



TIGER

Tennessee Initiative for Gifted Education Reform

POSITION STATEMENT:

PRINCIPLES THAT SHOULD GUIDE GIFTED EDUCATION REFORM

As an organization, TIGER is committed to the reform and strengthening of gifted education in Tennessee. We believe that educational equality and opportunity demand that we work as a community—families and schools together—to meet the unique needs of every child. Each and every child in Tennessee deserves an educational system that addresses their needs, that challenges them, that allows them to grow, to thrive, and to succeed. Too often, this simply isn't the case for academically gifted and talented children. Too often, they are not challenged. Too often, they feel isolated. Too often, they do not thrive.

Reform of gifted education should aim to build a system that reliably identifies academically gifted children throughout Tennessee, assesses their individual needs, and puts in place the means to meet those needs. Such reform should be guided by the following basic principles:

- 1) The existing system of gifted education in Tennessee, while imperfect, should not be ended unless a new and sound system of gifted education is adopted and implemented.
- 2) Reform should maintain the mandate that school districts identify academically gifted children and provide services to meet their needs.
- 3) Reform should maintain the existing due process rights of families.
- 4) Reform should provide strong mechanisms for identifying academically gifted children. This requires outreach to parents, early identification, and identification tools that are both valid and non-discriminatory.
- 5) Reform should recognize that there are differing levels of academic giftedness. Thus, no one set of services can meet the needs of every academically gifted child. Rather, educational services must be geared to meet the needs of each individual child.
- 6) Reform should recognize that academically gifted children often confront unique social-emotional issues, and that these needs must be addressed.

- 7) Reform should recognize the need to dramatically improve teacher training with regard to academic giftedness. A training standard should be established as a part of teacher licensure, and a system of certification in gifted education should be established.
- 8) Reform should recognize that some children are both academically gifted and have particular learning disabilities, and that special and gifted education must be integrated in these instances.
- 9) Reforms should be driven by the extensive research in education and psychology on what is needed and what works regarding academically gifted children. Methods of identification and services should be guided by best practices in the field rather than any preconceived notions.