

# Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education

## Position Statements

Arkansans for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) points with pride to Arkansas' efforts toward an interest in the education of students with gifts and talents. Arkansas was the first state to provide simultaneously a mandate and funding for gifted education. The Arkansas Governor's School is recognized nationally as an exemplary program for students with gifts and talents. Additionally, Arkansas' policies regarding the identification of students with gifts and talents were selected by Dr. James Gallagher in his *Policies on Identification from Special Populations: Three States in Profile* as a national model.

With Act 881 of 1995, the Arkansas Legislature established one of the nation's strongest incentive programs for development of the College Board's Advanced Placement program in Arkansas high schools. Act 929 of 1997 set a national precedent in that it became the first legislation to define Pre-Advanced Placement. Act 102 of 2003 and Act 1015 of 2007 increased access opportunities for Arkansas students to Advanced Placement.

As Arkansas maintains a climate of educational excellence for all students, the educational needs and characteristics of students with gifts and talents must not be overlooked. State funding for gifted programming must not only be maintained, it must be increased, to continue to provide quality services. The Arkansas Talented and Gifted Program Approval Standards must continue to be re-examined and strengthened. As most educational standards, they are documents that serve well, but are minimum standards for gifted programming. AGATE applauds the state's efforts to support recent initiatives to give young Arkansans the base they need to be productive individuals.

In order for students with gifts and talents to have opportunities for appropriate and challenging educational experiences, AGATE takes the following positions:

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### Academic Excellence

**Expecting each student to work at his or her maximum level toward or beyond a set of external standards as defined by the nation, state, district, and/or school. Learning and performing for each student should be at a challenging level commensurate with each student's skills and developed abilities.**

*AGATE supports academic excellence for all students. AGATE believes the use of research-based standards will assure both high expectations and high performance.*

## **Acceleration**

**Acceleration is allowing students to move through the curriculum at a pace that exceeds grade level expectations. Examples of acceleration are: non-graded classes, advanced course offerings, grade-skipping, early entrance, and subject matter acceleration through the elimination of content and skills that the student has already mastered.**

*AGATE supports the use of full or part-time acceleration as effective methods to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.*

*AGATE advocates that high school courses taken before the ninth grade should be counted toward graduation requirements. This affects students enrolled in math, science, and foreign language.*

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## **Advanced Placement**

**Advanced Placement is a College Board national program by which a secondary student can gain college credit and/or advanced college placement. Advanced placement is obtained by successfully meeting criteria established by higher education institutions on a nationally given and scored Advanced Placement examination.**

*AGATE supports Advanced Placement opportunities as one method to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents and other able learners.*

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## **Affective Learning**

**Affective learning incorporates in the curriculum opportunities for students to develop attitudes and attributes which promote emotional health.**

*AGATE supports the development of the whole child. AGATE believes that in addition to academic opportunities, appropriate guidance services should be provided for students with gifts and talents to meet their psychological and social needs.*

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## **At-Risk**

**At-risk students may underachieve or drop out of school. Unmet economic, physical, emotional, linguistic, and/or academic needs may inhibit a student's ability to learn or attend school.**

*AGATE believes that some students with gifts and talents are at risk because of unmet needs. AGATE supports identification practices that locate and serve these children.*

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### **Collaborative Learning**

**Collaborative learning is a teaching strategy whereby students are expected to share expertise and effort in order to create a common project/product. Forms of collaborative learning traditionally have been used with students with gifts and talents. Examples are: Future Problem Solving, Odyssey of the Mind, Math Counts, Destination Imagination, Quiz Bowl, etc.**

*AGATE supports providing students of similar interests/abilities the opportunity to choose to work collaboratively.*

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### **Common Core State Standards Initiative**

**Common Core Standards are a state-led effort to give all students the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our standards are competitive in the emerging global marketplace.**

*AGATE supports the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.*

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### **Cooperative Learning**

**Cooperative Learning is the practice of assigning a common task and/or project to a group of students with varying ability levels often reflecting the full range of student achievement and aptitude. Cooperative learning prepares students to live in a democratic society; helps them understand group membership and group dynamics; and allows them to practice both leadership and follower skills.**

*AGATE advocates those forms of cooperative learning that use enriched advanced materials but cautions against misuse of the process. Misuse of the process occurs when students with gifts and talents are assigned to help others learn rather than being allowed to advance at their own pace thereby restricting their access to learning. AGATE opposes the use of group grades.*

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### **Creative Thinking**

**Creative thinking is the human attribute of constructive originality. It is thinking in divergent ways and includes a variety of open-ended thinking processes (e.g., generating novel ideas, elaborating on or modifying a concept, thinking analogically or flexibly). It is the process of combining what exists into something new. The something new could be a procedure, idea, or product. Creative behavior is important to all areas of adult life including but not limited to the arts.**

*AGATE believes that creativity can be developed and needs to be nurtured in students to foster the abilities necessary to affect our society with new ideas and solutions to problems.*

*AGATE supports fostering creativity in all children. Highly creative students need an adaptation in their educational program.*

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### **Critical Thinking**

**Critical thinking is evaluative thinking process that requires judgment made through critical examination; components of critical thinking may include discerning purpose, evaluating argument, weighing evidence, appraising data and sources for accuracy or bias, using data to support inferences, examining multiple perspectives, and determining implications and consequences.**

*AGATE believes that critical thinking is a basic set of skills for all students in a democratic society. In and of itself, a thinking skills program is not sufficient to meet all the educational needs of students with gifts and talents. Thinking skills are not differentiated within themselves, but they can facilitate differentiation for the gifted.*

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### **Differentiation**

**Differentiation is adapting the curriculum to meet the unique needs of learners by making modifications in complexity, depth, and pacing. It may include selecting, rather than covering all the curriculum areas, depending on the individual needs of the student. Differentiated curriculum includes the adaptation of content, process, concepts, and products to meet a higher level of expectations appropriate to students with gifts and talents.**

*AGATE believes that curriculum should be differentiated for all students and that in all classrooms there should be multiple paths for success. The expectation is that all students should achieve high level outcomes. The major purpose of differentiation for the gifted is to challenge the advanced learner. Contemporary educational ideas, such as performance assessment, collaborative learning, ungraded curriculum or thematic interdisciplinary curriculum are not differentiated within themselves, but they can facilitate differentiation for the gifted.*

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### **Enrichment**

**Enrichment activities supplement and go beyond the core or standard grade-level curriculum. Gifted students should have opportunities for greater variety in content with greater depth and breadth, and the development of affective, creative and scientific skills not currently part of their regular classroom work.**

*AGATE believes that enrichment opportunities such as field trips, special speakers, special projects, and community involvement, or enrichment materials such as technology, reference materials, literature books, and arts materials should be provided for all students. Such activities or material acquisitions do NOT constitute a gifted program or a differentiated curriculum. Enrichment opportunities for students with gifts and talents should involve students in interaction with new ideas and topics not ordinarily included in the regular classroom.*

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## **Equity**

**Equitable education is fair and impartial learning opportunities and access to appropriate curriculum for gifted students. In order to meet educational needs at all levels of development, these opportunities should encourage and enable students to develop to their fullest potential.**

*AGATE encourages access to challenging programs for all students. Equity in the quality of education each student receives does not mean the outcome for each student will be the same.*

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## **Grouping**

**Students may be grouped by age, need, interest, or ability. Groups may be formed and reformed to meet varied instructional purposes. All students may need to participate in both heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping. Ability grouping is not synonymous with tracking.**

*AGATE advocates flexible grouping of students with gifts and talents. Students should be grouped for at least some part of the educational day in an appropriate setting, based on a commonality of the students' intellectual, academic, and/or affective needs. There should be a defined educational experience in this grouping.*

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## **Heterogeneous/Homogeneous Grouping**

**Grouping heterogeneously generally occurs by chronological age level and without regard for the diverse needs of students, their learning styles, or their interests. Homogeneous grouping is based on common criteria such as the students' interests, special needs, or academic abilities. Students of all ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups may be found in both patterns.**

*AGATE believes homogenous grouping is appropriate when the learning experiences/curriculum are adapted to meet students' special educational needs.*

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## **Honors Classes**

**Honors classes are secondary level courses specifically designed to be advanced in**

content, process, and product. Traditionally, students who meet various criteria choose or are placed into these courses.

*AGATE believes, when used properly, this is one way to ensure a more challenging and differentiated curriculum. Honors classes should be available for, but not limited to, identified students with gifts and talents. Recognizing the diversity of gifted students, honors classes do not constitute an entire secondary gifted program.*

*AGATE believes that further diverse services should be made available, e.g. seminars, mentorships, and independent study.*

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### **Identification**

The Arkansas Department of Education Standards of Gifted and Talented Programs delineate procedures for the identification of students with gifts and talents.

*AGATE supports the Arkansas Department of Education Program Approval Standards on identification.*

*AGATE believes that the appropriate use of the identification guidelines will result in identified students with gifts and talents who are representative of the school population in terms of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.*

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### **Independent Study**

Independent study allows students to follow individual or self-selected areas of interest or specific aptitude by designing and implementing their own study plans. Close monitoring by teachers is an essential component of independent study.

*AGATE believes guided independent study is an appropriate learning activity for students with gifts and talents. Successful independent study is based on student interest and teacher assistance. Students must develop knowledge of the research process and management skills.*

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### **Individual Learning Options**

Individual learning options provide a specific program that meets the particular needs, interests, and/or abilities of an individual student for some part of his/her educational experience. It does not mean that every child is working in isolation on a different level or a different subject at all times.

*AGATE believes that individual learning options can facilitate the education of all students. AGATE believes that meaningful education for students with gifts and talents requires challenging activities and assignments which often are beyond the basic curriculum. Individual learning options may also utilize mentorships, internships, and*

*independent research.*

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### **Interdisciplinary Curriculum**

**Interdisciplinary curriculum is a curriculum that is structured around a theme, topic or concept which incorporates the studies of math, science, language arts, social studies, and/or the fine arts.**

*AGATE believes interdisciplinary learning is one method to differentiate instruction. Making connections or recognizing new relationships among disciplines allows students to apply their knowledge to real situations*

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### **Learning Styles**

**Learning styles are a set of personal characteristics that suggest a student's natural preference and need for differing types of classroom experiences.**

*AGATE believes that all students have learning needs that can only be met by varying methodology and experiences within the classroom setting.*

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### **Mentorship**

**Mentorships match students one-to-one with another individual who can provide advice and/or expertise in a field of study.**

*AGATE supports mentoring options as one way to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.*

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### **Multicultural Education**

**Multicultural education is a process, not a single activity. The process should help students develop a better understanding of their own backgrounds and those of other groups that compose our society. Through this process students should learn to respect and appreciate diversity and overcome prejudicial attitudes. The multicultural education process should provide a learning environment which meets the academic and social needs of individual students. These needs may vary due to race, sex, disability, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic background.**

*AGATE advocates multicultural education that fosters in all children the ability to critically analyze and make intelligent decisions about real-life problems and issues.*

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### **Performance Assessment**

**Performance assessment is the process of evaluating student learning using student products or performance instead of traditional standardized tests. It allows students to be evaluated with regard to their individuality and creativity.**

*AGATE supports appropriate performance assessment practices for students with gifts and talents.*

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### **Pre-AP (Pre-Advanced Placement)**

**Pre-AP is a suite of K-12 professional development resources and services. These initiatives are designed to equip all middle and high school teachers with the strategies and tools they need to engage their students in active, high-level learning, thereby ensuring that every middle and high school student develops the skills, habits of mind, and concepts needed to succeed in college. The Pre-AP initiatives assist in building rigorous curricula, facilitate access to Advanced Placement for students, and introduce concepts, skills and assessment methods for success in AP and other challenging courses.**

*AGATE supports the initiatives of Pre-AP as a means to increase the equitable access to Advanced Placement coursework.*

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### **Task Commitment**

**Task commitment is behavior that illustrates a student's choice to carry an idea to completion.**

*AGATE believes that task commitment is demonstrated through a student's personal commitment to a task. A lack of commitment to school assigned tasks is not necessarily an indication that task commitment is not present in the student.*

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### **Underachievement**

**Underachievement is a discrepancy between recognized potential and actual academic performance. The causes of underachievement may be social, emotional, physical, and/or academic.**

*AGATE believes that gifted underachievers should be included in programs for students with gifts and talents as need dictates. AGATE advocates programs that serve all students with gifts and talents, not just those who are achieving. Underachievement is often a consequence of inappropriate curriculum. Special counseling for the underachieving student with gifts and talents may constitute one appropriate learning opportunity.*

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