

## **ADD-ON ENDORSEMENT POSITION STATEMENT**

Maryland PTA and its 215,000 members seek and support requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to add an Add-on Endorsement for Gifted and Talented Education to the “*highly qualified*” teacher standards under Special Areas: Special Education, ESOL, and Reading.

Maryland PTA urges MSDE to add this endorsement to ensure the selection of appropriate teachers for gifted and talented students is established and clearly articulated. This includes increasing knowledge regarding developmental patterns and learning styles of the gifted and appropriate program provisions to necessitate ongoing, high quality staff development as a component of a successful Gifted and Talented program.

## **BACKGROUND BRIEF**

One of the missions of PTA is to support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children. National PTA has existing Position Statements & Resolutions on Teacher Quality, Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Instructional Programs for the Gifted and Talented.

In addition, The *Maryland PTA Legislative Platform supports* the Bridge to Excellence Act to ensure that “*all students benefit from adequate educational resources; that each school system receives an equitable share of state funding; and that school systems are held accountable for individual student achievement. Full funding will enable schools to provide much needed improvements such as; reducing class sizes, eliminating achievement gaps; providing quality music, art, career technology, **gifted & talented programs**; providing full-day kindergarten, and pre-kindergarten programs to build the foundation for future learning.*”

Gifted children are defined in Federal and Maryland state law as a special needs population requiring different or additional resources. Many people mistakenly believe that gifted children can learn things on their own and do not need any special programming. However, these children have definite psycho-social as well as educational needs. In addition, many gifted children are never identified in minority and economically deprived populations and/or underserved.

A strong Gifted and Talented Program includes a differentiated curriculum for the gifted learner, regular classroom curricula and instruction that can be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners. It also must be implemented by “*highly qualified*” professionals in identification and instruction of Gifted Learners with time and other support for the preparation and development of the differentiated education plans, materials, and curriculum. Some states including Maryland have mandated criteria for teachers who teach gifted children.

Current national educational policy calls for every teacher to be highly qualified in his or her field. This means that a teacher cannot teach in an area, which he or she is not certified. In terms of teachers of the gifted, we need highly qualified, well-prepared teachers.

Being well prepared focuses on the unique and special skills necessary to meet the needs of a special and unique population, such as learners who demonstrate unusual potential. Teachers certified in Gifted Education, are equipped to deliver high levels of qualitative differentiated curriculum on a consistent and systemic basis. The absence of teacher training components sends the message that any teacher can effectively meet the need of a gifted population.

To be a “highly qualified” teacher *for Special Area programs in Maryland*, all teachers in any core academic subject area must:

- Hold at least a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education (IHE);
- Hold a valid Standard Professional Certificate or Advanced Professional Certificate or Resident Teacher Certificate in the subject area they are teaching; and
- Satisfy the requirements associated with specific teaching levels and experience  
Special Areas: Special Education, ESOL, and/or Reading

**An additional advantage of a state mandated add-on endorsement certificate for gifted education is that teachers who teach gifted children generally teach all children. Recent studies have indicated that most children can benefit from the strategies used to teach gifted children. Research done notably by William and Mary College, *Center for Gifted Education* in the “*Project Athena*” study, and University of Connecticut, *National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT)* indicates that all children benefit from teachers who are trained and supported long term in the technology, skills, strategies and multi-disciplinary approach that Gifted and Talented education requires.**

Many states have specific requirements for teacher preparedness for Gifted and Talented Education. Twenty-three (23) States required that teachers working in specialized programs for gifted and talented have taken graduate courses or received a teaching certificate in gifted education. State requirements for a certification ranged from six credit hours (*Arizona and South Carolina*) to 24 credit hours (*Colorado*).

The National Associations of Gifted Children (NAGC) states, “*Gifted learners are best served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education, expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, and involvement in ongoing professional development*”. Teacher Certification with an “*add-on endorsement for gifted education*” earned by teachers would help to ensure that gifted learners’ needs are met.

Maryland currently has no mandate for the certification or endorsement of highly qualified teachers or administrators of Gifted and Talented students despite recommendations based on National Standards for Gifted and Talented Programs. However, Maryland law (§ 8-204) and regulations states-“*To the extent funds are provided in the State budget or are available from other sources, the State Board shall provide guidance, consultative and technical assistance, and fiscal support for programs that include Teacher training to incorporate instruction in methods and techniques that are designed to enable teachers to identify and teach gifted and talented student*”.

***In 2001, Governor’s Commission On Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland*** recommended to the State Board, that: “*teachers regularly assigned to instruct students identified as gifted and talented learners obtain an endorsement as a Teacher of Gifted and Talented Students. Supervisors/coordinators assigned to supervise or assist educators assigned to work specifically with gifted and talented students and/or to advise administrators or board personnel obtain an endorsement.*”

The Maryland State Board of Education accepted this recommendation in 2002, but MSDE has not submitted COMAR regulations to require an Add-on Endorsement for teachers of Gifted and Talented students similar to existing requirements for Special Education, ESOL and Reading teachers. MSDE is working with the state Advisory Council for Gifted & Talented Education (MDPTA is represented) along with local school systems and higher education representatives to develop COMAR language for MD State Board approval.

An “***add-on endorsement certificate for gifted education***” will provide schools with “highly qualified” teachers in gifted education, benefiting the gifted population and raising the level of expectation for all students.

Approved by the Maryland PTA Board of Directors, July 20, 2007

## **Resources & Bibliography**

- I. **National PTA Position Statement - Teacher Quality** - *To help students improve their achievement levels, teachers must increase their own knowledge and skills and learn new teaching methods. Teachers need ongoing content instruction, mechanisms to network and share information with their peers, and opportunities to form partnerships with colleges, teacher organizations, parents, and other experts in their field. New teachers—especially those working in urban areas—have additional needs that must be addressed to ensure that they are prepared to enter the classroom and do not quickly become discouraged and leave the profession.*

*Recognizing that good teachers are essential to ensuring student academic success, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) sets stringent new teacher-quality requirements. In addition, Title II of the Higher Education Act focuses on teacher quality and authorizes funds for programs that promote teacher and principal training, recruitment, and retention. Title II also requires that professional development activities include training on how to involve parents in their children’s education.*

Full Text at: [http://www.pta.org/ia\\_pta\\_positions\\_1117831599937.htm](http://www.pta.org/ia_pta_positions_1117831599937.htm)

- II. **NPTA Resolution - Education for Gifted and Talented Children** - Resolved, That the National PTA endorse and support educational programs in the public schools for those children identified as gifted and talented; and be it further Resolved, That the National PTA prepare materials that parents might use in local school districts to encourage schools to pursue identification of gifted and talented children and to realize their responsibilities to provide educational programs for these particular youngsters. **Adopted:** 1979
- III. **NPTA Resolution - Instructional Programs for the Gifted and Talented** - Resolved, That the National PTA encourage state PTAs to urge their state education departments and the Department of Defense to require undergraduate teacher training so that prospective teachers recognize and understand the unique characteristics and needs of gifted and talented children; and be it further Resolved, That the National PTA encourage state PTAs to urge their state education departments and the Department of Defense to prepare leadership and pedagogical (of, relating to, or befitting a pedagogue or teacher) materials for use with the gifted and talented and urge that these be incorporated into in-service programs for all teachers. **Adopted:** 1988
- IV. **Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2001, Senate Bill 856, Section 5-401**, Pages 59-61 <http://mlis.state.md.us/PDF-Documents/2002rs/bills/sb/sb0856e.PDF>
- V. **Maryland Annotated Code of Maryland, State COMAR Regulations, and Criteria for Gifted and Talented Education, Programs and Students** - <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/giftedtalented/>
- VI. **MSDE Certification -What is the general definition of a “highly qualified” teacher?** - [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/esea/docs/TQ\\_Regulations/general\\_definition.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/esea/docs/TQ_Regulations/general_definition.htm)
- VII. **Special Areas: Special Education, ESOL, and Reading – Highly Qualified Standards, Certification and Add-on Endorsement Guidelines** [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/esea/docs/tq\\_regulations/special\\_areas.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/programs/esea/docs/tq_regulations/special_areas.htm)
- VIII. **(Maryland) Governor’s Commission on Funding and Services for Gifted and Talented Student Education in Maryland** - We make three main points: Far too many Maryland gifted and talented children are overlooked and underserved; Maryland needs consistency in standards and quality for defining, identifying, and teaching gifted and talented children throughout the State and To guarantee a fair and equitable framework for addressing these first two points in local schools, the State needs to increase its financial assistance, not astronomically, but significantly. <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/00001793/qlvosckzyuvckcbokbvrjutkvnolgk/GovernorsCommissionReport.pdf>
- IX. **Underachievement Among Gifted Minority Students: Problems and Promises** - Eric Digest #E544, Authors: Donna Y. Ford & Antoinette Thomas - <http://www.nagc.org/CMS400Min/index.aspx?id=156>
- X. **NAGC – Supporting the Needs of High Potential Learners** - <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=31>
- XI. **Project Athena -The College of William and Mary, Center for Gifted Education** - Co-Principal Investigators: Dr. Bruce Bracken, & Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska - <http://cfge.wm.edu/athena/#products>

This project will demonstrate how the development and implementation of high-powered, interdisciplinary curriculum in language arts can raise the threshold of performance in economically disadvantaged high ability learners in the regular classroom as well as other educational settings. By setting high standards for curriculum content and instructional pedagogy and by working with administrators, teachers, students, and parents to embed

these expectations in classroom practice with supporting structures in the home and community, this project will advance the state of the art of gifted education