



TIGER

Tennessee Initiative for Gifted Education Reform

POSITION STATEMENT:

ON THE TAASE PROPOSAL TO REMOVE GIFTED EDUCATION FROM TENNESSEE'S SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS

The Tennessee Association of Administrators of Special Education (TAASE) has indicated it will propose legislation in January 2002 to remove gifted education from the responsibility of special education. The stated objective is to force general education—i.e., regular classroom teachers—to be responsible for developing programs and services for academically gifted children. **TIGER is strongly opposed to the proposal as it currently exists.** The TAASE proposal would end existing programs and services for gifted children before any general education program for gifted education is even discussed. TIGER believes no changes should be made in current gifted programs until any new program is carefully planned, adopted into law, and funded.

Moving gifted education into general education with no program, no training, and no funding in place would be disastrous for academically gifted children. There would be no expectation that school districts identify gifted children, and, with no plan or program, no expectation that any services be provided to meet the needs of those children already identified as gifted. Few regular classroom teachers now have any training in gifted education—in either the challenging academic needs or unique social and emotional needs of gifted children. Moreover, as a practical matter, very few regular classroom teachers have the time to differentiate their instruction—in every subject, every day—for the several gifted children in their classrooms. General education classrooms are thus unprepared to meet the needs of academically gifted children, and the TAASE proposal would do nothing to change this.

It is a simple axiom that “the horse comes before the cart.” The TAASE proposal, however, would do the opposite. There should be no consideration of changing gifted education in Tennessee until and unless a new and meaningful program is implemented and operational.

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