



## *Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit*

Kansas Gifted Education History  
Equal Educational Opportunity

**"There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people."  
- Thomas Jefferson**

The concept of equal educational opportunity should extend to all children, including those identified as gifted, and provisions should be made to enable each child to reach his/her highest potential. Equal educational opportunity does not mean providing the same education for every child but providing the opportunities through which every child can maximize his or her individual potential. True equality is providing equal opportunity to benefit from education according to ability. To use the same methods and materials for all children is not providing equal educational opportunity. Setting expectations too high may frustrate some students and create an environment for failure. The same is true of a student with high ability who will not reach his/her potential if required to perform at exactly the same level as all other students.

In the present social, political, and educational systems based upon democratic principles, the refusal to provide gifted children the right to an educational opportunity appropriate to their level of development is not acceptable. To assume that one level of educational opportunity meets the needs of all students is unfair. A variety of learning opportunities at many different levels must be provided for all children.

When entering the educational system, many gifted children have already developed the basic skills other students have yet to be taught. Their ideas and interests may be very different from that of their age peers, and they may begin to develop a sense of isolation or feel different from others. Because their educational needs are being ignored, many students with giftedness fail to achieve their potential, set low goals for themselves, and achieve at levels significantly lower than their intellectual capability. Without access to special resources and intensive instruction early in their educational experience, the highly gifted are most at risk for under achievement.

Gifted and talented students develop a sense of competence and self-confidence when they are provided services designated to meet their unique needs. Students with giftedness who receive special services tend to make significant gains in achievement. They learn to work more effectively and efficiently and develop strong problem-solving skills. These students absorb a vast amount of information and utilize this knowledge to produce a variety of possible solutions. They become producers of knowledge and ideas instead of just consumers.

Loss of talent through educational neglect can be a tragic waste for both the individual and in turn for society. Students who are gifted and talented have much to contribute to society and in turn can benefit society by solving a range of complex problems facing humanity today. Society needs these gifted individuals and needs to expect much from them. As adults, today's gifted students are needed to play more demanding and innovative roles as humanity faces future complex problems. Leaders, problem solvers, and complex thinkers are vital for society's progress in this millennium. The United States Congress recognized the value of these talented individuals in a declaration made in 1972 (P.L.I 95-561, Title IX, Part A, Section 901):

**"The Nation's greatest resource for solving critical national problems in areas of national concern is its gifted and talented children. Unless the special abilities of gifted and talented children are developed during their elementary and secondary school years, their special potential for assisting the Nation may be lost. Furthermore, gifted and talented children from economically disadvantaged families and areas are often not afforded the opportunity to fulfill their special and valuable potential, due to inadequate or inappropriate educational services."**

Because many students with giftedness do not continue to achieve without attention to their unique educational needs, the losses of individual potential and the benefits of gifted services are difficult to calculate. As James Gallagher wrote in 1978, "...failure to help the gifted child reach his potential is a societal tragedy, the extent of which is difficult to measure but which is surely great. How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight? They are the difference between what we are and what we could be as a society."



**TYPE**

Variations in Single-subject acceleration:

1. Receive instruction in 4<sup>th</sup> grade class for reading and math; returns to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom for other subject areas.
2. Group of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students transported to junior high building for 7<sup>th</sup> grade pre-algebra class; transported back to elementary building for instruction with classmates the remainder of the day.



**TYPE**

Variations in Whole-grade acceleration:

1. When a 1<sup>st</sup> grader has completed 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom at the beginning of the next year.
2. When a 5<sup>th</sup> grader completes the fall semester, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the start of the second semester.