



## 2011 PROPOSED STATEMENT: **HIGHLY CAPABLE**

The Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that ensure highly capable children (K-12) receive an appropriate basic education, which includes access to highly capable programs (K-12).

The Washington State PTA recommends that the legislature and Quality Education Council build on the work of the Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group. This shall include, but not be limited to:

- Advocating for a standard definition of highly capable and working to ensure students who are both highly capable and students of color, who are poor, or who have disabilities, have equitable access to the state's highly capable program.
- Further, Washington State PTA supports the recommendation that districts that do not currently offer highly capable programs refer to the guidelines set forth in the report of Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group.

### **Context:**

Highly capable programs (K-12) are part of basic education, yet children who need these programs face accessibility barriers. This is especially true for children of color, children who are poor or children who have a disability.

The Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group was funded by the legislature and tasked with setting guidelines for identification procedures, program and curriculum options, accountability, and professional development measures to ensure that all highly capable students, no matter their socioeconomic status, have their needs met. Early and ongoing identification is a critical part of addressing underserved populations. So is ensuring that all children with special needs have equitable access to appropriate instruction and resources.

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### **Why now?**

This work continues ongoing efforts around basic education reform and plays a part in closing the educational opportunity gap for disadvantaged students and students of color, as well as students with special needs.

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### **Why is this issue important?**

Traditional methods of identifying highly capable students leave out many who possess these qualities or who have the potential to benefit from highly capable programs. White and Asian students are overrepresented while Black, Hispanic and American Indian students are highly underrepresented.<sup>1</sup>

And even when they are identified, access to appropriate programs is uneven. At present, OSPI will allow districts to interpret "access to highly capable programs" as one AP class in high school. For most highly capable students, particularly those of color and/or low socioeconomic status, this is way too late.

The Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group took care to design its report so that regulations could be written to give districts that do not currently offer highly capable (K-12) programs guidance on how to set up programs. In the past session, highly capable received funding, but no clear direction for districts without existing programs.

The areas of concern are the same across the state:

- Level of service provided
- Equity of access
- Multiple measures of identification across various skill sets.

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### **Why PTA/PTSA?**

- Basic education reform is Washington State PTA's top priority. In 2009, HB 2261 included highly capable as part of basic education. Beginning in September 2011, funding for highly capable students will be protected under basic education. Washington State PTA has the opportunity to continue advocating for a definition of highly capable students that addresses the needs of students across all cultural and linguistic groups, across all socio-economic strata, and disabling conditions both visible and invisible, and across all areas of human endeavor.
- This issue fits in well with our mission and vision and aligns with Resolution 18.22 Children with Special Needs.
- Washington State PTA participated in the Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group, alongside researchers and academics, principals and teachers, administrators and parents and of highly gifted students.

**Recommended WSPTA board action:** Do pass

**Issue submitted by:** Brooke Valentine, of Grass Lake PTA 9.7.20; Janis Traven, of Garfield HS PTSA 6.15.467; David Berg, of J.P. Stewart PTA 5.7.55

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### **Resources:**

- **Highly Capable Program Technical Work Group report:**  
<http://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/Workgroup/pubdocs/HCPWorkgroupLegReport.pdf>
- **Highly capable: Current programs in Washington and other states:**  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/EDU/Documents/Highly%20Capable%20Students%20FINAL%20w%20OSPI%20forms%2009%2023.pdf>
- **Washington Coalition for Gifted Education:** <http://wcge.wordpress.com/>

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<sup>1</sup> Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, Closing Opportunity Gaps in Washington's Public Education System, January 2010 report, page 10.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/Cisl/pubdocs/AgapLegReport2010.pdf>