

## TALENT Act S.512

### To Aid Gifted and High-Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation’s Teachers Act

Success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a commitment to developing student talent as early as possible. When compared to other developed countries, the United States ranks 31<sup>st</sup> in math, 17<sup>th</sup> in reading, and 23<sup>rd</sup> in science<sup>1</sup>. To address this urgent problem, Senators Grassley (Iowa), Casey (PA), and Mikulski (MD) have introduced legislation that amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide responsible federal leadership in meeting the needs of gifted and high-ability students. *To Aid Gifted and High-Ability Learners by Empowering the Nation’s Teachers* (TALENT) Act has four key emphases:

- Supporting Educator Development to Ensure Academic Growth for High-Ability Students
- Confronting and Addressing the National Excellence Gap
- Providing Public Transparency of Student Achievement Data
- Continuing Research and Dissemination on Best Practices in Gifted Education

The TALENT Act provides common sense, no-cost strategies to change America’s talent trajectory and regain our role as an international leader in education. Far too many students are not achieving to their potential, with every state reporting wide “Excellence Gaps,” the achievement gap at the top levels of achievement between low income and their more affluent peers and between minority students and white students. Nationally, on the 2011 NAEP math exam, 9% of white students scored at the advanced level, compared with 1% of African American students and 2% of Hispanic students. The TALENT Act addresses the persistent challenges that impede school districts from providing appropriate services to high-ability students:

Challenge	TALENT Solution
The need for federal leadership to systematically respond to the academic needs of high-ability students must be balanced with real fiscal challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new TALENT Act does not create any new programs and does not have a separate authorization. Instead, the bill inserts gifted and talented students into relevant areas of ESEA.</li> </ul>
The majority of teachers are not trained to recognize high ability and adjust instruction to work with high-ability and gifted students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support professional development through Title II based on a local analysis of existing excellence gaps and steps to close the gap.</li> <li>• Require partnership grant recipients to use funds to ensure that principals, teachers, and pupil service personnel have the training to supporting identification and services for gifted students, including those who have not been formally identified.</li> <li>• Enhance the Rural Education Achievement Program to include gifted education as an allowable professional learning topic.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Hanushek, E. A., Peterson, P.E., & Woessmann, L. (2010). *U.S. math performance in global perspective*. Boston, MA: Harvard University, Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Challenge	TALENT Solution
<p>Access to gifted education is inequitable, often only available to students in more affluent areas, which results in an underrepresentation of African American and Hispanic students.<sup>2</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require states and districts to include in their Title I plans the steps they will take to assist local schools districts in supporting gifted students, including those who have not been formally identified as gifted.</li> <li>• Require districts to describe how their Title I schools will identify and serve gifted and talented students, including high-ability students who have not been formally identified as gifted.</li> <li>• Enhance the Rural Education Achievement Program to allow funds to support rural gifted and talented students through professional development for teachers.</li> </ul>
<p>High ability and high achieving students are not maximizing their potential in part because education policy ignores them.<sup>3</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct states to provide greater transparency of achievement data to families and the public by including information about students who perform at the advanced level on the state tests, disaggregated by subgroup, on the state report cards.</li> <li>• Direct the U.S. Secretary of Education to report to Congress and the public how the states and districts are taking steps to close their excellence gaps.</li> </ul>
<p>Districts and schools lack evidence-based strategies to support high ability and gifted students.</p>	<p>Direct the Institute for Education Sciences to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue research and development activities on gifted students;</li> <li>• Administer demonstration grants that build and enhance the ability of school personnel to support gifted and talented students; and</li> <li>• Disseminate evidence-based best practices to improve the identification and instruction of gifted students.</li> </ul>
<p>Increase STEM Opportunities for high achieving students</p>	<p>Increase the number of students from low income families and other groups underrepresented in STEM fields by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting students to participate in the federal STEM education programs in the America COMPETES law based on achievement.</li> <li>• Encouraging school districts to provide AP/IB coursework when the student is academically able, even if that is earlier than is typical.</li> </ul>

We urge you to support the TALENT Act to systematically ensure that all high-ability students, regardless of zip code, are able to maximize their potential. The nation cannot afford to delay.

<sup>2</sup> See U.S. Office for Civil Rights. (2012). *The transformed civil rights data collection (CRDC (p 9))*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2012-data-summary.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Xiang, Y., Dahlin, M., Cronin, J., Theaker, T., & Durant, S. (2011). Do high flyers maintain their altitude? Performance trends of top performers. Retrieved from <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/high-flyers.html>