



Gifted and Talented Training Grant

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Gifted and Talented Training Grant

\$500,000

Executive Summary

Background

The Gifted and Talented Training Grant was established seven years ago by the Legislature to help educators improve the identification of and service to gifted and talented students in five talent areas: intellectual, visual/performing arts, leadership, academic, and creativity. Three factors influenced the creation of a line item for gifted and talented training: (1) the Gifted and Talented mandate, Idaho Code §33-2003, (2) the new Gifted and Talented Endorsement, and (3) a Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by Boise State University which revealed that professional training for regular education teachers was essential.

The 2003 Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for the Gifted and Talented Training Grant. Districts must apply for funds, and their applications must detail how training would establish or improve the identification of and service to gifted and talented students. The funding formula is based on two factors: (1) each district's total student enrollment for the prior year, compared to the total statewide enrollment for the prior year and (2) on the number of gifted and talented students identified and served in the prior year.

The 2001 Legislature appropriated \$100,000 for an external study focusing on the Gifted and Talented mandate. The College of William and Mary completed the study and provided a report to the State Department of Education on April 1, 2002. The overall recommendation of the evaluation report was to "convene a statewide task force to review the evaluation report in order to develop a coherent plan of action that complements overall program recommendations."

Under the guidance of its gifted and talented specialist, the State Department of Education convened a task force during the fall of 2003 to prioritize the recommendations and develop a plan for implementation. The task force members represented all special education regions. Parents, a superintendent, school administrators, a special education director, teachers, gifted/talented coordinator/facilitators, university professors, and a retired educator were all members. In addition to reviewing the evaluation report, the task force members requested information on the financing of gifted programs, planning best practices for gifted/talented students and the testing and identification of gifted/talented students. The task force will send the plan of action to Dr. Marilyn Howard in January 2004.

Impact

The impact of the Gifted and Talented Training Grant is documented by the following:

- Increased number of gifted and talented students identified and served
- Increased number of gifted and talented endorsements issued
- Implementation of new activities and strategies by teachers

2004 Expenditures

- \$550,973 was budgeted for training
- \$29,258 was budgeted for substitutes

- \$20,478 was budgeted for training materials
- \$7,531 was budgeted for travel
- \$134,620 was carried over from the 2001-2002 grant

2005 Request

The request is for a continued \$500,000 appropriation to support this successful program.

Gifted and Talented Training Grant

\$500,000

Background

Several factors influenced the 1998 Legislature to create a separate line item in the public school budget for gifted and talented training, including:

- 1993 Gifted and Talented Mandate, Idaho Code §33-2003
- 1995 Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by Boise State University
- 1997 Gifted and Talented Endorsement

Gifted and Talented Mandate: Approved by the 1993 Legislature, the Gifted and Talented Mandate, Idaho Code §33-2003, requires districts to identify and serve gifted and talented students in five talent areas: specific academic, intellectual, creativity, leadership and visual/performing arts. Since the establishment of this mandate, districts have strived to identify and serve students in the five mandated talent areas. However, the percentage of Idaho students identified as gifted and talented remains below the national average. Further, recent data shows that only 19 districts identify and serve gifted and talented students in all five mandated talent areas.

Statewide Needs Assessment: Part of the challenge for districts in meeting the Gifted and Talented Mandate is understanding who gifted and talented students are and how to best serve their needs. A Statewide Needs Assessment conducted by Boise State University in 1995 revealed an essential need: professional development for general education teachers. Gifted and talented students spend the majority of their day in the regular classroom setting, and general education teachers need training in activities and strategies that benefit gifted and talented students.

Gifted and Talented Endorsement: The 1997 Legislature approved the requirement that by July 1, 2004, teachers providing “direct services” to gifted and talented students must possess a Gifted and Talented endorsement to their teaching certificate. The 1999 Legislature approved the standards for this endorsement, and since then three colleges of education have established programs to assist educators in earning the endorsement. As of this report, 88 endorsements have been issued. It is estimated that 140 educators will need to meet this new requirement by July 1, 2004.

The mandate, the survey, and the endorsement highlighted the need for funding targeted at training general education teachers, gifted and talented facilitators, administrators and parents. The purpose was to improve identification of students and to improve services to gifted and talented students in the five talent areas. This included training to help regular classroom teachers implement new strategies in their classrooms that would benefit gifted and talented students. The training grant also enables educators to take courses that would fulfill the endorsement requirement.

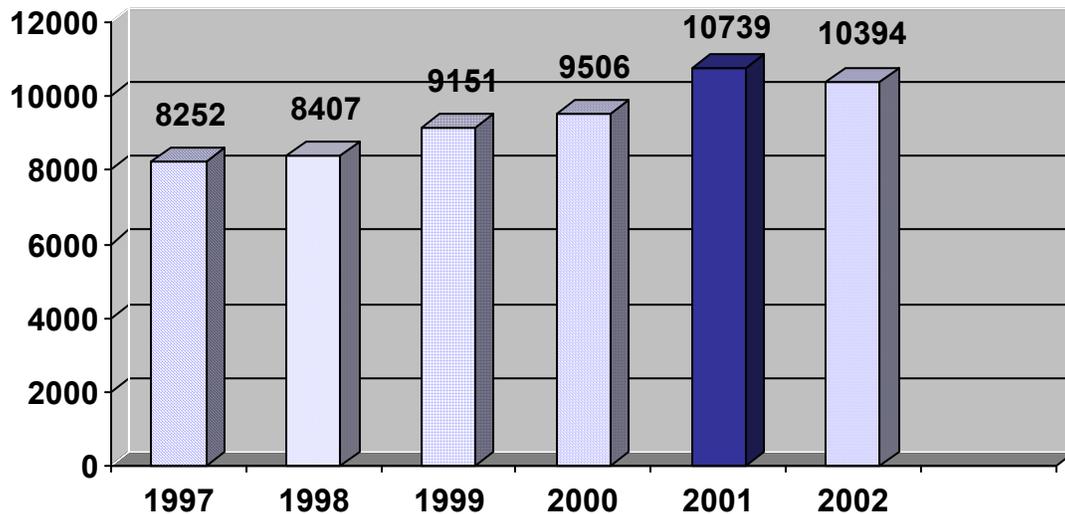
Impact

The Gifted and Talented Training Grant is intended to improve the identification of and services to gifted and talented students in the five talent areas by funding training and support for general education teachers and gifted and talented teachers, as well as parents and administrators. The following data indicates that the grant is serving its purpose.

Increased Number of Students Identified and Served

After five years of increases in the number of gifted and talented students identified in Idaho schools, FY 2002 showed a slight decrease. Future years' data will show whether this will be a trend in Idaho schools. The 2002 Child Count revealed that 10,394 students were identified as gifted and talented compared to past years as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of Gifted and Talented Students Identified and Served from 1997-2002



Number of Students Identified in the Five Mandated Talent Areas

The number of students identified by districts and served in each talent area is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers of Gifted and Talented Students Served by Talent Area

Talent Area	2002 Child Count
Intellectual	1,628
Visual/performing Arts	393
Leadership	111
Academic	7,779
Creativity	483

Increased Number of Gifted and Talented Endorsements Issued

By July 1, 2004, all gifted and talented facilitators who provide “direct services” to gifted and talented students must possess a Gifted and Talented Endorsement. The endorsement was approved by the 1999 Legislature. As of December 2003, 88 endorsements have been issued, an increase of 53 endorsements over last year.

Training that Supports New Activities and Strategies by Teachers

The Gifted and Talented Training Grant funds training that help teachers implement new activities and strategies benefiting gifted and talented students. District budget data reveals that 4,934 teachers are projected to participate in training during the 2003-2004 school year. The following data was derived from application and budget forms submitted by districts for the 2003-2004 school year.

Table 2: Projected G/T Training Activities for 2003-2004

Training Activities	Number of Districts Training Personnel
In-district Training	47
Edufest 2003	16
Council for Exceptional Children Conference	14
Edufest 2004	51
Workshops Outside the District	18
National Association for Gifted Children Conference	5
Other Conferences	7
Trainings on gifted and talent materials	23
Parent Training	7
Advanced Placement Vertical Teaming	2
College Course	17
Junior Great Books Workshop	0
Professional Library	1
Advanced Placement Workshops	4

Required Gifted and Talented Plans

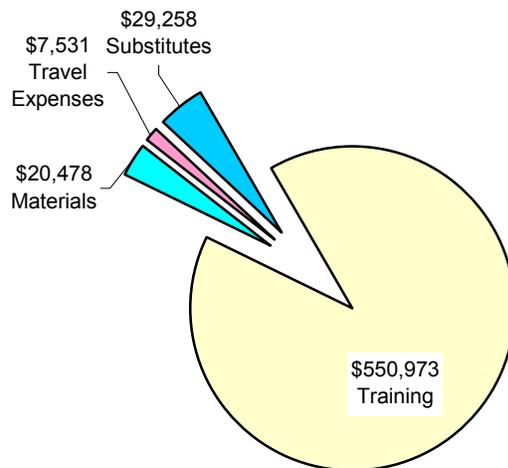
Related to the grant program, but not tied to it, is a state requirement for districts to create a plan to identify and serve gifted and talented students. A State Board of Education administrative rule, which was approved by the Legislature, requires districts to compose and submit plans to the Gifted and Talented Student Specialist at the State Department of Education for approval. The purpose of the administrative rule is to increase the uniformity of and provide direction for gifted and talented programs statewide, as required by the Gifted and Talented Mandate, Idaho Code §33-2003.

2004 Expenditures

During each of the past six years, the Legislature appropriated \$500,000 for training purposes. Funds are distributed to districts based on a formula. Half of the funds were allocated pro rata based on each district's total student enrollment for the prior year, compared to the total statewide enrollment for the prior year. The other half of the funds were allocated based on the number of gifted and talented students identified and served in the prior year. For purposes of funding, the number of gifted and talented students identified and served was capped at 7% of the district's total student enrollment. The minimum amount districts could receive was \$500. To receive the funds, districts must apply to the State Department of Education and detail how training would establish or improve the identification of and service to gifted and talented students in the five mandated talent areas. Districts must also explain how the funds will be spent. Figure 2 displays the projected expenditures for the 2003-2004 school year.

For a review of funds each district is expected to receive and how these funds will be spent, please see Appendix A.

Figure 2: Projected Gifted and Talented Grant Expenditures for 2003-2004



Carry-Over Money

Budget data reveals that 51 districts carried over money from the prior year to the 2003-2004 fiscal year. One of the main reasons for the carry-over is the timing of training. Nearly all of the districts with carry-over expended their money on summer Edufest 2003 held at Boise State University. Edufest occurs at the end of July, which coincides with the beginning of a new fiscal year.

External Study

To study the impact of the Gifted and Talented Training Grant and Mandate on the state gifted and talented programs, the 2001 Legislature allocated \$100,000 for an external study. The College of William and Mary was awarded the contract to conduct a statewide evaluation of gifted programs. Three research questions were addressed in the study. The result of the study produced 13 recommendations in seven areas. These recommendations form part of the study's Executive Summary (see appendix B).

The overall recommendation of evaluators was to “convene a statewide task force to review the evaluation report in order to develop a coherent plan of action that complements overall program recommendations.” The task force, under the direction of the State Department of Education gifted/talented specialist, was convened in the fall of 2003. The purpose of the task force was to review the study and prioritize the recommendations for implementation. The members serving on the task force represented all special education regions statewide. Parents, a superintendent, school administrators, a special education director, teachers, gifted/talented coordinators/facilitators, university professors, and a retired educator were all members. The evaluation report was thoroughly reviewed by the committee.

Task force members requested additional information that was provided by state department staff and others knowledgeable in their fields. Information on financing of gifted programs, planning best practices for gifted/talented students, and the testing/identification of gifted programs was reviewed.

After reviewing the study and the additional information, the task force prioritized the College of William and Mary recommendations for implementation. The task force will send the plan of action to Dr. Marilyn Howard in January 2004. The results of this plan will guide the direction of gifted/talented programs in the state of Idaho.

2005 Request

The request for 2005 is for a continued \$500,000 appropriation to support the training of general classroom teachers. The recommendations of state's gifted and talented task force may influence future legislative requests in the area of gifted and talented education.

Appendix A

2003-2004 Projected Gifted and Talented Expenditures by District

Appendix A: 2003-2004 Projected Gifted and Talented Expenditures by District

Dist #	District	Carryover + Award = Budget			Items Budgeted				Total Budgeted
		Carryover from 2002-2003	G/T Award 2003-2004	Total Budget	Substitute Teachers	Training	Materials	Travel Expenses	Total Budgeted
1	Boise	3000	40,328	43,328	0	43,328	0	0	43,328
1	Anser	0	192	192	0	0	192	0	192
1	Hidden Springs Charter	0	314	314	0	0	314	0	314
2	Meridian	34,975	72,326	107,301	14,000	90,939	2362	0	107,301
3	Kuna	80	4163	4243	0	4243	0	0	4243
11	Meadows Valley	500	500	1000	0	800	0	0	1000
13	Council	0	575	575	0	575	0	0	575
21	Marsh Valley	482	3818	4300	0	4300	0	0	4300
25	Pocatello	288	27,172	27,460	7460	10,000	5000	5000	27,460
25	Pocatello Charter	0	288	288	0	288	0	0	288
33	Bear Lake Co.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	St. Maries	0	1146	1146	0	1146	0	0	1146
44	Plummer/Worley	522	519	1041	0	1041	0	0	1041
52	Snake River	6455	5533	11,989	0	11,989	0	0	11989
55	Blackfoot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
58	Aberdeen	1184	1555	2738	1438	1300	0	0	2738
59	Firth	0	947	947	0	947	0	0	947
60	Shelley	0	5572	5572	0	5572	0	0	5572
61	Blaine Co.	1323	8695	10,018	0	9695	323	0	10,018
71	Garden Valley	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
72	Basin	0	911	911	0	911	0	0	911
73	Horseshoe Bend	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
83	West Bonner Co.	919	2518	3437	0	3437	0	0	3437
84	Lake Pend Oreille	80	6479	6559	1300	4759	500	0	6559
84	Sandpoint Charter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
91	Idaho Falls	0	22,118	22,118	0	21,868	250	0	22,118
92	Swan Valley	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
93	Bonneville	9181	14,091	23,272	0	23,272	0	0	23,272
101	Boundary Co.	1847	2634	4482	0	4482	0	0	4482
111	Butte Co.	0	1054	1054	0	1054	0	0	1054
121	Camas Co.	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
131	Nampa	10,603	21,238	31,841	0	31,841	0	0	31,841
131	Nampa Charter	520	850	1370	0	800	570	0	1370
132	Caldwell	0	12,983	12,983	0	12,983	0	0	12,983
133	Wilder	896	729	1625	0	1625	0	0	1625
134	Middleton	0	4360	4360	0	4360	0	0	4360
135	Notus	933	925	1858	0	580	560	718	1858
136	Melba	4042	1876	5918	0	5918	0	0	5918
137	Parma	76	2427	2503	0	2503	0	0	2503

* These small elementary districts do not operate gifted/talented programs.
 NA = no application
 NR = no report

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		Carryover from 2002-2003	G/T Award 2003-2004	Total Budget	Substitute Teachers	Training	Materials	Travel Expenses	Total Budgeted
139	Vallivue	0	6272	6272	0	6272	0	0	6272
148	Grace	0	654	654	0	654	0	0	654
149	North Gem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
150	Soda Springs	0	2883	2883	0	2400	0	483	2883
151	Cassia Co.	1783	7980	9764	0	9764	0	0	9764
161	Clark Co.	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
171	Orofino	5708	2784	8492	0	8492	0	0	8492
181	Challis	0	523	523	0	523	0	0	523
182	Mackay	0	500	500	0	350	150	0	500
191	Prairie *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
192	Glenns Ferry	48	922	970	0	970	0	0	970
193	Mountain Home	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
201	Preston	0	4621	4621	0	4621	0	0	4621
202	West Side	0	580	580	0	580	0	0	580
215	Fremont Co.	3419	5594	9013	0	8313	700	0	9013
221	Emmett	387	5334	5721	0	5721	0	0	5721
231	Gooding	1243	3214	4457	0	4457	0	0	4457
232	Wendell	2387	2924	5311	0	2200	3111	0	5311
233	Hagerman	0	500	500	0	448	51	0	500
234	Bliss	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
241	Grangeville	4338	1991	6330	0	4800	153	0	6330
242	Cottonwood	1667	1357	3024	0	2500	524	0	3024
251	Jefferson Co.	0	7539	7539	3600	2739	1200	0	7539
252	Ririe	0	706	706	0	350	56	300	706
253	West Jefferson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
261	Jerome	0	4793	4793	0	4793	0	0	4793
262	Valley	0	633	633	0	633	0	0	633
271	Coeur D'Alene	0	26,636	26,636	0	26,636	0	0	26,636
272	Lakeland	4882	7124	12,006	0	12,006	0	0	12,006
273	Post Falls	1224	9031	10,255	0	10,255	0	0	10,255
274	Kootenai	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
281	Moscow	0	6928	6928	0	6928	0	0	6928
282	Genesee	366	893	1259	0	1259	0	0	1259
283	Kendrick	785	675	1460	0	1460	0	0	1460
285	Potlatch	0	707	707	0	707	0	0	707
287	Troy	927	541	1468	0	1468	0	0	1468
288	Whitepine	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
291	Salmon	18	1580	1598	0	1598	0	0	1598
292	South Lemhi	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
302	Nezperce	811	500	1311	0	1311	0	0	1311
304	Kamiah	57	1558	1615	0	1270	0	345	1615
305	Highland	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500

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		Carryover from 2002-2003	G/T Award 2003-2004	Total Budget	Substitute Teachers	Training	Materials	Travel Expenses	Total Budgeted
312	Shoshone	1707	1325	3032	0	3032	0	0	3032
314	Dietrich	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
316	Richfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
321	Madison	0	6705	6705	0	6228	477	0	6705
322	Sugar-Salem	1061	1989	3050	0	2900	150	0	3050
331	Minidoka Co.	0	7292	7292	0	6292	1000	0	7292
340	Lewiston	6050	8690	14,740	0	14,740	0	0	14,740
341	Lapwai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
342	Culdesac	145	500	645	0	350	0	295	645
351	Oneida Co.	235	1823	2058	0	2058	0	0	2058
363	Marsing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
364	Pleasant Valley *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
365	Bruneau-Grand View	353	507	860	0	860	0	0	860
370	Homedale	3857	3117	6974	500	6474	0	0	6974
371	Payette	0	5285	5,285	0	5285	0	0	5285
372	New Plymouth	8	1917	1924	0	1924	0	0	1924
373	Fruitland	3368	3947	7315	600	6715	0	0	7315
381	American Falls	1251	3859	5109	0	5109	0	0	5109
382	Rockland	111	500	611	0	400	211	0	611
383	Arbon *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
391	Kellogg	594	3886	4480	0	4480	0	0	4480
392	Mullan	517	500	1017	0	817	200	0	1017
393	Wallace	803	1,604	2407	0	2017	0	390	2407
394	Avery	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
401	Teton Co.	0	1742	1742	0	1742	0	0	1742
411	Twin Falls	4219	12,597	16,816	0	15,051	1765	0	16,816
412	Buhl	2118	3438	5556	0	5556	0	0	5556
413	Filer	0	2003	2003	0	2003	0	0	2003
414	Kimberly	0	3604	3604	0	3604	0	0	3604
415	Hansen	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
416	Three Creek *	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
417	Castleford	0	537	537	0	537	0	0	537
418	Murtaugh	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
421	McCall-Donnelly	155	1325	1480	0	1480	0	0	1480
422	Cascade	112	551	663	0	135	528	0	663
431	Weiser	0	1641	1641	360	1150	131	0	1641
432	Cambridge	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
433	Midvale	0	500	500	0	500	0	0	500
	TOTALS	134,620	475,197	609,818	29,258	550,973	20,478	7,531	609,818

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Appendix B

Evaluation Report of the Idaho State Public Schools Gifted Education Programs

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Evaluation Report of the Idaho State Public Schools Gifted Education Programs

Executive Summary

From July, 2001 to April, 2002, the Idaho State Department of Education contracted with the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary to conduct a state-wide evaluation of gifted programs. The evaluation was conducted under the directorship of Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education and Director of the Center for Gifted Education; multi-state consultants were also invited to join the evaluation team to ensure diverse perspectives in fully picturing the landscape of Idaho gifted education programs.

Study Purpose and Evaluation Questions

The purpose of this evaluation study was to respond to three major research questions of interest to the Idaho Department of Education regarding the degree of implementation of Idaho Code, Section 33-2003. In addition to document the current status and critical issues of gifted programs in the state, recommendations for further improvement of gifted services across the state and direction for program development to the next level of excellence were provided. Specifically, the three research questions addressed in the evaluation were:

1. What impact has the Gifted and Talented Training Grant had on students and teachers concerning the implementation of the G/T Mandate?
2. What are the similarities and differences concerning the implementation of the G/T Mandate in rural and urban school districts?
3. What barriers prevent districts from fully implementing the G/T Mandate and what ideas are presented for eliminating these barriers?

Data Sources

To investigate the above three research questions, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from multiple sources including questionnaire surveys, document reviews, classroom observation, focus groups, interviews, and community/parent town hall meetings. Economic data in gifted education expenditures and distributions were also analyzed. Selected districts also provided student high stakes test scores, which were analyzed.

Instrumentation

Eleven instruments were used in collecting data. The instruments used in the evaluation study included surveys, questionnaires, observation scale, document and curriculum review forms, interview and focus group protocols.

Sampling Design

A stratified sampling strategy was used to select twelve school districts using three strata: size of the district, SES level, and geographical location. The sampling pool consisted of 113 school districts documented in Idaho School Districts Profiles (1999-2000), the latest district profiles available when the sample was drawn.

A sampling plan was also developed for the administration of one thousand copies of Idaho Gifted Facilitator Survey, based on the proportional distribution of the amount of training money to each school district during the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The program surveys were mailed directly to each district's contact person (mostly the district gifted program coordinator). A second mailing plus post-card reminders were sent, and prepaid-envelopes were enclosed in each survey to ensure a higher response rate. The response rate for the program surveys was 74.8%. Whole sample analysis and sub-sample analysis by district size were conducted.

One thousand copies of the Idaho G/T Facilitator Survey were mailed to school districts that have received training funds. The school districts' coordinators helped with the administration process. The response rate was 57.8%. Quantitative analyses were conducted in the order of sectional questions; content analyses were conducted for participants' responses to open-ended questions.

For each classroom observation, each individual evaluation team member completed the form independently, and the team members filled out the consensus form at the end of each observation day. Scores from the consensus forms were entered into the database. Five different analyses were conducted based on the demographics of the sample.

Focus group data were compiled from two sources: participants' written responses to each question on index cards and the focus group note-taker's written account. Content analyses were conducted based on secondary analyses on the twelve in-house district-level analyses and on the aggregated focus group data across districts.

Program documentation was collected on-site and analyzed by size of district and by an overall analysis across districts.

Interview data were collected both on-site and through phone calls. Content analyses were conducted for each group of interviewees separately based on their roles. These data were used to confirm or refute emerging themes from other data sources as well as provide deeper insight into perceptions about the program from leadership personnel at both state and local levels.

Data from Community/Parent Town Hall meeting were also collected. Questionnaire data were analyzed and themes were derived.

Summary of District Survey Findings

A total of 77 school districts completed the survey resulting in a 74.8% response rate. In the giftedness categories, specific academic talent and intellectual ability were addressed in the vast majority of programs, while creativity, visual and performing arts, and leadership were addressed by over half of the programs. Overall, there was a wide range of giftedness categories, identification instruments used, and identification procedures in place. While strategies were used to promote cultural diversity, a significant percentage of respondents indicated that populations such as underachievers, students whose native language was not English, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students were considered to have inadequate access to gifted education programs.

Depending on the grade level of the student, different grouping patterns were employed. Over 60% of elementary students were served in pull-out programs, while more than 50% were served in regular heterogeneous classrooms. In middle and high schools, the regular heterogeneous classroom dominated. Differentiation services were only provided 0-2 hours a week in nearly 40% of elementary schools, 33% of middle schools, and 34% of high schools. The data analysis also found that only 11% of elementary schools, 9.6% of middle schools, and 12.3% of high school students were provided with differentiation services for 10 or more hours a week.

When examining the goals addressed in delivering curriculum and instruction, high percentages of coordinators indicated positive responses to all the goals, although there was a stronger emphasis on cognitive rather than affective or creative goals. The curriculum and instructional methods were found not to be standardized, in that 86.3% employed a teacher-developed curriculum. While instructional approaches such as inquiry, problem-solving, and individual and group project work were employed, these services were not differentiated to take into account the individual needs of the students. Only 19.2% of programs indicated individual services to special populations of gifted learners. The Internet and computers appear to be widely available in Idaho gifted/talented programs, with over 90% of schools surveyed having access to the Internet for research purposes. Program evaluations were not done on a systematic basis, with 16.7% of the districts never conducting evaluations and 36.1% of districts conducting evaluations on unspecified timelines.

Very few school districts had a written acceleration policy in place (11%) or student transfer policies (16.4%), indicating a lack of alignment between program goals and implemented student services. Parent education services were not provided in 71.2% of school districts, although many parents were involved in field trips, and as volunteers in classes.

The impact of the G/T training grant was reported as positive, with 80.8% of teachers becoming more competent in addressing G/T students' needs and providing more accommodations (69.9%) for students. While initial implementation had positive results, a need was cited for ongoing follow-up work. Many educators felt that they still needed training for the program (72.1%). Most facilitators had neither the gifted endorsement (71.2%) nor a higher degree in gifted education (79.5%). Only 4.1% of teachers servicing gifted students have a master's degree.

When looking at barriers to implementation of the plan and expanding g/t services, teachers' capacity or willingness to change (57.5%), limited staff development (49.3%) and a lack of parental networks (19.2%) were cited. Powerful forces affecting the service delivery included the addition of the state mandates (76.7%) and gifted rules/regulations/plans (47.9%). Support for such program development appeared to emanate from traditional structures such as the State Department (65.8%) and administrative support at local levels. While the programs have been given legislative support, funding (75.3%) and professional training for general education teachers (49.3%) in gifted education practices were considered to be in need of attention.

Most educators completing the form believed their program partially aligned with the NAGC Standards in curriculum and instruction (64.6%), program evaluation (53.4%), and administration (56.2%) and professional development (52.1%), but in all other categories, the majority of respondents believed their districts did not align with national standards.

Summary of Facilitator Survey Findings

The Idaho G/T Facilitator Survey was completed by 582 educators, mostly teachers, constituting a response rate of 58.2%. The majority of the teachers (85%) had between 6 and 21 years of teaching experience, with 37.6% having more than 10 years of experience. Approximately half (49.5%) taught at the primary or intermediate level, 23.4% taught at the middle school level, and 10.4% were high school teachers. Most educators had limited exposure to gifted education, with only 6% having either state endorsement or a Master's degree with a concentration in gifted education.

Predominant grouping models employed in respondents' classrooms included regular classroom pull-out (52.1%) and regular heterogeneous classrooms (44.3%) with flexible grouping. Most respondents (88.2%) were familiar with the identification procedure and 64.9% believed it was fair, although there was some sense that not all student populations had access to programs.

When respondents were asked about the twelve goals specified in the *Idaho Best Practices Manual* which were addressed in curriculum and instruction, over half of the teachers indicated they focused on developing productive, complex, abstract, and/or higher-level thinking skills, integrating basic and higher level thinking skills into the core curriculum, and in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within area of study. Instructional methods were consistent with the Idaho Best Practices goals. Teachers felt that parent communication was an important part of the success of the programs, and 71% indicated their communication with parents to be adequate or excellent.

Approximately 70% of the teachers had attended 1-3 training sessions through the State Gifted Fund. A strong majority of respondents (92.4%) believed that their training experiences with the State gifted training grant benefited their instructional practices with the G/T students to some extent. Overall, 48.9% of teachers rated staff development experiences related to gifted education provided by their school districts as either good or excellent. A majority of teachers (77.4%) also expressed satisfaction with the administrative support for the program.

When teachers were asked to select the single most important benefit of the G/T Program for G/T students, opportunities to learn with similar ability peers (31.5%) and accelerated and challenging learning (29.9%) were cited. The teachers mentioned nine categories of possible improvement, with funding the most critical problem. When asked the nature of changes they would like to see, teachers once again gave a wide variety of responses, including training opportunities, equipment, materials, personnel, and technology.

Summary of Classroom Observation Results

In looking at overall instructional practices, the total average score for the observed teachers was 16.96. This is somewhat below the average total of 21 recommended by gifted education experts as acceptable practice. The categories or areas of teaching, receiving the most check marks were (1) curriculum planning, (2) expectations for learners, and (3) general teaching strategies. In an analysis of teacher behaviors by grade level, both curriculum planning and expectations for learners also registered high percentages, along with accommodation to individual differences and curriculum delivery features. High school and elementary teachers registered the highest percentage of expected behaviors, with high school teachers demonstrating strengths in curriculum delivery and critical thinking, and elementary teachers demonstrating strength in general teaching strategies. Middle school teachers received the highest percentages in encouraging metacognition and using problem solving.

In looking at the instructional practices by size of the district, teachers from large and small districts showed more expected instructional behaviors than medium sized districts. The four highest categories were (1) expectations for learners, (2) accommodating individual differences, (3) critical thinking strategies, and (4) problem solving.

Overall, teachers with training showed significantly higher percentages on seven of the items, demonstrating a significant and positive impact of the state-sponsored gifted training grants on instructional behaviors with gifted students in Idaho.

Summary Analysis of Documents

The overall findings from the analysis of gifted program documents in 12 Idaho school districts suggest that fulltime coordination of the program is needed to ensure that the program is sufficiently delineated on paper and faithfully implemented in the classroom. Only in districts where this coordination was in place did program documentation approach satisfactory levels. The areas of greatest weakness in documents appear to be in not having a clear program and curriculum framework that delineates student outcomes and assessment approaches for each grade level of service. In the absence of such documentation, most programs could not be evaluated successfully according to student outcome data. Curriculum documentation at the level of complete units of study that include model lesson plans was also lacking in all districts.

The identification system also lacked definition across programs in respect to program intervention, exemplifying a mismatch between student characteristics and program interventions in most domains except intellectual. Limited numbers of personnel assigned to these programs coupled with lack of systematic training and problems with attrition further impede steady program development.

Summary of Economic Data

Trend analyses of the economic data revealed that in the past seven years (1995-2002) when the State Gifted Training Grant was allocated to local districts, there was an increasing percentage of gifted students identified (from 2.9% to 3.8%) across the state. However, the baseline of increase was different for school districts of different size, with large school districts having the highest initial rate of identification (3.5%), small districts the second (2.8%), and medium-sized districts the third (2.4%). The medium-sized districts had the most constant rate of increase over the years, whereas large and small districts showed more fluctuations.

Gifted and talented expenditures from state and local funds from 1996 to 2000 were examined. Across the state, the expenditures fluctuated dramatically with the 1997-1998 academic year registering the lowest per gifted child expenditure, and 1998-1999 academic year the highest. Over the years, the medium-sized districts had the highest per gifted child expenditure (above \$800), the large school districts the second (\$ 500), and the small districts the lowest (\$300).

The State Gifted Training Fund has been stable over the years (\$ 500, 000 per year) accompanied by an increasing identified population. As a result, the per gifted child distribution of the grant was down from \$60 per child in 1997 to \$ 53 in the 2001-2002 academic year. The disproportionality was most evident in large school districts. Compared to the per gifted child expenditures over the years, the state money accounted for only a small portion of the expenditures; yet the more focused emphasis of the state gifted grant on training did increase the visibility of the state money for gifted education.

The State Gifted Training Fund was equal to half of the State's allocation on one of the training programs on special education: Learning Restrictive Environment (LRE). Moreover, the special education training fund had a more diversified formula of spending than the state gifted training fund, where training is the sole channel of use.

Summary of Student Impact Data

The trend analyses supported the consistent high level of performance on standardized tests registered across years by gifted students. The results of the analyses on student impact data also suggested that the size of the school district was the single most important factor in affecting students' performance in relevant tests at both grade levels. It is not clear from the analyses of these available data the extent of the program impact on students' academic achievement. However, it is likely that the sampled students from the large school district had more accesses to resources and advantageous benefits possessed only by a large district. It was also likely that students from the larger districts were admitted into the gifted program through more stringent criteria than those in the smaller size district. As a result, the differences were already shaped at the point of admission to the gifted program.

The current analyses also suggested that the length of time these gifted 9th and 12th graders stayed in their gifted programs did not result in important differences in their performance on high stakes tests. The analyses also suggested that at the high school level, although these gifted students had the opportunities to enroll in some Advanced Placement courses, the choices for them seemed limited.

Given the fact that many variables were involved in students' school life, it is cautioned that no conclusion should be made based on the impact of the gifted program on these students' academic performance. It is highly recommended that performance-based pre-post tests specifically designed for assessing students' learning in the program within and across years be used in a future study.

Summary Analysis of Educator Interviews

Interviews with superintendents or their designee and program coordinators in the 12 sampled districts in Idaho paint a picture of gifted program personnel struggling to serve students in the face of both internal and external pressures. Philosophical issues stemming from misconceptions about the population affect perceptions and attitudes of teachers and administrators. At the same time, limited resources keep the programs from advancing forward and gaining a platform for wider acceptance. Because the program is mandated yet training for teachers is not, personnel problems are great in respect to having sufficient numbers of trained personnel, especially in smaller districts and lack of experienced and trained administrators running the programs. The state monies to date have been used wisely to provide a catalyst for program development and improvement, but the scale of funding is so small in comparison to the special needs efforts in the state that districts continue to feel hampered in providing services to this population. In larger districts where greater flexibility in funding and use of resources is possible, this problem may not be as acute.

Interviews with state department personnel and legislators reinforced the twin dilemmas of local control and budget deficits in Idaho that diminish state-wide standardization in implementing initiatives and the capacity to raise the quality of gifted programming systematically.

Summary of Findings

The following findings constitute the major themes emerging from the evaluation study. All themes were derived from three or more data sources, which are coded by each stated finding. The code structure is as follows: GPS (Gifted Program Survey), FS (Facilitator Survey), CO (Classroom Observation), I (Interviews), FG (Focus Groups), TH (Town Hall Meeting), and DR (Document Review).

- ◆ There is a lack of equity and consistency in programs and services across buildings within one district as well as across districts within the state. FG, I, DR, CO
- ◆ The gifted identification process is not known by some student and adult stakeholders. It also relies too heavily on high achievement scores and teacher recommendations. No separate approach to identification is employed beyond elementary school in most districts. FG, TH, DR
- ◆ The identification process focuses on multiple categories in the majority of districts, but program services do not match up with the process. I, DR, GPS

- ◆ The identification process does not focus sufficiently on strategies to identify under-represented groups, including minority students (especially Hispanic), twice exceptional, ESL, and underachievers. Special program opportunities are not in place for these learners either. DR, I, GPS
- ◆ Gifted students are under-identified in the majority of school districts, given the national incidence rates (5-15%). DR, I, FG
- ◆ There appears to be an under-utilization of flexible grouping approaches, with regular classroom placement and pull-out programs dominating. FG, GPS, I
- ◆ Contact time is more limited than the minimum necessary to provide a quality program, with almost 40% of programs meeting with gifted students less than two hours per week. FG, GPS, FS
- ◆ Curriculum emphases are derived from individual teacher preferences, with the majority emphasis areas being project work and critical or creative thinking. GPS, CO, FG
- ◆ Curriculum development for gifted students is needed at all levels of schooling, with a clear set of goals and outcomes specified. Differentiation of instruction is limited. Comprehensive articulation of curriculum offerings across domains is also currently lacking. Middle and high school options need to be increased, especially honors and Advanced Placement courses in multiple areas and technological/distance learning opportunities. FG, TH, CO, DR
- ◆ Pull-out programs dominate at the elementary level and are facilitator-driven with no set curriculum. While the program is perceived as challenging by students and parents, its fragmented nature creates a concern among stakeholders. FG, DR, CO
- ◆ Multiple instructional approaches are commonly employed with gifted students. FS, GPS, CO, FG
- ◆ The training grant was perceived as beneficial in that it provided a few teachers with opportunities for enhancing classroom practice. Many of the adults were unaware of it or felt it was “too little and too diffuse” to have a significant impact on programs. Major benefits of the training grant cited included raising teacher competency, meeting the needs of gifted students more effectively, and changing staff attitudes in a favorable way. FG, I, GPS
- ◆ Staff development opportunities in gifted education appear to be limited in number and focus. Over 70% of the districts noted that over half of their personnel still need training in gifted education. GPS, FS, FG, I
- ◆ Over half of the districts do not have a regular schedule for evaluation. Although self-report data suggest that gifted students are assessed on multiple measures, little evidence exists that such processes occur. GPS, I, DR
- ◆ Program management and appropriate supervision are hampered by most coordinators’ having split positions and being untrained in gifted education. GPS, FS, I

- ◆ Communication with parents was found to be problematic on most gifted program issues. Very few formal parent education programs are available. FG, TH, GPS
- ◆ Lack of adequate staffing and resources to deliver the program at local sites was seen as a major barrier to program improvement by adult stakeholders. Lack of administrative leadership for the program was also perceived as a major problem. FG, TH, CO, I, GPS
- ◆ Provisions for improvement focused on curriculum development and articulation, more teacher training for regular classroom teachers, and more staffing. FG, TH, FS, GPS

Findings by Research Question

Question 1: What impact has the Gifted and Talented Training Grant had on students and teachers concerning the implementation of the G/T Mandate?

Teacher competency for addressing the needs of gifted students was a theme that emerged across several data sources as a major impact of the state training grant. Both program coordinators (80.8%) and G/T facilitators (92.4%) in their survey responses indicated perceptions that the competency of teachers had increased. The G/T facilitators saw the competencies manifested through increased use of creative student products, increased student sharing of ideas, and increased student participation in more challenging projects. The training grant benefits were viewed by focus group members as providing a few teachers with opportunities for enhancing classroom practice. This perception was supported by classroom observation data, which revealed that the 57% of the observed teachers who had received training demonstrated a higher incidence of the expected behaviors than those teachers who had not received training. Moreover, there was a statistically significant positive correlation between teachers' total scores on the observation instruments and the number of years over which they had received training.

The impact of the training grant on teachers was also assessed with regard to numbers of teachers receiving training and their perceptions of the quality of the training. Almost 90% of G/T facilitators had received training through workshops or conferences, with 70% receiving at least 1-3 training sessions. However, less than half rated the quality of their staff development experiences as good or excellent. A comparative analysis from the two surveys (program survey and G/T facilitator) suggested that, while program coordinators portrayed training impact quite positively because of high numbers trained, many G/T facilitators were more reserved in their reaction, possibly due to a concern about quality. Additionally, parents were reticent to aver that the impact of the grant had trickled down to the classroom level.

Classroom observation data suggested, however, that more gifted behaviors were present in classrooms with trained teachers than those without training. The extent to which that translates into increased learning cannot be judged from the data sources available for this study.

The state training grant clearly impacted local programs by creating conditions for increasing capacity for positive changes to occur. Program coordinators (78.1%) said that the grant led to greater capacity for program development. The program coordinators' survey also

revealed that the majority of coordinators (69.2%) perceived that the contribution of the training grant to local gifted programs was significant or very significant. Over 94% of G/T facilitators saw the expenditures as worthwhile and added that the grant should not be allocated differently. Additionally, 80.8% of program coordinators perceived some change in local gifted programs as a result of the state training grant, with another 9.6% responding that complete change had occurred in their districts as a result of the state training grant. All data sources reported positive responses to the training grant, but some stakeholder groups preferred the expenditures to be more flexibly allocated. Moreover, multiple sources cited the unevenness of the training opportunities provided. Limitations of the training grant itself included the lack of follow-up support, inconsistency of training opportunities, lack of length or depth of training, and the lack of targeting the training opportunities to local needs. These issues are also potential barriers to full implementation of the G/T mandate.

Question 2: What are the similarities and differences concerning the implementation of the G/T mandate in rural and urban school districts?*

Similarities

Classroom observation data revealed that teachers in large and small school districts displayed more expected instructional behaviors than those from medium-sized school districts in setting higher expectations, accommodating individual differences, encouraging critical thinking, and problem solving skills. However, teachers in medium-sized school districts were able to communicate objectives to students to a greater extent than large or small school districts. Multiple sources of data indicated that lack of trained personnel was a common problem, regardless of the size of the school district. Most frequently mentioned problems across data sources included an insufficient number of trained personnel working with gifted students, lack of experienced or trained administrators, and the fragmentation of responsibilities by those responsible for servicing gifted students. All districts emphasized that programs were underfunded. Economic data for a three-year period showed decreasing expenditures for gifted across all school districts. Utilization of a pull-out model for program delivery was similar across district types, with larger districts having slightly more diversity of program options, possibly due to greater flexibility in funding and resource allocation.

Differences

Interview and survey data revealed that small districts rated their programs lower overall than medium or large districts. Large school districts had more diversified programming for gifted students than small or medium-sized school districts. Large districts had a more positive viewpoint about the use of the training grant than small and medium-sized school districts, in which some stakeholders indicated a preference that the training grant funds be used for direct services. In small and medium-sized school districts, issues of fragmentation of personnel responsibilities surfaced as an issue. Small school districts perceived their programs to be challenging, whereas medium-sized and large school districts reported a more inconsistent viewpoint about the quality of the program. Urban districts benefited from being able to diversify programs to a greater extent than rural ones and to attract better trained resources to the program.

* Many of the analyses were done by large, medium, and small designation for districts, yielding a definition of urban as being designated the “large” districts and “medium and small” being designated the rural districts.

Rural districts were highly dependent on a key person who “did it all,” frequently leading to a lack of program policies and clear delineation of gifted issues to be addressed. Advocacy needs appeared to be greater in rural districts. Administrators in rural districts appeared to be more lacking in awareness of gifted education issues than their urban counterparts, leading to myths and misconceptions.

Question 3: What barriers prevent districts from fully implementing the G/T mandate and what ideas are presented for eliminating these barriers?

Lack of adequate staffing to deliver the program at local sites was seen as a major barrier to program improvement by adult stakeholders, coupled with inconsistent quality of administrative leadership. Additionally, 57.5% of program survey respondents cited teachers lack of capacity or willingness to change as a barrier to implementing the state mandate. Interview results also indicated a perception of philosophical opposition to program development or expansion within some communities. Almost 50% of coordinator surveys and interview respondents cited lack of teacher knowledge as a major barrier for implementing and expanding the mandated plan, and misconceptions about giftedness revealed in stakeholder statements represent a related obstacle. Reports of limited numbers of persons endorsed in gifted education and limited staff development opportunities evident in survey results also reflect potential barriers.

Multiple data sources provided evidence that program development needs to deepen and expand in the core areas of curriculum, identification, and counseling and guidance.

All data sources cited funding as the predominant barrier to implementing the state mandate. State funding expenditures showed decreasing patterns across a five-year period and revealed disparate patterns of allocation to small, medium, and large school districts.

Ideas for program improvement were many and varied. All data sources communicated the need for additional appropriated monies in order to provide for program improvements, additional hiring of staff, expansion of professional development opportunities, and a more focused articulation of curriculum development and implementation. Increasing communication, particularly to parents and other adult stakeholders, was viewed as a way to improve cooperation between schools and home/community. More discretely, focus group members revealed that increasing parental involvement might be seen as a conduit to procure additional local funding through school boards.

Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations and recommendations for overall program improvement in the Idaho gifted programs include a number of program development areas already cited in responding to the core research questions of this report and are congruent with results obtained from the multiple data sources explored. These recommendations need to be viewed as integrated sets. Each cluster of recommendations is central to program improvement and should be interpreted as such by the state task force. Within each cluster, the order of the recommendations implies the priority for action.

Commendations

- ◆ The state, through its mandate and state plan mechanisms, has clearly recognized the needs of gifted students and the extent to which they are under-served.
- ◆ State Department leadership, in developing state plan requirements and targeting state funds for training, has been proactive in providing a catalyst for local program development.
- ◆ Technical assistance to districts provided by the state coordinator has also been well received.
- ◆ The passion and commitment of Idaho gifted coordinators and facilitators was seen as truly remarkable by the evaluation team.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

- ◆ Develop state policies and procedures regarding acceleration, pacing, and continuous progress across the K-12 spectrum as they would affect gifted program implementation at the local level. Since these approaches to serving the gifted are very well documented in the research literature and in the NAGC standards, more attention to their effective implementation needs to occur.
- ◆ Develop statewide counseling and guidance policies and procedures for all gifted learners at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Lack of evidence for a comprehensive model for addressing the affective and future planning needs of the gifted suggests a deficit in local program design. Using the NAGC standards on counseling and guidance as a basis, Idaho should develop a strong program dimension in this area.

Curriculum Recommendations

- ◆ Develop curriculum frameworks and scope and sequence documents at each program level and across K-12 that demonstrate adaptations in addressing the general education state standards for gifted learners. Align all current and future gifted curriculum work with the general education state standards so that neither duplication of coverage nor learning gaps occur.
- ◆ Develop a statewide effort on curriculum development for gifted learners, blending teacher-developed curriculum approaches with extant exemplary curriculum for gifted learners where available to form a richer base for differentiating instruction. Seek to adopt alternative texts and other materials appropriate for the population served.
- ◆ Strengthen secondary options at both middle and high school levels by providing more options and special classes. Both Advanced Placement courses and dual enrollment opportunities need to be increased.

Identification Recommendations

- ◆ Encourage districts to identify and program for gifted populations by category. Appropriate services to intellectual, academic, and creative students should be well developed before undertaking new initiatives in other categories of giftedness. Program depth and articulation should not be sacrificed to broad identification approaches that cannot be matched to appropriate services.
- ◆ Continue to address the need to identify under-represented groups in the state for gifted programs, including Hispanic students.

Professional /Parent Development Recommendations

- ◆ Develop a statewide plan for training grant emphases to focus on weaker areas found in the classroom observation data. Organize the plan in such a way that a targeted group of strategies is emphasized each year with teachers, and institute appropriate follow-up monitoring procedures to ensure that effective use occurs. More monitoring of classrooms by program coordinators using a standard classroom observation form, demonstration teaching, and videotape analyses of teaching might be employed to encourage the institutionalization of best instructional practice. Principals and other administrators should be built into the training plan as well in order to coordinate follow-up efforts and to socialize administrators to the educational needs of this population.
- ◆ Develop a statewide parent education program that focuses on strengthening parent understanding of the gifted program via written materials and special workshops. The data suggest that parents are dissatisfied with communication about the program. Thus, it is important to involve them in understanding all phases of the program. We recommend offering a series of parent workshops/seminars to provide a more formal forum for parent education and dialogue. These events could focus on specific program highlights in particular regions of the state, as well as general topics of interest to parents of gifted learners, and might highlight individual student work as well as program performance results. This would elevate the understanding of what districts are already doing to meet the needs of gifted learners and provide positive channels for communication with parents.

Evaluation Recommendations

- ◆ Develop a state system of annual program evaluation that routinely collects evidence of student growth in gifted programs at each stage of development, possibly at the end of grades 3, 6, 8, and 12. Assessments of stakeholder perception should also be done biennially. Create and implement a system to collect trend data on graduating seniors as a basis for assessing the impact of the program over time. Track course-taking patterns in AP and dual enrollment for identified gifted students as well as performance on high stakes tests such as the PSAT.

Resource and Funding Recommendations

- ◆ Provide a state funding mechanism that allows local districts flexibility in how gifted education dollars are expended within the parameters of gifted program development guidelines. It is very clear to the evaluators that the responsibilities of this program require

greater staffing than it currently enjoys. Increased district-wide assistance in areas such as curriculum and staff development, expansion to incorporate areas like counseling, and service articulation at secondary levels are important foci needing increased attention and resources. However, we are reluctant to recommend particular staffing allocations as we feel these options should be generated internally, with attention to available revenues and individual district needs. In fact, in addition to considering new personnel resources as a way to accomplish some of these recommendations, the state might also consider such alternatives as stronger collaboration with curriculum and instructional areas to bolster the capacity to upgrade classroom practices and similar collaborations with special education, bilingual education, and other federally supported programs to address gifted underrepresented population needs in the state.

- ◆ Provide full time program leadership in all districts. Such coordination would require educators to be endorsed in gifted education and highly conversant in gifted program options.
- ◆ Provide a “fair share” of funding for the gifted program in order to address the disparities between and among programs at the state level with similar outcomes.

Overall Recommendation

- ◆ Convene a statewide task force to review the evaluation report in order to develop a coherent plan of action that complements overall program recommendations.