

## **TALENT Act Charts New Course for Gifted, High-Ability Students**

### ***CEC-endorsed bill focuses on teacher development, closing the “excellence gap”***

**Arlington, Va., March 13, 2013** — A bipartisan bill introduced Monday in the U.S. Senate shifts the education debate in Washington, D.C., toward a focus on gifted, high-ability students—particularly those from low-income or minority backgrounds—who have been overshadowed in a federal educational system that concentrates on its struggling, low-achieving students.

Special and gifted educators are applauding the bill, the **To Aid Gifted and High-Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation’s Teachers (TALENT) Act**, which, by amending the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, would provide teachers, school districts, and states with the support needed to better identify and serve students with gifts and talents through increased professional development, addressing the national Excellence Gap, public transparency of student achievement data, and the development and dissemination of evidence-based best practices in gifted education.

“CEC is pleased to endorse the TALENT Act, legislation that will impact millions of students and teachers nationwide,” said **Dr. Christy A. Chambers**, President of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

“Too often, our society accepts the myths about students with gifts and talents, including that they will do fine on their own, even when research tells us the opposite is true,” Chambers said. “The TALENT Act serves as a wake-up call to our nation and our educational system to recognize this forgotten student population.”

The TALENT Act, introduced by **Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa)**, **Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.)** and **Sen. Robert P. Casey (D-Pa.)**, expands the focus of the reauthorization of ESEA.

The TALENT Act meets the needs of gifted and high-ability students in four key areas:

- 1. Supporting Educator Development to Ensure Academic Growth for High-Ability Students:** The TALENT Act recognizes the critical role of teachers as the catalyst for learning and academic growth and as such seeks to expand professional development opportunities in gifted education pedagogy for teachers nationwide.

- 2. Confronting and Addressing the National Excellence Gap:** The TALENT Act responds directly to recent research demonstrating a growing “excellence gap” at the top achievement levels between students from low-income or minority backgrounds and their more advantaged peers by emphasizing opportunities for students who are economically disadvantaged, English language learners, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from rural areas throughout the bill.
- 3. Providing Public Transparency of Student Achievement Data:** The TALENT Act emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the highest performance levels in the accountability system, with an emphasis on closing the “excellence gap”.
- 4. Continuing Research and Dissemination on Best Practices in Gifted Education** The TALENT Act recognizes that the expanding research in gifted education is the foundation for the success of our nation’s students with gifts and talents.

“America cannot afford to ignore the needs of its brightest students and, by doing so, squander their potential,” said **Sen. Grassley**. “Our legislation would make modifications to federal education policy in order to develop and encourage the high achievement that’s possible for so many gifted and talented students. By doing so, it would help to enhance the future prosperity of our nation.”

**Sen. Casey** concurred. “We must train our teachers to identify and encourage gifted and high-ability learners, particularly in underserved communities,” **Sen. Casey** said. “The potential of our children must be maximized for their sake and for the sake of our long-term economic growth.”

Joining her colleagues, **Sen. Mikulski** said, “As our nation continues to look at how best to create jobs, how best to sustain jobs and how best to support high-paying jobs, we must look at how best to educate the children who will make up tomorrow’s workforce. High-ability and high-potential students need to be engaged and held to high standards. By educating and preparing our students well, we will ensure that our nation’s brightest minds will get brighter each year and will not stagnate.”

Although there are approximately 3 million students identified as having gifts and talents in the United States, recent studies indicate an underrepresentation of students from low-income or minority backgrounds as top performers on statewide assessments and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also called the Nation’s Report Card. Known as the “excellence gap,” this achievement discrepancy typically carries through a student’s educational career and beyond.

"The absence of a national message that gifted and talented children are important to our nation's future has been deplorable," said **Julia Link Roberts**, president of The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a special interest division of CEC.

"The TALENT Act introduces the need for providing appropriately challenging educational opportunities for our nation's gifted children. Gifted education has value for education and economic development for our country," said Roberts, who is also the executive director of the Center for Gifted Studies and The Carol Martin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science located at Western Kentucky University.

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*CEC is an international community of educators who are the voice and vision of special and gifted education. CEC's mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with exceptionalities and their families through professional excellence and advocacy.*

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