



March 12, 2011

Gifted and Talented State Advisory Committee
c/o Colorado Department of Education
Gifted Education Unit, Student Support Services
1560 Broadway, Suite 1175
Denver, CO 80203-1799

State Council for Educator Effectiveness
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear State Council for Educator Effectiveness:

The Colorado State Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education (SAC) was created by the Colorado State Board of Education in 1984 to assist in the improvement of gifted education. As the State Council on Educator Effectiveness considers criteria in the creation of standards of teacher effectiveness, SAC recommends that the special needs of gifted students be kept in mind, not only because these students needs are often overlooked, but also because gifted programming provides effective teaching using “best practices”. We urge you to include provisions for teachers on how to work successfully with exceptional students, including gifted, in the creation of performance evaluations, professional development, and pre-service educator preparation.

For example, one idea from The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), in their programming criterion, lists as a minimum standard that “Gifted learners must be assessed for proficiency in basic skills and knowledge and provided with alternative challenging education opportunities when proficiency is demonstrated.” This seems to be a guiding principle that would benefit all students, not only gifted, and would be important when assessing teacher effectiveness. Successfully differentiating the curriculum is integral in meeting the needs of all students. A 2008 Fordham Institute report found that, while low-achieving students have made gains under NCLB, advanced learners are “languishing” and that teachers need to spend the bulk of their time with struggling students even though they know that others in the classroom need attention as well.

Gifted students may not show growth commensurate with their abilities, so allowing educators the opportunity to use assessments that can be given out of level or that have high ceilings such as NWEA will help them show adequate growth for their high ability students. It is very encouraging to see that the committee is considering multiple ways of showing student growth. According to the Growth Model Position Statement from the Council of Exceptional Children -The Association for the Gifted (CEC/TAG), “Growth models always need to be designed in a way that encourages mastery of grade-level content and fosters growth above grade-level.”

It might be helpful to know that Gifted Education has national standards for all teachers in regards to the instruction of gifted students.

All teachers should:

1. Understand the issues in definitions, theories, and identification of gifted and talented students, including those from diverse backgrounds;
2. Recognize the learning differences, developmental milestones, and cognitive/affective characteristics of gifted and talented students, including those from diverse backgrounds, and identify their related academic and social-emotional needs; and
3. Understand, plan, and implement a range of evidence-based strategies to assess gifted and talented students, to differentiate instruction, content, and assignments for them (including the use of higher-order critical and creative-thinking skills), and to nominate them for advanced programs or acceleration as needed.

If any additional information would be useful as the committee's work on educator effectiveness continues, SAC would be pleased to provide the group with assistance in this important and far-reaching task. Our committee is eager to provide support to the new teacher effectiveness guidelines.

Sincerely,

Diane Cassidy

SAC President

Katie Crenshaw

SAC Vice-President