2020 Legislative Priority
Equitable Identification of HiCap Students

"Gifted children in poverty and from minority groups are 2.5 times less likely to be identified for, and in, gifted and talented programs in schools." –National Association for Gifted Children[1]

Special Program	WA Total Enrollment	Highly Capable Enrollment
Free/Reduced Lunch	46.42%	19.28%
English Language Learner	11.70%	1.10%
Special Education/Section 504	19.50%	8.29%

Source: OSPI Report to the Legislature, 2019

Why is under-identification happening in Washington state?

- A parent or teacher must refer a student in order to be considered for highly capable (HiCap) services. **Most students are never considered.**
- Testing is often scheduled on Saturdays or afterschool, at an unfamiliar or distant location. **Discriminates against families without transportation.**

Why fix under-identification?

- Identifying low-income students with high potential **early on closes the opportunity gap**.[2,3,4,5]
- HiCap students disengage, underachieve, or have behavior problems when under-challenged.[6] **Students of color are more likely to be referred for special education than highly capable**.[7]
- When school is too easy, students don't develop study skills, persistence, or a solid work ethic.[8]

How to fix under-identification?

- The #1 research-based practice is to **universally screen every student in a grade level**.[9,10,11,12]
- Can use **existing assessments** (like Smarter Balanced) or administer a screener.
- Non-verbal, cross-culturally equitable screening tools take **as little as 30 minutes**, assess reasoning skills (not math or reading), and serve as a valuable critical thinking exercise for all students.
- **Do not rely on teachers to refer HiCap students.** This is a major cause of under-identification.[13]

Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that achieve equitable representation of all demographic groups in highly capable programs, regardless of zip code, especially low-income students, students with disabilities ("twice exceptional"), English Language Learners, and highly mobile students by universal screening:

- All students by 2nd grade, and again by 6th grade; and
- At students' school of attendance, during the regular school day; and
- Using unbiased screening instruments.

For More Information

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org)

Citations

[1] National Association for Gifted Children (2018). http://www.nagc.org/giftedness-knows-no-boundaries

[2] Yaluma & Tyner (2018). Is There a Gifted Gap? Gifted Education in High-Poverty Schools. Fordham Institute. https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/there-gifted-gap-gifted-education-high-poverty-schools

[3] VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh (2007). Overlooked Gems: A National Perspective on Low-Income Promising Learners. A Joint Publication of the National Association for Gifted Children and the Center for Gifted Education, College of William & Mary.

[4] Plucker, et al (2018). Equal Talents, Unequal Opportunities, Second Edition: A Report Card on State Support for Academically Talented Low-Income Students. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. https://www.jkcf.org/

[5] Finn & Wright (2015). Failing Our Brightest Kids: The Global Challenge of Educating High-Ability Students. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press. p. 227–229.

[6] Grissom, et al (2017). Teacher and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs: Evidence from National Data. Elementary School Journal 117, no. 3, p. 396–422.

[7] Ford & Russo (2016). Historical and legal overview of special education overrepresentation: Access and equity denied. Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners, 16(1), 2016, 1–8.

[8] Lubinsky & Benbow (2006). Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth After 35 Years. Perspectives on Psychological Science. Volume 1, Number 4. p. 316-345. https://my.vanderbilt.edu/smpy/ ***One of their most important findings is that receiving accelerated curriculum (via grade skipping or subject acceleration) is the biggest predictor of long-term success for gifted students.***

[9] Card & Giuliano (2016). Universal screening increases the representation of low-income and minority students in gifted education. PNAS vol. 113, no. 48, Nov 26, 2016, p. 13678-83. http://www.nber.org/papers/w21519.pdf ***When Broward County, Florida universally screened all 2nd grade students in 2005-06 and 2006-07, the number of low-income students and English Language Learners identified as gifted increased by 180%.***

[10] Manoatl (2019). Aurora Public Schools' pilot program centers equity in GT identification, finds many more gifted black and Hispanic/Latino students who were previously overlooked. https://www.coloradokids.org/aurora-public-schools-pilot-program-centers-equity-in-gt-identification-finds-many-more-gifted-black-and-hispanic-latino-students-who-were-previously-overlooked/

[11] Lakin (2016). Universal Screening and the Representation of Historically Underrepresented Minority Students in Gifted Education. Journal of Advanced Academics 27, no. 2, p. 139–149.

[12] National Association of Gifted Children (2018). New Report Makes Clear the Need for Universal Screening of Gifted Children. http://www.nagc.org/about-nagc/media/press-releases/there-gifted-gap

[13] NWGCA & WAETAG (2019). What do Seattle & NYC Have in Common? http://tinyurl.com/seattlenyc