



# Responding to the Needs of Elementary Level Gifted Learners







*A Position Statement of the  
Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented (MEGT)*

## Purpose

Elementary gifted learners span all socioeconomic, racial and cultural groups. Schools must nurture and support the emerging and demonstrated talents of these unique learners as they occur. The purpose of this position paper is to acknowledge the specialized academic and affective needs of elementary gifted students and to advocate for their right to appropriate daily instruction and services. Our goal is to provide a rationale for a continuum of intentional and consistent programming.


## Issues

Research indicates that the most capable learners are often the ones who learn the least in the classroom. From kindergarten through grade 5, the gifted learner enters the classroom with advanced knowledge and an ability to learn at a more rapid rate than age peers but may be the student least challenged. Gifted elementary grade students differ from their age mates in three significant areas; 1) pace of learning, 2) depth of understanding, and 3) interests. In many school districts, the lack of support for gifted education at all levels of leadership has resulted in the stagnation of programming designed to meet the needs of gifted students. Main areas of concern about the education of elementary gifted students are:


-  *Academic capacity within a classroom may range from three to five years or more, making it difficult to tailor learning to individual needs.*
-  *The insufficient use of appropriate grouping for instruction leads to “one size fits all” education.*
-  *The significant differentiation of instruction needed to enhance advanced learning may not be taking place.*
-  *Districts may not be utilizing appropriately challenging curriculum which would maximize gifted students’ potential.*
-  *Professional development activities designed to enable teachers to recognize the needs of their gifted students might not be occurring.*
-  *The educational community may not recognize that they share responsibility for the education of gifted students.*

## Recommendations

**Statement:** Elementary gifted learners have the right to an appropriately challenging curriculum.


-  **Recommendation:** Content of curriculum should be driven by clear concepts and principles. Curriculum should include interdisciplinary themes, complex ideas, and abstract concepts.

**Statement:** Gifted students have distinctive needs. They have the right to be taught by instructors with the specialized knowledge, training, and tools to meet those needs.


-  **Recommendation:** Effective instruction of gifted students requires training in gifted education, monetary funding, and administrative support.



**Statement: Meeting the needs of gifted students is a shared responsibility, whatever the educational setting.**

 **Recommendation:** The classroom teacher and gifted specialist need to work cooperatively in planning strategies and instruction to meet the needs of the gifted student.


**Statement: Much of the evidence to date points to the absence of appropriate curriculum and instruction for gifted student in the regular heterogeneous classroom.**

 **Recommendation:** Schools should use a multiple programming approach, one where a constellation of programs is available in which students can participate based on their abilities, needs and interests. Some of these options are: clustering, mentorships, compacting, grouping, flexible pacing, enrichment clusters, send-out classes, etc.

**Statement: Most gifted learners spend the vast majority of their day in a regular classroom. Research shows that little or no differentiation is taking place. Gifted learners require purposeful differentiated instruction throughout the school day.**

 **Recommendation:** Schools should provide opportunities for pre-testing, compacting, acceleration, higher-level questioning and complex curriculum.

**Statement: The proven instructional strategy of grouping students allows for more appropriate, rapid and advanced instruction that matches the rapidly developing skills and capabilities of gifted students.**

 **Recommendation:** Teachers need opportunities to learn about and employ appropriate flexible grouping strategies.

## References

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