

## Findings from William and Mary G/T Study

(During the 2003-2004 school year, the State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Gifted/Talented, will begin a G/T Task Force, as recommended in the College of William and Mary study.) The purpose of the following section is to share findings, commendations and recommendations from the study conducted by the College of William and Mary. As mentioned in previous memorandums, the 2001 Legislature awarded the SDE an extra \$100,000 to fund an external evaluation addressing the G/T Training Grant and Mandate. The study was conducted between August 2001 and April 2002. The data from the study revealed that there was a significant and positive impact of the state-sponsored gifted training grant on instructional behaviors with gifted students in Idaho.

### Findings (sample)

- Classroom observations revealed that teachers who received training registered higher percentages of expected behaviors than those who did not in 77.5% of the items across the nine categories. Teachers who received training demonstrated more frequently (over 15% difference) exemplary behaviors in curriculum planning, expectations for learners, accommodation for differences through material selections or task assignments, delivering curriculum by teaching key concepts, emphasizing higher level thinking skills, brainstorming ideas for problem solving, and providing opportunities for students to think meta-cognitively. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between teachers' total scores on the observation instruments and the number of years over which they had received training.
- Gifted students are under-identified in the majority of school districts, given the national incidence rates (5-15%).
- Staff development opportunities in gifted education appear to be limited in number and focus. Over 70% of the districts noted that over half of their personnel still need training in gifted education.
- The identification process does not focus sufficiently on strategies to identify under-represented groups, including minority students (especially Hispanic), twice exceptional, ESL, and underachievers. Special program opportunities are not in place for these learners either.
- Pullout programs dominate at the elementary level and are facilitator-driven with no set curriculum. While the program is perceived as challenging by students and parents, its fragmented nature creates a concern among stakeholders.
- Curriculum development for gifted students is needed at all levels of schooling, with a clear set of goals and outcomes specified. Differentiation of instruction is limited. Comprehensive articulation of curriculum offerings across domains is

also currently lacking.

- Communication with parents was found to be problematic on most gifted program issues. Very few formal parent education programs are available.

#### Commendations

- The state, through its mandate and state plan mechanisms, has clearly recognized the needs of gifted students and the extent to which they are underserved.
- The State Department leadership, in developing state plan requirements and targeting state funds for training, has been proactive in providing a catalyst for local program development.
- Technical assistance to districts provided by the state coordinator has also been well received.
- The passion and commitment of Idaho gifted coordinators and facilitators was seen as truly remarkable by the evaluation team.

#### Policy recommendations:

- Develop state policies and procedures regarding acceleration, pacing and continuous progress across the K-12 spectrum as they would affect gifted program implementation at the local level.
- Develop statewide counseling and guidance policies and procedures for all gifted learners at elementary, middle, and high school levels.

#### Curriculum recommendations.

- Develop curriculum frameworks and scope and sequence documents at each program level and across K-12 that demonstrates adaptations in addressing the general education state standards for gifted learners. Align all current and future gifted curriculum work with the general education state standards so that neither duplication of coverage nor learning gaps occur..
- Develop a statewide effort on curriculum development for gifted learners, blending teacher-developed curriculum approaches with extant exemplary curriculum for gifted learners where available to form a richer base for differentiating instruction. .
- Strengthen secondary options (Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment opportunities) at both middle and high school levels by providing more options and special classes.

#### Identification Recommendations:

- Encourage districts to identify and program for gifted populations by category. Appropriate services to intellectual, academic, and creative students should be well developed before undertaking new initiatives in other categories of giftedness.
- Continue to address the need to identify under-represented groups in the state for gifted programs, including Hispanic students.

#### Professional/Parent Development Recommendations:

- Develop a statewide plan for training grant emphases to focus on weaker areas found in the classroom observation data.
- Develop a statewide parent education program that focuses on strengthening parent understanding of the gifted program via written materials and special workshops.

#### Evaluation Recommendations:

- Develop a state system of annual program evaluation that routinely collects evidence of student growth in gifted programs at each stage of development, possibly at the end of grades 3, 6, 8, and 12.

#### Resource and Funding Recommendations:

- Provide a state funding mechanism that allows local districts flexibility in how gifted education dollars are expended within the parameters of gifted program development guidelines.
- Provide full time program leadership in all districts.
- Provide a “fair share” of funding for the gifted program in order to address the disparities between and among programs at the state level with similar outcomes.

#### Overall Recommendations:

- Convene a statewide task force to review the evaluation report in order to develop a coherent plan of action that complements overall program recommendations.

#### Summary

While the results from the external study reveal a significant and positive impact

of the state-sponsored gifted training grant on instructional behaviors with gifted students in Idaho, much work is still needed. Efforts will be made this fall to prioritize the recommendations and generate possible actions to take. The entire William and Mary study can be viewed by clicking on the “research” category on the G/T homepage (<http://www.sde.state.id.us/GiftedTalented>). The G/T study is the first entry.