

CALL TO ACTION

Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education *Changing Mindsets, Policies, and Practices*

Increase access and opportunities to increase achievement and growth for all

In gifted education, we seek to meet the advanced learning needs of students all day, every day. However, inequities rooted in larger society plague education, often leading to inequitable representation in gifted programs. Although schools cannot fix larger societal inequities on their own, we can ensure that our actions do not compound these inequities. Our goal must be to promote both equity and excellence. We must take actions to increase access and opportunity, which increases achievement and growth for all. We must assure that student racial, ethnic, economic, or other demographic factors do not reduce their likelihood of access and successful participation in advanced programming. By realizing equity and excellence in gifted/advanced education, schools will help all students reach their full potential and expand excellence.

What is Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education? What is it not?

- It is not about 'status' or sacrificing needs of one group of students for another; *it is meeting the needs of all students.*
- It is not seeing students at-risk; *it is seeing students at-potential.**
- It is not having multiple hoops to show a student's perfection in everything; *it is about multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their potential.*
- It is not providing the same services to all; *it is adjusting services based on demonstrated needs of students.*
- It is not about all students receiving the same content at the same time at the same pace; *it is about personalized learning.*
- It is not about putting up barriers and hurdles; *it is about expanding access and opportunities.*
- It is not based on a national comparison for local programs; *it is based on local context and data.*
- It is not only recognizing students who come with easily recognizable gifts and talents; *it is about being a talent scout and intentionally creating environments to recognize and develop talents not yet tapped.*

Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education

Changing Mindsets, Policies and Practices

To set the foundation for realizing both equity and excellence, we must approach it from the shared perspective that both can be realized. Both are integral to a successful educational environment. This commitment toward equity and excellence is urgent and requires intentional and sustained actions. No single action will change mindsets, policies, and practices; we must synergize efforts to increase achievement and growth for all.

ACTION 1: Reframe Your Lens

We must reframe our lens on how we view students, their actions and beliefs; how we view schools, our actions and goals; and how we view ourselves, our roles and responsibilities.

HOW? Reflect on our own biases, stories, and influence. Connect with student experiences. View students as "at-potential" versus "at-risk." Be a talent scout not a deficit detector. Look for opportunities to say yes, not opportunities to say no.

WHY? By reframing our lens, we ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to access gifted programs. We begin to change our mindsets, raise expectations, and begin the pathway toward equity and excellence.

ACTION 2: Use Equitable Identification Practices

We must provide opportunities for every student to show us their strengths and talents and mitigate systemic barriers to access gifted education.

HOW? Align identification practices with the services provided. Use universal screening and referral practices. Use local norms and context for local programs. Take advantage of existing student data and a variety of information sources. Provide multiple opportunities, not multiple barriers.

WHY? By improving identification practices, we focus on recognizing demonstrated advanced learning needs so that no potential is untapped and no student is overlooked for gifted education.

ACTION 3: Provide a Range of Services within the Program

We must match the educational environment with each student's demonstrated educational needs. Gifted services must adjust to the student instead of the student adjusting to the services.

HOW? Provide differentiation in the regular classroom, but that will be insufficient for some students. Offer a variety of services in a variety of settings. Accelerate, extend, and enrich learning experiences. Heed academic, social, emotional, and cognitive needs.

WHY? By providing a range of services, we respond to the range of needs and we teach students only what they don't already know so that they will optimally develop, all day, every day.

ACTION 4: Foster Talent Development

We must also cultivate potential in students whose strengths are not yet tapped or readily observable in typical classroom environments, in addition to serving students who are already demonstrating high performance. We must provide intentional efforts that bring out and develop a student's strengths and talents.

HOW? Create learning environments where teachers are able to observe student strengths and recognize potential. Respond by developing a student's strengths through intentional learning experiences, including front-loading, in various domains. Provide early intervention and development opportunities to maximize potential.

WHY? By fostering talent development, we will ensure that all students have opportunities to grow and experience learning environments that are not dependent on their background or economic means.



North Carolina Department of
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For more information:

Visit NCDPI at <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/advancedlearning>
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ACTION 5: Collect and Use Meaningful Data

We must seek out and be responsive to meaningful data so that we align information with actions and aspirations.

HOW? Begin with the end in mind. Form a team to gather expertise and existing data. Use your program vision and goals to determine relevant data to analyze. Collect new data to fill gaps. Disaggregate the data and look at patterns and trends over time. Share information to inform mindsets, policies, and practices.

WHY? By collecting and using meaningful data, we will assess program success and inform program improvement. We will determine if the right interventions are being used in the right way, at the right time, to meet each student's needs.

ACTION 6: Provide Focused Professional Learning Opportunities

We must provide a clear focus on the above critical actions in professional learning opportunities to realize equity and excellence in gifted education.

HOW? Facilitate professional development in a variety of settings and modes. Involve all—the total school community, including partners in and out of school. Develop shared ownership to synergize efforts. Focus on changing mindsets, policies, and practices.

WHY? By providing focused professional development, we remove systemic barriers, improve student services, share ownership and move closer to equity and excellence in gifted education.

*Coleman, M.R., Shah-Coltrane, S., & Harrison, A. (2010). U-STARS~PLUS: Teacher's observation of potential in students: Individual student form. Arlington, VA: Council of Exceptional Children.

