
Expanding the Federal Role in Gifted and Talented Education

Background

The federal role in gifted education has remained limited and for a time, nonexistent. Yet, an investment in America's most advanced learners is one of the best strategies to help the United States remain globally competitive. By neglecting the educational needs of these students, we put our country at a disadvantage to effectively compete in the global marketplace and deprive them of an appropriate, challenging education.

Dubbed the "quiet crisis" by former Secretary of Education Richard Riley in 1993, the availability of gifted education still varies dramatically between and within states, leaving many of our nation's schools under-prepared to meet the unique learning needs of three million gifted learners. In fact, recent research has exposed an increasing achievement gap between high-performing disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers. In fact, this achievement gap among high-performing students is growing at a faster rate than that of like students at the opposite end of the achievement spectrum. Unfortunately, the federal government has done little to properly address the educational needs of students with gifts and talents.

Currently, only one small federal program is dedicated to identifying and serving students with gifts and talents, the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act. With less than three cents out of every \$100 of the federal K-12 education budget being devoted to our nation's gifted and talented students in 2007, the Javits program has been chronically under-funded at levels too low to fully achieve the nationwide goal of improving gifted education in America.

In April 2008, 53 Representatives and 28 Senators sent a letter to leaders of the House/Senate Appropriations Committees requesting a restoration of funding for the Javits program to its FY 2005 level of \$11.25 million. This letter had the endorsement of the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for Gifted Children.

CEC urges Congress to address the educational needs of students with gifts and talents as it considers upcoming legislation impacting our nation's schools and teacher preparation programs.

CEC's Recommended Congressional Action

- Support the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act, the only federal program dedicated to identifying and serving students with gifts and talents by:
 - Co-sponsoring the Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 2007(H.R. 2925), which would create a formula grant to states for the development/expansion of gifted and talented programs.
- Support language in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that:
 - Modifies language in the Teacher Development section (sec. 206(a) in the House version and sec. 205(a) in the Senate version) to include gifted and talented teachers in the list of shortage areas. While discussing this amendment offered by Sen. Burr, Sen. Enzi commented on the need for today's teachers to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.
 - Expands the definition of "teaching skills" to also focus on the identification of students with specific learning needs particularly those who are gifted and talented.
 - Includes a requirement for all Title II Partnership Grant recipients to make changes to their preparatory programs to train teachers in meeting the needs of students with gifts and talents.

CEC Contact Information

For more information, please contact Kim Hymes, Director of Policy and Advocacy Services at kimh@cec.sped.org or 1-800-224-6830 ext. 441.