

18.36 Equitable Access to Highly Capable Services

Resolution passed 2018; amended 2022

Whereas, Washington State PTA is a strong advocate for the social and emotional well-being and academic needs of all children, so that they may reach their highest potential; and

Whereas, the Washington state legislature has recognized highly capable education as part of basic education for grades K-12 in all Washington public schools since 2011; and

Whereas, highly capable students often have unique needs and vulnerabilities, including social and emotional challenges, delayed executive function, asynchronous intellectual, social, and motor development, different developmental timelines, and a need for accelerated academics; and

Whereas, successful student outcomes (positive self-image as well as academic achievement) are more likely when student needs have been met, and suffer when they have not been met; and

Whereas, students of color, multi-language learners, low-income students, students with disabilities, and twice-exceptional (“2e”) students (highly capable students with disabilities) are 250% less likely to be identified and have access to highly capable education; and


Whereas, best practices for equitable access and identification of highly capable students have been published by the Washington Highly Capable Program Technical Working Group (2010), as well as in national research; and

Whereas, pre-service teacher training programs rarely cover the characteristics and needs of highly capable students and how disability impacts highly capable students. As a result, teachers are not always equipped to recognize when a student should be referred for timely evaluation of their cognitive ability and/or for evaluation of their suspected disability.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support using best practices to remove barriers to the identification of ALL students who would benefit from highly capable services in every demographic group, regardless of gender or prior academic achievement, including students of color, multi-language learners, students from low-income families, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, migrant students, students with disabilities, and twice-exceptional (“2e”) students. Best practices include, but are not limited to, the use of appropriate universal screening in early elementary grades, and again before secondary school, conducting all screenings and assessments during the regular school day, and other best practices known to improve equity of access; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support access to highly capable services for ALL students who qualify for highly capable education using expanded equity promoting criteria, and expressly objects to limiting access to highly capable education based on space constraints, logistical considerations, lack of transportation, waitlists, disability-related educational needs, holding



appeals to a higher standard than narrow general identification criteria, or any form of quotas; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support teachers, counselors, principals, and administrators receiving meaningful pre-service training and ongoing professional development about the unique characteristics and social, emotional, and academic needs of highly capable and twice-exceptional (“2e”) students; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils support legislation and policies that create systems of accountability for school districts that fail to equitably identify or serve highly capable students.