



ASSESSMENT AND
EVALUATION OF GIFTED
SERVICES



A POSITION PAPER

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field.

The position papers support the organization's belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child's potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.



ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF GIFTED SERVICES

Assessment and evaluation are key elements used in designing, implementing, and improving quality programs for gifted learners. The evaluation begins with the assessment of academic, social- emotional, and problem solving skills of the students being served. It continues with an assessment of the current learning environment, teaching strategies, and partnerships with parents, community, and services that extend beyond the confines of the traditional school. This information becomes the basis for a program designed to meet the goals delineated in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Plan.

Once gifted services are in place a regular and ongoing evaluation process is critical to determine whether a program is being implemented as designed, is effective in meeting the program goals, or whether revisions of the program are needed.

The evaluation of GATE programs must go beyond the measurement of student achievement indicated by state tests. In the development of an evaluation procedure, the effectiveness of all components of the GATE program must be considered. These include:

- district philosophy, goals, and standards for gifted and talented education
- procedures for identification
- structure and range of options for delivering services
- models and curricular modifications used and their implementation
- administrative and instructional personnel
- parents and the community involvement
- professional development in gifted and talented education
- resources available
- learning environments
- amount of time during the regular school day GATE students receive differentiated services
- program flexibility to meet changing needs of students



It is important that a GATE program plan include measurable goals in each of these areas. Without these goals and appropriate measures for them, it would be difficult to determine if a program is being effective in meeting gifted student needs. The assessment tools used in the evaluation of these goals should be varied, multiple, and valid for the goals being evaluated. Such tools could include the following: classroom observation, test results, questionnaires and rating scales, student portfolios, teacher self-evaluations, and student and parent reports. In addition, it is critical that the individuals who are doing the evaluation are familiar with the district as a whole, knowledgeable about gifted education, and competent in the evaluation process.

A thorough evaluation of a GATE program should include assessment of:

- the academic progress of gifted students beyond grade-level tests (e.g., portfolios, out of level testing, observation)
- the affective development and needs of gifted learners
- the equity of the identification and placement practices
- the use of appropriate differentiation in the curriculum and instruction
- the opportunities for GATE professional development for teachers
- the involvement of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the larger community
- the equity of the demographic breakdown of the GATE Program in comparison to the district as a whole (e.g., economics, ethnicity, language)
- the funding and resources available for the GATE program (including funds for ongoing evaluation)
- the integration of the GATE program with other school programs and services
- the drop-out rate of gifted students, both out-of-the-program and out-of-school

The purpose of an evaluation is to determine what is needed to improve the program. It should include both strengths and weaknesses, and focus not only on the program's effectiveness once established, but also on how the changing needs of the district and its student population might affect the program. An evaluation should be considered an informative and helpful process. Results should be available to all constituents and should conclude with a detailed plan and timeline for program improvement. It is, therefore, the position of the California Association of the Gifted that a program for Gifted and Talented Education must include a process for regular and ongoing assessment and evaluation. Properly conducted and used, program evaluations should lead to continuous program improvement that better meets the needs of gifted learners.



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