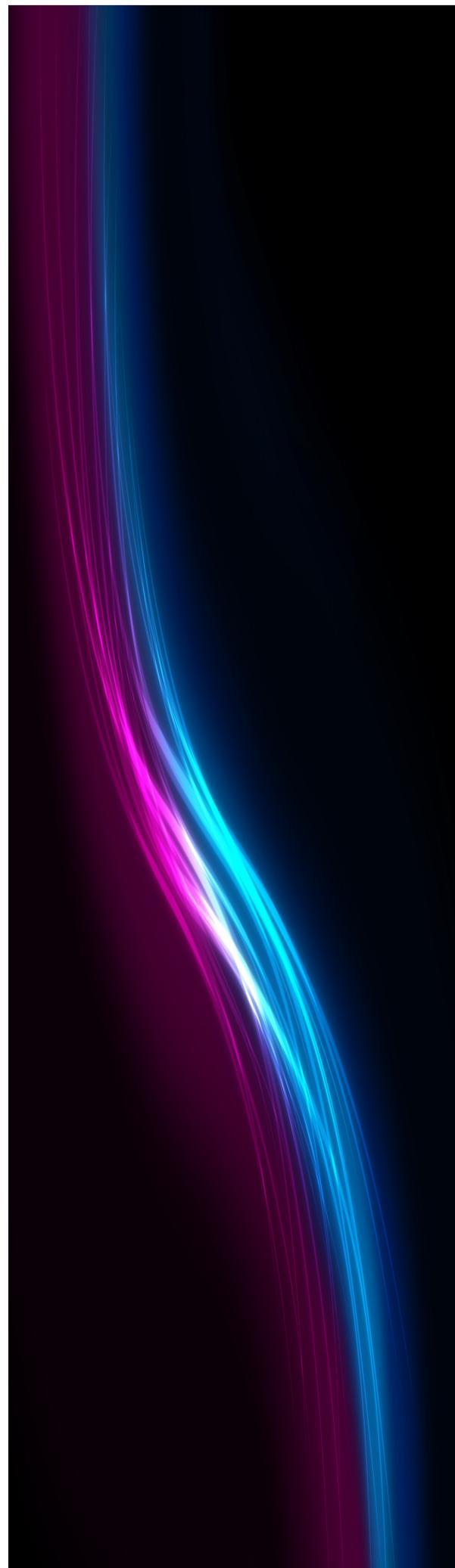


COLORADO DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Hewlett-Packard Company

Office of Gifted Education

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This resource is intended to provide current information to you in your role as a building leader. It is an on-the-go resource when you have specific questions around gifted education.

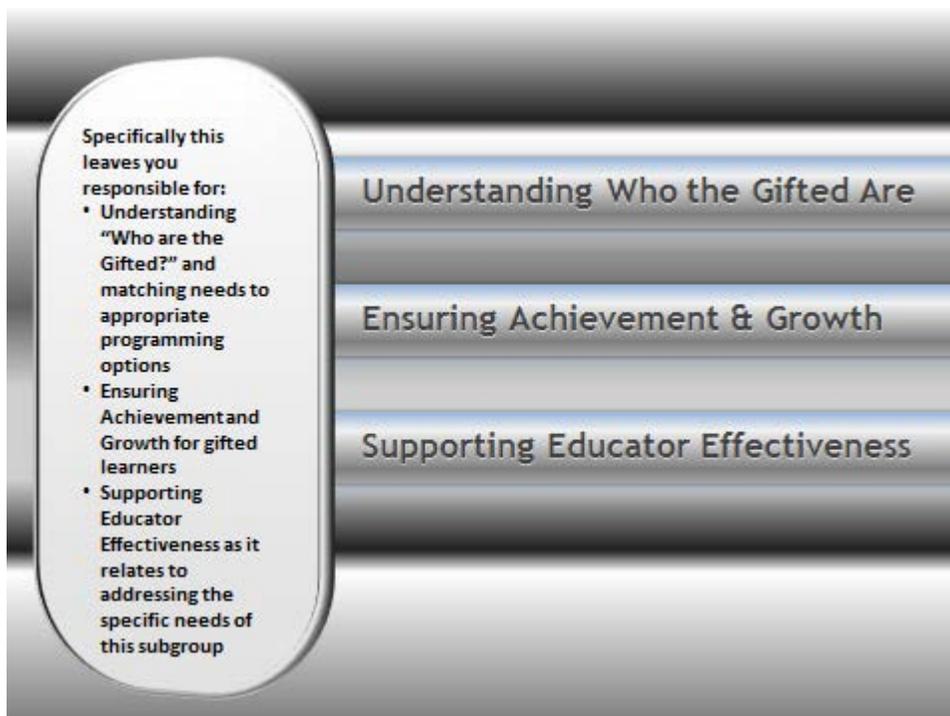
Shared Responsibility--Gifted Education is the shared responsibility of numerous stakeholders. District responsibility lies in the development of policies and programs. They are responsible for:

- Leadership & commitment to excellence
- Identification policies using state guidelines
- Programming & curriculum
- Stakeholder communication and support
- Colorado Gifted Education Review (C-GER)/ UIP Gifted Education Program Addendum/Program Evaluation

Classroom teachers are responsible for:

- Differentiating instruction
- Monitoring achievement

For you, it relies on your **Leadership in Implementation** of district policies and programs as well as the oversight and support of your staff in their classroom responsibilities.



PRINCIPAL'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN PROVIDING GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION: LEADERSHIP IN IMPLEMENTATION

Understanding
“Who are the
gifted?”

- Support initiatives to lead and encourage nomination/referral/identification of all potential students, including those in underrepresented populations
- Understand assessments and timelines in the identification of students for gifted and talented as well as criteria for identification set out in Administrative Unit (AU) Program Plan
- Ensure communications and shared decision making between all stakeholders—specifically addressing parental concerns for student academic challenge
- Collaborate and provide guidance/support in developing Gifted and Talented (GT) programming options for the school based on student needs
- Establish support structures to ensure student success (e.g., cluster grouping, scheduling to facilitate differentiation of student instruction through grouping and collaboration, counseling access)
- Address GT needs in budget planning

Ensuring
achievement and
growth

- Understand how to access/collect GT student data and provide leadership in analyzing achievement for gifted learners. Communicate data to all stakeholders.
- Support both academic and social-emotional success of all GT students
- Be aware of components of Colorado Gifted Education Review (C-GER) and how it relates to building responsibilities
- Understand the district AU Program Plan and UIP Gifted Education Program Addendum and align building programming to these official documents

Supporting educator
effectiveness

- Provide funding and staffing for gifted education as a component in the overall school budget
- Hire personnel when possible with minimum of GT endorsement to work specifically with identified gifted learners and building programming options to build leader(s) with expertise in gifted education
- Evaluate and provide feedback as needed and appropriate for all teachers who work with GT students (e.g., see DPS Effective Teaching Evidence Guideline and/or SOAR example) with a specific lens on differentiation for GT students
- Provide in-depth professional development opportunities in gifted education strategies to maximize both teacher and student performance

Understanding “Who are the gifted?”

- Colorado Laws and Regulations
- Learning Environment
- Identification
- Curriculum Planning and Instruction
- Personnel
- Programming
- Budget

Colorado Laws and Regulations

Gifted Education identification and programming is mandated in the [Exceptional Children’s Education Act \(ECEA\)](#). HB 07-1244 states: *For the purpose of implementing the program plan adopted by each administrative unit (e.g., your district or BOCES) pursuant to section 22-20-106, each administrative unit shall ensure that its constituent schools make available appropriate special provisions for gifted children to the extent that funds are provided for such implementation.* This is the legal mandate to have gifted education identification and programming in your building.

Learning Environment

Gifted educators believe that good instruction is critical for ALL students. However, it also recognized that every student is in some ways like all others, and different from all others. Not all students are ready for the same thing at the same time. All students must be challenged in an environment that is unconditionally accepting and encouraging of these differences. It is important for a building principal to provide leadership in establishing a learning environment where individual differences are valued and nurtured. When done correctly, differentiated instruction provides an avenue that allows all learners the opportunity to stretch beyond their comfort zone and truly grow. Differentiated instruction is a pivotal concept in gifted education.

Identification

- It is important that you know the basics of giftedness and what gifted students in general need to succeed.

- Your Administrative Unit (district/BOCES) has an approved outline of what tools, protocols, and timelines will be used to collect a body of evidence for identification. You will need to connect with the GT Director for any clarifications. Every AU Program Plan is also posted on the CDE Gifted website.
- It is also important to know who the gifted and talented students are in your building and how they are succeeding both academically and socially. If they are identified in math, does their achievement match their ability? In language arts?
- Data analysis will help identify underrepresented groups of students so that additional programming and enrichment options may be tailored to the building's needs. Do you have more girls identified in language arts? More boys in math? Do your FARM, minority, and ELL demographics match the rest of your population or are some groups disproportionate? If you are not familiar with School View data collection use the *GT Data Folder Instructions* available as a link on the Principal's Corner homepage to begin looking at your specific building GT data.

Advanced Learning Plans (ALP)

- It is mandated (12.05 (3) under Student Education Records),
 - The ALP shall record programming options, and strategies utilized with individual students and shall be part of the student's record. The ALP shall be considered in educational planning and decision-making concerning subsequent programming for that student and be used in the articulation process, preschool (if applicable) through grade 12. Gifted student records shall describe the body of evidence that identifies strengths, interests and needs, and the ongoing programming and student achievement results.*

that every identified student has an ALP to document their affective and academic goals in their identified area of strength. Accommodations, timelines, transition points, evaluation/progress tools are all outlined in this document. ALPs are a collaborative process between the parents, teacher(s) and the student. They must be reviewed and updated annually.

- It is important to know your AU ALP policies as outlined in your AU Program Plan. What data system houses the ALP? What is the timeline for creation? For review? Where and how are these documents maintained? Contact your GT Director for instructions.

Curriculum Planning & Instruction

Significant Instructional Strategies that Support Gifted Learners

- Use pre-assessment data for planning appropriate instruction. Elementary gifted students were shown to know 40-50% of the grade-level curriculum on the first day of

school. (<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/reports/rm9306/rm93106.pdf>) Knowing what they know will focus planning for their instruction.

- Provide adaptations, modifications, and extensions to the curriculum to support basic differentiation for gifted learners
- Provide rigor through use of higher order questioning/thinking and opportunities to explore content depth and complexity
- Critical thinking, inquiry, creative thinking and problem solving are all strategies proven to assist gifted learners
- Provide opportunities to cluster gifted learners together in their area of strength for portions of their day

Culturally Relevant Curriculum

Culturally relevant curriculum is an integral part of effective instruction. Being culturally responsive is one valuable means of engaging all students, whether identified Gifted and Talented or not. This is particularly important for students from historically underrepresented populations. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate deep explorations of cultures, languages, and social issues related to the diversity of their identified strengths. (Gonzales, 2013)

Colorado Academic Standards/Common Core

There has been a misconception that due to the increased rigor of the Colorado Academic Standards (which incorporate the Common Core Standards), gifted students no longer need curricular modifications. **THIS IS FALSE.**

The implementation of the Common Core is a major- and long overdue- step forward for the United States as educators strive to better prepare their students for an increasingly competitive world. But the Common Core will not meet the needs of the most advanced students without modifications in the curriculum and assessments of student learning that flow from the standards. Principals can help deliver the tools and resources—cost-effective ones—that will enable teachers to meet the needs of the top students to propel them forward to selective universities and high level careers in every field.

Principal Leadership.NASSP. Setting the bar for high ability students. October,2013

Personnel

12.01(18) “Qualified Personnel” or “Qualified Person” means a licensed, content endorsed teacher who also has an endorsement or higher degree in gifted education; or who is working towards an endorsement or higher degree in gifted education.

12.02 (1)(f)(i) The program plan shall describe the personnel who provide instruction, counseling, coordination and other programming for gifted students. Personnel shall be knowledgeable in the characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and competencies in the special education of gifted students. Qualified personnel with endorsement or an advanced degree in gifted education are preferred in specific programs and classrooms consisting of mainly gifted students.

Gifted education is a shared responsibility within a building. As stated in statute, it is important the personnel be knowledgeable about characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and hold competencies in the special education of gifted students. Some teachers will come with this skill set; others will need additional professional development to assure their competencies. “Schools that effectively train and utilize the services of all teachers, (general education, special subjects, special education and GT education) as well as psychologists, counselors and social workers tend to see more progress in their GT students.” (Gonzales, 2013)

Programming

“What is best for gifted students is what is best for all students: a spectrum of services that address their varying needs and provide significant differentiation of content, process, and product in response to their diverse needs .” (Heacox & Cash, 2014)

A Spectrum of Services

- All programming must align with student Advanced Learning Plans. Programming may include, but is not limited to:
 - Advanced content with depth and complexity
 - Alternative curriculum (e.g., College of William and Mary curriculum units, *Jacob 's Ladder*, Junior Great Books, M³, etc.)
 - Alternative instructional strategies
 - Content extensions
 - Content acceleration
 - Curriculum compacting
 - Independent study
 - Mentorships
 - Tiered instruction
 - Content area acceleration
 - Advanced coursework/honors courses
 - Mentorships, internships, online courses
 - Independent study
 - Use of technology
 - Curriculum compacting

Descriptions of these grouping/programming options can be found in the [Glossary](#) of the [CDE Gifted Education Guidelines](#).

- The academic needs of gifted learners can be met through a variety of options. Unless you have a magnet school or other provision for gifted students, most identified gifted students' needs will be met in the regular classroom setting. This, as mentioned before, is done through appropriate differentiated instruction. It is critical to make sure that all teachers are adept at providing high quality differentiated instruction.
- Gifted students need to be given time to interact with their intellectual peers. This may be done through pull-out/push-in grouping with a GT specialist, or cluster grouping in their area of academic strength within the classroom.
- Affective programming to address the social and emotional skills of gifted students identified on their ALPs can be efficiently addressed during the small cluster grouping times when they have the opportunity to interact collaboratively with their peers. Lunch bunches or counselor-led-sessions are another effective avenue to work on personal and social competencies with trained personnel. It is important to have administrator support around the importance of this aspect of gifted learners' growth. Areas that might be identified in student ALPs may include, but are not limited to:
 - Understanding of individual giftedness--perceptions of self
 - Perfectionism
 - Stress
 - Mood swings and sadness
 - Friendships and relationships
 - Resiliency
 - Risk taking
 - Organizational and study skills
 - Underachievement
 - Transitioning
- Enrichment opportunities such as clubs (e.g., drama, choir, band, art, newspaper, yearbook), competitions (e.g., Destination Imagination, Odyssey of the Mind) and activities (e.g., Legislative Day, Young Chautauqua, restorative justice) are also important opportunities for students to have access to throughout the year.

Programming Evaluation

- Annually review the status of your GT programming to assess the **impact** on student achievement and growth. Use observable and measurable procedures. Are your students meeting their ALP goals? What is the satisfaction factor for parents and students? Does the programming still match the needs or do you need to make changes for next year? What professional development growth is still needed? Did you accomplish everything you wanted to?

- The Colorado Department of Education cycles administrative units every four years for a Colorado Gifted Education Review (C-GER). It is the AU's legal accountability to the state. Your campus may be visited during their on-site visit.
- It is important to communicate all aspects of your gifted education identification and programming to all stakeholders. Many buildings do this via their school website. Your district may provide a general brochure on education in your district, but it is important that your community knows specifically what is being done at your building.

Budget

- All expenditures associated with gifted education should be connected with 3150 budget code.
- Funds associated with the state grant have spending and reporting parameters:
 - Salaries for appropriately certified endorsed or licensed personnel serving primarily gifted students
 - Professional development related to gifted education
 - Activities associated with programming options specific to gifted students and their learning plans
 - Supplies and materials used in gifted instructional programming

Check with your district guidelines around budgets and acceptable allocations.

- When designing your budget, align expenditures with identified needs (e.g., professional development, activities associated with programming options specific to gifted students and their learning plans)



- Policies and Procedures
- Data Sources
- Accountability

Policies and Procedures

It is important that you establish clear policies and procedures for your staff around gifted education in your building and communicate them to all stakeholders (parents, students, staff)

so everyone knows the same information. Who is responsible for writing the ALP? Who is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the ALP? What are the expectations around differentiation for gifted learners? Grouping philosophy around cluster grouping or cross-grade instruction? Content acceleration procedures? How will you ensure that teachers have the skills and materials they need to work with gifted learners in their classroom?

Data

Data collection and understanding must be ongoing and multiple sources should be explored. One test is simply a moment in time and may not provide a clear picture of student achievement. Answering the questions “Who are your gifted students?” and “How are they doing?” requires a focus on disaggregating data from both qualitative and quantitative measures.

School view data lab

- You may have several sources available for gathering data. The important piece to keep in mind is to disaggregate your gifted population to look at sub-group achievement, disparities and growth trends. On the Principal’s Corner homepage there is a step-by-step guide available to walk through the process of looking at gifted general, gifted specific, free and reduced, minority, gender and level (Elem/MS/HS). It is called, *GT Data Folder Instructions*. You may further wish to break it down by grade level and teacher.
- Buildings with a small “n” (<20), you will need to either hand tally or get site information from your district data person.

Move up/Keep up/Catch up

- The Colorado Department of Education Office of Gifted Education website provides targets on the [State Expectations-Specific for Student Performance](#) link to assist you in analyzing your student growth when compared to the state. Set targets for gifted students’ performance that meet or exceed state expectations that facilitate gifted students’ achievement and growth in your building.
- CDE also provides the [Basic Ideas](#) of Catch up, Keep up, and Move up for looking at student growth goals that are familiar to administrators:

CDE takes students’ current growth percentile and uses the Colorado Growth Model to determine if that growth is enough for them to be

- *Catching up (if the student was in the unsatisfactory or Partially Proficient category the previous year) to the Proficient level within 3 years or by 10th grade*

- *Keeping Up (if the student was in the Proficient or Advanced category the previous year) at the Proficient level within 3 years or by 10th grade*
- *Moving Up (if the student was in the Proficient category the previous year) to the Advanced level within 3 years or by 10th grade*

For gifted students we want to focus on Moving Up to the Advanced level those who are at the Proficient level in their areas of strength, and keeping those students at Advanced once they are there. This is the same use of the term “Move Up’ that is used for all students, but it is a different way to look at “Keep Up.”

Accountability

States, districts, buildings, and classrooms are accountable for the learning growth of ALL students. Accountability depends on appropriate measurement. The most meaningful measure is *NOT* the percentage of students demonstrating a minimal level of proficiency, but rather the number of students who demonstrate a year or more of growth as a result of their educational programming. Gifted learners have been found to experience 18-21 months of academic growth in 12 months when provided appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction ("NAGC Position Statements-Grouping"). When looking at data trends, analyze for root cause to formulate a clear picture of what is happening to better facilitate future planning.

Alternative Tests

Gifted student growth cannot be measured on many assessments. When selecting an assessment, it is important that gifted learners have the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge above grade level for the baseline or later measurements. Measures constructed using a vertical scale of continuous progress over multiple grade levels are needed to assess growth for individual students. Tests which allow for above grade or off-level testing can be effective in demonstrating higher level performance or the appropriateness of above-grade placement for instruction.

C-GER

Colorado Gifted Education Review (C-GER) is a component of the Accreditation and Accountability AUs have to the state of Colorado through ECEA Rules Monitoring section 12.07. It is a collaborative process between CDE and the AU to assist AUs with prioritizing areas for improvement in their gifted and talented programming. It includes both a desk audit and site visit with school visits included to gather authentic evidence to support accomplishments. C-GERs occur in 4-year cycles.

UIP—Program Addendum

Every AU is required to complete a UIP Addendum for Gifted Education. You may be asked to provide data breakdowns for your school by the district/BOCES, or be involved in conversations around gifted student achievement and growth. It is important that you take the time to break down your campus data and really know how this sub-group is performing. By doing this you will better be able to look at programming impact and make decisions for the future.



- Professional Development
- Educator Effectiveness

Professional Development

Because most programming for gifted students is done within the regular classroom, it is important to have strong, impactful professional development opportunities that improve and enhance the skills, knowledge and expertise of teachers and other personnel who provide instruction and other supportive services to gifted students. Effective professional development may include in-service workshops, materials and resources, co-teaching, modeling, and strategic lesson planning amongst grade level/subject team. All teachers need to build their capacity to effectively differentiate instruction.

The Office of Gifted Education at the Colorado Department of Education is continually striving to create professional development opportunities for educators across the state. Currently there are seven [Addressing the Needs of Gifted Students online modules](#) that teachers can take on the subjects of: Developing Mathematical Thinking in Gifted Learners, Differentiating for Gifted Learners, The Gifted Learner, Creativity, Affective Guidance, Raising Thinking Skills and Reading for the Gifted Learner.

[Twice exceptional training](#) is offered throughout the year and across the state as well. [Gifted Education Tuesdays](#) are an additional opportunity for educators to gather for 90 minutes each month to explore gifted education topics. These sessions are also available for district download to use on their own timeline.

Base section on data analysis of what the gifted students need from their teachers and what is observed in walkthroughs. Are students low in analytical skills? Do teachers ask higher level questions? Make sure needs are what drive the trainings.

Educator Effectiveness

Teacher Accountability Basics

What should educational leaders look for when evaluating teacher effectiveness with gifted learners? Professional evaluations call for objective measures related to student growth as well as additional evidence of effective teaching and professional practice. In Colorado, the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards are built upon the premise that excellent teaching is vital to every student's success. These standards are reflective of the expectations for teachers of gifted students. The descriptors in the accomplished and exemplary sectors of the rubrics are what would be expected of teachers instructing gifted students. When visiting classrooms where teachers are teaching gifted students, these descriptors should be visible and in practice.

In addition, keep in mind the following points from National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) in a document entitled, "[Accountability, Assessment, and Learning Growth for Gifted Students](#)" about teacher accountability specific to instruction and learning for gifted students:

- Pre-tests for specific goals, for units, or for a year provide an accurate measure of a student's knowledge of upcoming content and skills. These pretests establish the baseline for growth and the instructional level needed.
- Post-tests aligned with the pre-tests provide evidence that the change in student performance can be attributed to instruction.
- Professional practice includes the use of student data to plan instruction. Data provide evidence of the need for and planning of differentiation.
- A key component of effective teaching for GT students is effective differentiation
- Professional practice includes participation in professional development for meeting the needs of students with high abilities.
- Classroom observation of gifted student instruction includes assessment of specific elements of instruction that are effective for gifted learners. There are several documents located in the Principal Corner that may be useful: Assessing Classroom Differentiation, SOAR, and DPS Framework for Effective Teaching. All of these documents contain useful reference information for a building principal's task of evaluating teachers of the gifted.

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Gifted children continue to be an underserved population in our schools. Leadership in gifted education is a role that educators, parents and students must embrace. - The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids (Galbraith, 2013)