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The Council For Exceptional Children

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# Developing Programs For The Gifted and Talented

*Produced for the Office of Gifted and Talented, US Office of Education,  
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare by The Council for Exceptional Children.*

The success of programs for the gifted and talented student depends on sound development, efficient identification, and exemplary curriculum. Where there are a number of positive program alternatives there is no need to become locked into a single design. Considerations should be given to all available program formats before deciding which single or combination of alternatives to employ.

## How do I begin?

The first step in program development is planning. Planning is usually divided into three components:

- *Needs analysis.* Because every community represents a unique constellation of factors, an analysis of local needs should be conducted. This analysis should consider all aspects of the community and educational system to determine a realistic base for the size and scope of the program. Often, the availability of funds and physical facilities will have a bearing on the dimensions of the program. A team representing a cross section of the community should conduct this assignment.

- *Target group.* The needs assessment may also provide important information on the target group for the program. A broadened concept of giftedness has been established by the US Commissioner of Education in the 1971 Report to Congress on the Education of the Gifted and Talented. This definition cites six categories of giftedness: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability.

- *Identification.* Multiple criteria should be used to identify students in the target category and should include both standardized and subjective assessments. For the intellectually gifted, measures on achievement and intelligence tests are appropriate with scores falling

in the upper 2 to 3 percentiles of national or local norms. High creative producers can be identified through the use of tests of creativity and creativity checklists. Judgments by professional personnel using more subjective instruments should be combined with standardized assessments of either intellectual or creative ability. Parents and other adults knowledgeable about a child's performance outside the school should be consulted. In the creative arts, potential or demonstrated ability can be assessed through the judgments of experts in the field through interviews and/or auditions. In selecting students for a gifted and talented program, the students' areas of interest, ability, and insight should be considered.

## What kind of staff should be employed?

The selection of staff is a key factor in the success of the program. Desirable characteristics for teachers of the gifted and talented student include demonstrated competency in general educational techniques such as development of individualized curricula, utilization of innovative techniques, use of strategies which encourage high levels of thinking, extensive knowledge of their subject area(s), along with such personal characteristics as self confidence, security, understanding, and a desire to work with gifted and talented students. Though often overlooked, stamina is a highly desirable factor, too.

## What objectives are appropriate for a program for the gifted and talented student?

Objectives for the program should be established at several levels of the design. These levels involve the program, the teacher, and the pupil. Defining objectives is an essential part of program development, as they often form the basis of evaluation. Program objectives

relate to the target population and anticipated development. Teacher objectives integrate more general program objectives with the specific needs of the students while tapping personal teacher strengths and interests. Pupil objectives are the vehicle through which the program goals are achieved.

## What program designs are commonly employed?

- *Centralized.* This is a regional concept in programming which can serve the specialized needs of the gifted and talented student from a number of different school districts. A regional resource center is usually established which offers a wide range of facilities and a staff of experts in gifted and talented education. The center can specialize in one specific area of giftedness or provide options in many academic or talent categories.

- *Cluster.* This also features a resource center, but offers services to students from several schools within a given district or from several districts. It may serve elementary students, secondary students, or a combination of the two.

- *Decentralized.* The decentralized design offers programming for the gifted and talented within the local school and an itinerant teacher approach is often employed. This design may incorporate several approaches to programming for the gifted and talented by making a teacher of the gifted available to consult with regular classroom teachers or to conduct demonstration lessons.

## What resources exist for program planning?

All areas are rich in resources. Each district should investigate those resources available for use with its program. Community resources within an area may encompass all of the natural environ-

ment and urban centers. Specialists in a number of occupations may reside in your community. Members of the local school staff may also constitute valuable human resources.

#### How is curriculum for the program determined?

The curriculum for a gifted and talented program is not a road map for the teacher to follow without making any detours. It is unique in every community and with every target population. However, there are some common elements upon which the curriculum should be based. It should focus on the development of skills which are beyond the scope of the regular classroom, and content should be in the student's area of interest. Subject matter should be studied in its appropriate context, using the techniques of the field rather than engaging in an abstract exercise. It should also focus on the conceptual themes of important ideas rather than on the mere collection of new facts. Finally, the curriculum should include options which offer the student the freedom to explore.

#### How are programs for the gifted and talented evaluated?

Evaluation should be conducted at each program level where objectives were established. The objectives should be written in measurable terms or should cite the instrument which will be used in the evaluation. Both cognitive and affective assessments should be made in order to view the program from several perspectives. Evaluation can be *formative*, where data is collected throughout the operation of the program in order to point out areas which may need modifications, or *summative*, which takes place at the conclusion of the program to determine end results. A combination of both types has proved to be most successful.

#### RESOURCES

For more information concerning programming for the gifted and talented student, contact the state consultant for the gifted and talented in your state department of education or write:

The Council for  
Exceptional Children  
1920 Association Drive  
Reston, VA 22091

Additional reading in the area which may be helpful:

Boston, Bruce O. *Gifted and talented: Developing elementary and secondary school programs*. Reston, VA: The Council For Exceptional Children, 1975.

Ellis, Arthur S., & Ratner, Ronald, *Decision-making man*. St. Charles, IL: Aron Communications, 1976.

Kaplan, Sandra N. *Providing programs for the gifted and talented*. Reston, VA: The Council For Exceptional Children, 1975.

Mager, Robert F. *Preparing instructional objectives*. Belmont, CA: Lear Siegler, Inc./Fearon Publishers, 1975.

Maker, June C. *Providing programs for the gifted-handicapped*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1977.

Martinson, Ruth A. *The identification of the gifted and talented*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children, 1975.

Prepared by Lynne D. Niro, Hamden, Connecticut.

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**MICHIGAN READING ASSOCIATION**

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