

Colorado Gifted Education Coalition  
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Talented  
Comments regarding work of Interim Educational Success Task Force  
June 2012

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to everyone on the committee for your hard work and bipartisan efforts to improve education for every child in Colorado.

#### Purpose of this letter

At the June 7, 2012 meeting the committee agreed to invite lobbyists and key groups to provide feedback for two purposes. One request was to analyze bills that were ESTF bills enacted this legislative session to identify their impact/effectiveness for educators and students.

The second request was to review subcommittee recommendations/initiatives and provide input regarding the next steps.

#### COMMENTS REGARDING INITIAL INTENT OF SB11-111

Bullet 1 The key words relating to the needs of gifted students are, “or higher.” We believe the intent was for the interim committee to be broad in scope in addressing educational success issues.

Bullet 2 The key words in this bullet are “intervention education services” and “identify best practices.” We believe that identified gifted students qualify for intervention in education services because their instructional needs vary significantly from the norm. We know that “best practices” in general education are align with “best practices” in gifted education.

Bullet 3 The key words are “diagnostically using a student’s assessment results in creating and maintaining the student’s ICAP including intervention strategies where appropriate.” We believe that basing instruction and programming on “effective” assessment is critical for identified gifted students and should be reflected in individualized intervention plans.

#### COMMENTS REGARDING LEGISLATION

SB 12-047 We support the use of Accuplacer or other appropriate assessments to diagnose instructional levels and prescribe appropriate strategies and interventions for each student. Many gifted students need acceleration through content. Some have asynchronous development (advanced in one academic area, not in others). Diagnosing these

differences is important in the development of appropriate intervention strategies.

HB 12-1072 We support the concept of credit for prior learning. It should apply to secondary as well as post secondary experiences including but not limited to independent study, extra-curricular experience and other experiences not recognized in typical credit courses.

HB 12 1013 We support middle schools adopting policies to identify and provide interventions for students at risk of dropping out. This would apply to a number of at-risk gifted students and twice exceptional gifted students.

## COMMENTS REGARDING SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, the work of the subcommittees, while focusing on supplemental interventions and strategies for remediation, should also make recommendations for advanced students. In reviewing the following initiatives it appears that the committee is focusing on “best practices” that will benefit all students.

## COMMENTS REGARDING FUTURE INITIATIVES

### Successful Transition into High School and Completion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade

Highly gifted students are often ready for high school either as fully accelerated students or accelerated in specific academic areas. It is critical that any initiative allow flexibility of diagnosis and programming for these students.

Coordination between middle and high schools is key. Credit by examination is an important option. Flexibility in seat time, home-work and other restrictors is essential.

### High School Graduation and Matriculation into Postsecondary

The emphasis on varied opportunities for students to enroll in college level coursework through AP, IB, Early College, concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment is key for flexible programming for gifted students. It is important to avoid rigidity in the implementation of these options especially where highly gifted students and precocious (younger than norm) students are involved. The use of Accuplacer or other appropriate formative diagnoses hold promise for determining effective, efficient instruction for gifted students.

### Competency-Based System as an Intervention to Social Promotion

A competency-based system would provide for the flexibility in instruction and programming needed by gifted students. Grade level/age level placement has often hindered appropriate instruction for gifted students. In the current assessment system educators should be allowed to test “off level” where necessary to determine students’ level of instruction. Caution: Students advanced in academic areas often do not receive instruction and are left to “self-instruction.” Every student should receive instruction at his/her readiness level. No student should be deprived of teacher time or be expected to sit through instruction when they have demonstrated prior knowledge of the subject.

### Formative Assessments to Differentiate Instruction and Interventions

Best practices in gifted education have been at the forefront of differentiated instruction and intervention. Focusing on formative assessment for diagnostic and prescriptive decisions is key to meeting the needs of gifted students as well as all other students. The current Response to Intervention System (RtI) implemented at the state level shows promising results where applied effectively.

### Early Literacy (all kids reading by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

All primary teachers should be reading specialists who understand the precocious reader as well as the remedial reader. All students deserve (morally and ethically) to receive instruction at their level of readiness. This may mean cross grade grouping, acceleration, blended learning strategies, etc. Teacher instructional time is as important to advanced readers as it is to remedial readers. Gifted readers are often ready early to make the shift from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Reading specialists are able to determine this early shift and assist students in finding developmentally appropriate, yet academically challenging books and materials.