



# TIGER

## Tennessee Initiative for Gifted Education Reform

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## **Maddox-Herron Bill Incomplete and Shortsighted – Threatens Educational Opportunities for Academically Gifted Children**

Representative Mark Maddox and Senator Roy Herron have introduced legislation (HB 2934 / SB 3144) to permanently remove “intellectually gifted” children from special education. The bill was introduced on behalf of Steve Ramsey, an administrator in the Weakley County school system. TIGER opposes the bill because it is incomplete and shortsighted, and, as such, threatens the educational opportunities of academically gifted children all across Tennessee.

- The Maddox-Herron Bill would reverse over a quarter of a century of Tennessee education law, with no rationale or purpose identified. Most states provide gifted education services through special education, and Tennessee has done so since the mid-1970s. Maddox-Herron would reverse this with no indication of what problem exists with the current system that needs fixing.
- Under the Maddox-Herron Bill, academically gifted students could—and most likely would—lose important rights, protections, and services. Under current law, school districts are required to identify academically gifted children and provide services to meet their educational needs, and students are afforded due process protections if schools refuse to do so. Maddox-Herron merely calls for the development of a “plan” to provide for gifted education in the regular classroom by 2003; it very clearly does not specify that such a plan must maintain existing rights and services afforded academically gifted students.

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- The Maddox-Herron Bill would explicitly limit gifted education services after 2003 to the “regular classroom.” With this mandate, nearly all existing programs for academically gifted children would be terminated—pullout programs (such as ENCORE in Nashville, CLUE in Memphis, APEX in Shelby County, SEEK in Wilson County, and MERIT in Murfreesboro), dual enrollment programs in high school and college classes, mentors, tutors, and resource rooms. These types of programs account for nearly all gifted education in the State today, but none of them take place in the regular classroom.
- The Maddox-Herron Bill does not provide for the funding of gifted education or for training regular classroom teachers to take on the added responsibility of gifted education. The Bill transfers some funds to general education, but only for the one transition year as gifted education is moved from special education to the regular classroom. After this, there is no mechanism for funding, and, given current budget problems, new funds are obviously unlikely to be available.

As a practical matter, regular classroom teachers are already expected to do too much with the time they have available. Good teachers, who sincerely want to help and challenge academically gifted children, rarely have the time to create and implement alternative lesson plans for the one or two gifted students in the class. This is why educational research overwhelmingly shows that the needs of academically gifted students often go unmet in the regular classroom. And, it is why the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest professional organization for special educators, calls for gifted education to be provided through special education.

TIGER opposes the Maddox-Herron Bill because it provides no rationale to change existing law, seriously threatens existing gifted education rights and services, provides no funding for future programs, and runs counter to educational research.

For the full text of the Maddox-Herron Bill: [HB 2934](#) / [SB 3144](#)

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**TIGER is a statewide, non-profit organization of parents and other advocates working to strengthen educational opportunities for academically gifted children in Tennessee.**