



**National Association for Gifted Children  
Talent Development Task Force  
Report to the Board of Directors**

November 2015

# Talent Development Task Force Report to the Board of Directors

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# National Association for Gifted Children

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### Background

In February 2015 the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Board of Directors voted unanimously to create a task force on talent development for the purpose of researching, discussing, and assessing where NAGC is and where it should be going relative to its talent development emphasis. A diverse group of experienced leaders agreed to serve. The Talent Development Task Force met for the first time on March 16, 2015, and met monthly, finalizing this report on November 2, 2015.

### Introduction and Scope of Work

In its first meetings, members of the task force (TF) reviewed NAGC's talent development activities to date, including proposed legislative and other organizational initiatives; the 2012 low-income, high-ability student summit; creation of the Corporate Advisory Council; and the 2014 Talent Development Challenge in Baltimore. TF members also reviewed previous NAGC documents and noted that the *NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards* already reflected a significant trend toward a talent development perspective on gifted students and services to meet their needs. **Fundamental issues related to TD were discussed and TF members reached consensus on the group's priorities:**

1. The most important undertaking, particularly in light of disagreements related to the meaning of the term, was to describe "talent development" (TD) in such a way that clarified the term as it relates to gifted children and youth. TF members believed (a) a carefully crafted explanation of a TD framework for gifted education would show that traditional views of giftedness and newer emphases on TD are not necessarily mutually exclusive and (b) this report might serve as a step toward building consensus for the gifted education community regarding the import of a TD perspective and for future collaborative advocacy work with other education organizations and stakeholders.

The group agreed it should be clear about NAGC's continued commitment to the recognition of giftedness as manifested in multiple ways, including high IQ, but also build on new research that indicates ability is malleable, affected by opportunity, and develops over time from potential to increased competency and expertise. TF members

agreed that entity views of intelligence are not compatible with TD approaches, which focus on transforming potential into giftedness or talent. The group reached consensus that clarification of a TD framework could help present gifted education in a way that is more engaging to a broader audience; could contribute to teacher training and gifted programming that go beyond an emphasis on identification to a more expansive, systematic approach to the development of high ability; could lead to expanded legislator and corporate support for services for gifted students; and enjoys a rich research base.

2. After describing TD as a framework for understanding giftedness and elaborating on the promise of such a framework for gifted education services, the TF would tackle a second priority -- developing a list of recommendations for the NAGC Board for specific activities, including future events, reports, and other projects related to TD.

**The remainder of this report addresses the two priorities described above.**

### **Part One: Discussion of the Concept of Talent Development as a Significant Theoretical Framework for the Field of Gifted Education**

While recent conversations might lead some to believe that TD is a new concept, it is not. TD as a goal for gifted education has been proposed for decades by many distinguished individuals in the field. These scholars include Don Treffinger, John Feldhusen, Carolyn Callahan, Joe Renzulli and many others. Early views of TD coincided with emerging conceptions of giftedness that were broader than IQ only and recognition of the role of non-cognitive traits related to gifted-level achievement. They were associated with the field's growing focus on recognizing and serving a broader range of gifted students, especially those from under-identified populations, with a wider array of program models and services. The perspective on TD offered by the TF is a compilation of views expressed by various scholars.

In recognition of the overlap in theories related to the nature of giftedness and programming practices, and noting that the term "talent development" is used by other educational groups, members of the TF determined to stay focused squarely on high-ability students and how TD approaches can be used to advance their extraordinary abilities. Discussions must address TD within the context of gifted education: *Who are these students we call gifted? In what ways are they different from peers with similar experience levels? Which of their needs might be addressed effectively through a TD model?* To that end, it was necessary to compare traditional, particularly entity, views of giftedness and gifted education with more recent concepts.

## **Evolution of Ideas, Concepts, and Definitions Based on Recent and Emerging Research and Understandings**

Just as cultures and the talent areas valued by those cultures have changed, so have the prevailing theories regarding the nature and development of giftedness, which is testament to an increasingly complex understanding of extraordinary human potential, i.e., giftedness as a multifaceted phenomenon that includes cognitive, affective, and motivational qualities, and is influenced by both social and psychological contexts. Modern theories have roots, of course, in earlier traditions that over time proved to be inadequate. **Some of these traditional views have limited support in empirical research and, in many cases, act as barriers to support for gifted education from a broader group of stakeholders. These views are included here as a way to make clear key differences in a TD framework for gifted education based on newer conceptions of giftedness:**

1. Historically, the primary attention to giftedness and gifted education is directed at high intellectual abilities. From this perspective, giftedness is seen as an innate quality of an individual that needs to be recognized and revealed through some type of cognitive assessment or IQ test.
2. In the traditional understanding of giftedness, the basis of domain-specific abilities can be identified via IQ at an early age.
3. Further, gifted individuals are presumed to possess reasoning abilities that allow them to be successful across all academic domains and are presumed to remain gifted throughout their lives, whether or not they actually fulfill their potential through achievement in valued domains.
4. This entity view of giftedness presumes that giftedness is inherent in the person rather than in how the person develops his or her abilities.
5. Some traditional theories suggest that gifted children are morally superior and more sensitive, that giftedness can be defined by personal psychological characteristics/traits (e.g., over-excitabilities, sensitivities, and intensities).

As theorists and practitioners worked to resolve problems with earlier conceptions of giftedness, understanding of the phenomenon became richer. Newer theories call attention to a broad slate of traits and behaviors that contribute to the development of giftedness and stress its developmental nature. Recognition that giftedness emerges through the interaction of innate abilities and learning or experience has encouraged stronger programmatic emphasis on TD.

**Below is the task force’s list of core beliefs about the nature of giftedness that set the stage for discussions of TD as a framework for gifted education programming and service options:**

1. Ability, both general and domain specific, matters.
2. Giftedness is developmental and malleable, rather than fixed. This is especially true for children from poverty whose IQ scores can increase as a result of exposure to quality educational environments. According to studies of brain development, intensive and challenging experiences can significantly modify problem-solving ability. Research on expertise development has revealed how new abilities are “unlocked” by extensive experience with and practice in a domain.
3. Giftedness is multi-dimensional, involving both abilities and critical psychosocial skills that address the social and emotional needs and challenges of gifted children.
4. Giftedness is defined in terms of a comparison group.
5. Giftedness tends to be demonstrated more generally initially; but for most gifted individuals, demonstration of extraordinary abilities tends to become more focused over time into particular domains of interest and ability.
6. Demonstrated achievement matters more as a signifier of giftedness as one develops and pursues abilities and interests to specialize in a content area.

### **Talent Development**

Supporting modern views that giftedness is multi-faceted, domain-specific, developmental, observable through achievement, influenced by a variety of psychosocial factors, and vulnerable to loss if neglected, **the TF proposes the following critical characteristics of a TD framework for gifted education:**

1. Both general intellectual abilities and abilities associated with specific domains of talent are important in a TD framework.
2. Both kinds of abilities are malleable and need to be cultivated.
3. Parents play an important role in developing children's giftedness and productivity and should be informed and guided at every stage about educational opportunities that allow them to foster their children's achievement and social-emotional skills.
4. Giftedness moves from potential to competence to expertise to distinction in achievement/creative productivity.
5. A TD framework places greater emphasis on identifying potential in early stages of TD, particularly with individuals who have had limited opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, or other characteristics that are assessed in determining gifted program eligibility and/or services. Greater emphasis is placed on achievement and productivity in later stages of TD.

6. Different domains have different trajectories, so not all starters in a domain trajectory will be children, particularly in domains that focus on psychological maturity and interpretation of experience. Further, parents and educators must always be mindful of identifying and supporting “late bloomers” and underachievers.
7. Different types of programs, teachers, and instruction are needed at different stages of TD.
8. Children may progress through stages of TD at different rates. For example, enrichment opportunities and effective parents and teachers accelerate development of advanced abilities, while lack of exposure and effects of poverty may delay them.
9. Because giftedness changes over time, it is always relative and defined in terms of a comparison group, including others who share similar learning opportunities and/or background characteristics from elementary through graduate school, and into the professions, scholarship, and the arts.
10. Psychosocial variables such as persistence, strategic risk taking, and self-confidence are determining factors in the successful development of talent, and most can be improved and enhanced through instruction and coaching. If there is a unique psychology of gifted children, it is more likely a result of striving to be exceptional and the resulting ramifications of being out of sync in a particular cultural or social context, rather than inherent in being gifted per se.
11. Children who were earlier identified as gifted and are not performing well in school should have the assistance needed to reverse that underachievement. While they may not qualify for specific academic programs, high-ability students who are underachieving should have access to school counseling and psychological services, including comprehensive evaluations to determine causes and possible solutions to their under-performance.
12. Talented individuals must have opportunities in the community (broadly defined to include the home, school, neighborhood, local and regional community, society at large) *and*, to fully develop their potential, must take advantage of and commit to those opportunities at every stage in the TD process.
13. Gifted programs need short- and long-term goals. In the short term, participants are best served with challenging activities and peers and with benchmarks that can be achieved in the course of a year. A quality program should also provide a vision of a TD trajectory that leads to high-level opportunities in a domain. This is particularly important for young people whose families are not well versed in the tacit knowledge associated with success in a field. In these ways, gifted programs taking a developmental view of their mission prepare talented individuals for outstanding creative productivity or high levels of contribution to a domain and to our world.

## Addressing Questions and Misconceptions about Talent Development

To further elucidate what a TD framework in gifted education does and does not mean, the TF addressed concerns and misunderstandings that can arise:

1. **“Misconception: Emphasizing domains of talent means that ‘everyone can be gifted in something’.”**

It is probable that with a TD framework, the talents of more children and more types of talents will be identified. But, giftedness is often conflated with strengths. Every individual has relative strengths (and weaknesses), but not everyone has sufficient ability to benefit maximally from intensive TD. Additionally, since different sets of abilities map to different talent domains, not everyone may have the constellation of abilities best suited for advanced achievement and creative contributions in a domain. Additionally, there aren't an infinite number of valued domains. Not all domains contribute to society, are equally valued by society, and can be supported with teaching and coaching within schools, communities, and nations.

2. **Misconception: “Talent development does not value IQ.”**

Measures of general ability such as IQ are helpful but may be a better indicator of giftedness at the beginning stages of TD. Later, with development and differentiation, specific abilities will become better indicators of exceptional talent and potential. It is not an either/or situation—both general and specific abilities are needed and important but at different times in development and different levels according to a domain (e.g., IQ may not be helpful in identifying artistic talent).

3. **Misconception: “Talent development ignores psychological needs, i.e., it does not focus on the ‘whole child.’”**

Talent development focuses on the whole child and recognizes that providing appropriate opportunities for learning and achievement enhances psychological health. Gifted children can have special psychological needs due to a mismatch between their abilities and propensities and available environmental supports. Gifted children vary in terms of personality traits as much as non-gifted children, and there is little empirical support for many of the psychological or social-emotional characteristics attributed only to gifted students. Rather than defining psychological traits of giftedness, in a TD framework, psychosocial skills are developed in service of achievement and healthy social-emotional growth. Active cultivation and development of these will result in more children being able to achieve at the higher levels they desire and feeling personally fulfilled with their choices.

**4. Misconception: “In a TD framework, it’s possible to ‘lose’ giftedness.”**

If children don't develop their abilities, they may indeed lose ground and seem less capable when compared to peers who have continued to achieve. Because giftedness is developmental, influenced by the interaction of innate abilities and experiences, high IQ in childhood may not translate into high levels of domain-specific achievement in adolescence or adulthood. Motivation may wax and wane. The role of gifted education is to assist in the critical transition of general ability into specific talent areas, to cultivate motivation and provide appropriate opportunities so this does not happen.

**5. Misconception: “A talent development framework does not serve underachievers well.”**

Underachievement may be due to lack of appropriately challenging opportunities, which should be made available to all students who can benefit from them. However, as a result of a lack of interest or motivation or underdeveloped psychosocial skills (e.g., fear of competition), a student may not be a good candidate for TD experiences at a particular time in his or her life. For younger students, students with disabilities, and any others who have had limited opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, or other characteristics that are expected of students receiving gifted program services, there is much more latitude with respect to lack of demonstrated achievement. At some point, however, achievement in the domain has to matter. At higher levels of education and training, achievement will be the determining factor for continued investment and services.

**6. Misconception: “Everyone could be gifted if they just had opportunities.”**

While opportunities enhance everyone's achievement, they will not make everyone gifted. Ability affects how an individual can maximally take advantage of opportunities or capitalizes on them (e.g., faster rate of growth when given appropriately challenging experiences).

**7. Misconception: “Talent development only focuses on individuals who can become eminent.”**

The supports needed for eminent level contributions are complex and rare; identifying which children can eventually achieve at those highest levels is not possible and should not be pursued as a program goal. However, pathways to distinguished, creative, adult careers are well known in many domains, and gifted programs can seek to provide more students with the supports and opportunities needed to reach higher levels of achievement. Gifted programs are responsible for helping those children with the abilities and desire move forward on TD paths—getting students to the next stage of TD,

including to post-secondary levels and beyond; and, for those talented individuals who choose, to endpoints in adulthood characterized by exceptional expertise, leadership, and/or creative productivity in their chosen fields.

## **Part Two: The Promise of Talent Development as a Framework for Gifted and Talented Education Programs and Services**

Believing that there is power in shaping recommendations for NAGC around support for TD and that TD should be an organizational focus, the TF has included additional thoughts on how key beliefs and practices in the field of gifted and talented education might be viewed through a TD lens. Each of the topics in this section of the TF report is described with an emphasis on TD, suggesting how such a focus could enhance opportunities to identify gifted students and serve them appropriately. Part Three of this report recommends specific, prioritized activities and/or initiatives for the NAGC Board to consider. But the purpose of this section is to discuss in more general terms the promise of developing TD-related products and services in support of high potential and high-achieving children. Each topic might be viewed as an area of opportunity around which NAGC might develop symposia, convention sessions, publications, etc.

### **1. Giftedness Is Developmental**

Within the TD framework, the meaning of giftedness changes over time because it is viewed as developmental within domains. In young children, it can manifest as potential for future achievement that is signaled by high ability or high academic achievement in a domain – qualities often thought to indicate giftedness. While high measured ability or achievement is a signal of gifted potential, their absence does not necessarily imply a lack of potential for those students who have had fewer opportunities to develop and learn or for whom English is not their first language. With appropriate training, teaching, coaching, study and practice, psychosocial support, and opportunities, potential is turned into domain-relevant competencies and expertise. Although the time needed varies, as individuals have opportunities to acquire advanced knowledge and skills in a domain, the meaning of giftedness changes from the potential for high achievement to high levels of demonstrated achievement, competence, and/or creativity. This can occur within or outside of school. Some individuals progress to the highest stages of TD wherein an individual makes a transformative or paradigm-shifting contribution to his or her field.

An important implication of viewing giftedness as developmental is that programming must be geared towards the developmental level of the gifted individual. For example, programs at the earliest levels of TD must expose participants to varied domains of

talent and allow them to demonstrate potential, while programs designed to support later stages need to build foundational knowledge and skills in a domain while removing the barriers to higher levels of achievement and skill acquisition. Because giftedness is developmental and domain specific, how students are identified must match the domain (e.g., writing samples for creative writing talent rather than an abstract test of intelligence) and mirror the trajectory of TD within domains. For example, talent in some domains can emerge early (e.g., mathematics), while abilities and interests for other domains tend to coalesce later (e.g., psychology). Additionally, there will be individual differences in when students arrive at various stages of TD due to varying levels of family, school, and community support. It is important, therefore, that opportunities be provided early as the window for entry into some domains (e.g., gymnastics) closes early.

## **2. Social-Emotional Development and Counseling**

In the TD framework, the fruition of childhood potential involves more than exercise of cognitive abilities. Psychosocial skills enable children to progress to increasingly challenging and creative stages of a domain. These psychosocial skills are not considered inborn traits unique to gifted individuals, but rather proficiencies or competencies that can be cultivated and developed over time. Important psychosocial skills include self-regulation, mindsets, task persistence, grit, strategic risk-taking, comfort with competition, collaboration, resilience, and optimism. Many of the social and emotional difficulties commonly assumed to be side effects of high cognitive ability are actually caused by prolonged exposure to unchallenging, unengaging, or inappropriate educational experiences and/or inappropriate parental expectations. More relevant to TD, a lack of opportunity to develop in the talent domains creates frustration and disengagement. Children find engagement, progression, and growth in a talent domain to be highly meaningful experiences that yield self-efficacy, confidence, and life satisfaction.

Counseling plays a central role in TD and counselors are essential members of the team of adults that make TD successful. Counselors can ensure such psychosocial skills training is provided to children and adolescents who are identified for gifted education services. The focus of this instruction can be on skills that inhibit children and youth from taking opportunities and performing at their best such as habits associated with underachievement. For example, children might have stage fright or lack self-confidence to share ideas with others who are more confident in their contributions. The instruction or training for older students can focus on enhancing the likelihood that talent will be recognized and developed more fully. These skills may involve learning

how to promote oneself tastefully, how to be a contributing member of a team, how to find a mentor, and how to persist even when success or failure makes it tempting to let practice or hard work habits slip.

The second important role of the counselor in TD is to identify resources in various domains within the community such as programs outside of school and to make connections with adults who would be willing to serve as mentors, role models, advisors, or coaches. Ideally, counselors who perform these TD duties are certified and trained as such, but other adults can serve or assist in many of these roles as well, including coaches, psychologists, volunteer parents with domain expertise, and, of course, teachers. A third important role of social-emotional counseling is to assist parents/guardians in supporting and guiding their gifted children.

### **3. Equity**

Demographics are shifting in the United States. As a result, the numbers of culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse/different (CLEED) students are increasing in our nation's schools. Students who are CLEED, low-income (which includes students from rural, White, urban, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and other cultural backgrounds) as well as students in some categories of disability who have been provided with opportunities to develop their potential have made significant contributions to society. Even though we know student potential can be cultivated and supported through programs and services for the gifted, gifted students who are CLEED, low-income, and/or in some categories of disability are chronically underrepresented in programs and services for the gifted nationwide. This longstanding issue must be addressed. How can we as a nation ensure our promising students who are CLEED, low-income, and/or in certain categories of disability are allowed equitable access to advanced and enriched learning experiences, programs, and services? High-quality TD initiatives in schools and communities offer a viable model for identifying and cultivating potential in students who have not had ample and equitable opportunities to develop their gifts, talents, and potential.

The TD model acknowledges that typical characteristics of giftedness may manifest differently in high potential and high-ability learners who are CLEED, low-income, and/or in some categories of disability. It also acknowledges that abilities (general intellectual and in specific domains) are malleable and can be cultivated and nurtured by opportunity. Talent development, with its emphasis on developing potential early within domains, is one plausible option for not only enhancing opportunities to identify gifted students across all racial, ethnic, language, and economic groups as well as some

categories of disability and to serve them appropriately, but also for achieving greater equity in gifted education in the United States and beyond.

#### **4. Programming Options for Gifted Learners**

Educational opportunities in the form of gifted programs and services are critical to turn potential in childhood into achievement in adulthood. There are multiple pathways to expertise. However, because giftedness is developmental and moves from potential at the earliest stage to growing competency and expertise in later stages, it is important that the learning experiences and opportunities change over time to match the student's stage of TD. For younger children, exposure to various talent domains through enrichment programs is important to expose talent and potential and to ignite interest and passion in future possibilities. This is especially critical for children who have had fewer early opportunities to learn because of poverty.

As talent emerges and coalesces, domain-specific programming that builds content knowledge and skills should be provided. Options include all forms of acceleration and enrichment, both within the school day and through after-school and out-of-school activities. For older students, accelerative and enrichment options are appropriate as well as programming that enables them to work more authentically and deeply in their domain of talent via apprenticeships or mentorships or other opportunities to learn from experts in a field. Due to individual differences in developmental readiness and environmental supports, schools, working collaboratively with parents, universities, and the community at large, will need to have a variety of services, programs, and access points for gifted students, including ones that enable children with well-developed interests and skills to soar ahead of peers, as well as ones that provide opportunities for children whose talents are just emerging (later bloomers).

#### **5. Curriculum for Gifted Learners**

Opportunities to move beyond existing instructional models help students discover and develop unique talents. The context in which an individual lives and the impact of society's attitude toward his/her particular talents can be powerful determiners of whether or not each student's abilities are nurtured and developed. Providing socioeconomically disadvantaged and culturally diverse learners with opportunities to engage in enrichment activities and complex subject matter improves motivation and opens a world of possibilities that might not otherwise be realized. As students advance in their acquisition of the knowledge and skills in their area(s) of talent, they need ongoing opportunities to apply the habits of mind and tools of inquiry that are required of an expert. When curriculum and instruction provide diverse opportunities for

students to explore knowledge, gain understanding, and acquire skills in work that stimulates their minds and adds meaning to their lives, they discover and develop their unique talents.

Curriculum that supports TD should allow students to become co-owners of the learning process. When students have the opportunity to make their own decisions and move beyond a framework of prescribed formats, they discover and explore deeper understandings and applications of knowledge and skills in multiple areas. Inquiry-based curriculum, real-world problem solving, and open-ended, flexible assignments, facilitated by GT-trained professionals, enhance student strengths, promote creativity, and provide students with myriad opportunities to discover their talents. With opportunities to create connections and apply learning in a meaningful context, students experience relevant and enduring learning in their areas of strength and interest.

## **6. Academic Achievement**

Whereas ability, particularly IQ, is considered paramount in the traditional view of giftedness, achievement, particularly in the latter stages, has a more central focus in the TD framework. Ability matters and is important in the service and support of achievement. Because TD is fundamentally domain-specific, the role of *academic* achievement – that is, the degree of mastery of the skills and knowledge commonly taught in K-12 education – varies by domain. For example, academic achievement may not be particularly relevant to TD in such domains as poetry, chess, or dance, but exceptional products or performances relative to age-mates would be markers of advanced achievement in these areas. Additionally, generalized academic achievement is less relevant than achievement in the domain of interest. Therefore, academic achievement in language arts is less pertinent to the budding mathematician than achievement in mathematics. For such a student, academic achievement in the talent domain is the most relevant indicator of potential and measure of currently actualized skill – more relevant than IQ or other measures of ability, assuming that the student has had adequate exposure to and instruction in the domain. Ability continues to serve as the second-best predictor for those students without sufficient exposure and for those with learning disabilities.

It is important to keep in mind the limitations of the K-12 curriculum as a means of assessing TD. Typical K-12 educational opportunities are targeted towards students of typical ability and achievement. Students with developing talent in a domain are likely to quickly outpace the curriculum and will require more rigorous instruction, more rapid

acing, and more challenging assessment if they are to continue meaningful TD within an academic domain. Therefore, high academic achievement in a domain with respect to the K-12 curriculum should be accepted as a sufficient condition for providing advanced academic intervention. Requiring such a student to produce evidence of high ability in addition to high achievement in order to access a rigorous, accelerated curriculum will overlook students who can benefit from TD opportunities. Ability is valuable insofar as achievement has not been observed. When achievement has been directly observed, it should trump ability. Achievement is also relative in that the level of achievement deemed exceptional in a specific context may vary due to students' previous lack of opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills.

## **7. Creative Productivity**

Creativity is developmental. It consists of attitudes and openness at the youngest ages, learned and mastered creative-thinking processes and strategies for older children that are acquired through direct instruction and practice, and eventually domain-specific applications in the form of creative products, projects, and ideas. Creativity may first appear as more general abilities related to ideation, originality, independence, and strategic risk-taking, for example, but becomes more domain specific as individuals develop domain-specific talents and apply those abilities to solve problems in their areas of emphasis. In the process of their development, gifted students are taught not only to be consumers of knowledge but also to strive toward contributing to the production of new knowledge and original performances.

A TD framework recognizes the importance of the creative process and guides and supports students to use creative thinking and creative problem solving to go beyond the known. Teachers recognize creative thinking when observing student responses to a thinking prompt, lesson, or activity. Through the use of a variety of assessment tools, creatively gifted students can be identified so their exceptional abilities can be nurtured. Gifted education professionals apply criteria when evaluating creative thinking, the creative process, and/or creative products; and they recognize that creativity is relative and must be judged in comparison to the levels demonstrated by others who have had similar opportunities to develop their abilities. The goal of TD in the long term is preparing young people to strive for making the world healthier and more beautiful, and thereby improving the human condition. High levels of creative productive achievement are appropriate long-term goals of gifted education.

## **8. Professional Development and Collaboration**

Professional development is necessary to help shift participants' knowledge, attitudes, and practices from those rooted in older concepts of giftedness to a TD framework for gifted education. The TD perspective supports professional development as a necessary component for preparing all educators (e.g., regular classroom teachers, gifted education specialists, administrators) in the areas of developmentally appropriate, domain-specific identification strategies; a variety of program and service options to meet specific needs of gifted students with a variety of abilities and interests and who are at different points along a TD pathway; comprehensive, aligned curriculum for gifted learners that is differentiated to challenge individuals in their areas of gifts and talents; provisions that support social-emotional well-being and affective growth; and creating environments and providing learning opportunities that promote academic achievement and creative productivity.

The TD framework encourages structures that promote interaction and collaboration to provide coordinated services of gifted education, general education, special education, higher education, related professional services, as well as community support (e.g., parent and family support, mentoring, and internship opportunities). Such an approach targets the relationship between purposes and processes for change and fosters collective decision-making related to ways in which the gifts and talents of high-ability youth might be developed most effectively.

## **9. Career Guidance for High-Ability Youth**

Although the field of gifted education has not dealt extensively with post-secondary education, TD does not stop with high school graduation. It is during the high school years that critical groundwork can be laid for the pursuit of future careers in domains of strength and interest. Some gifted young people have a single-minded passion for a particular career; in fact, many of those who achieve at the highest levels as adults may have demonstrated this kind of passion early on. However, without systematic support to help youngsters with gifts and talents (a) gain self-understanding, (b) identify future career goals that match their interests and abilities, and (c) access comprehensive academic and career counseling services to help them develop strategies for creating and successfully navigating pathways, many will struggle to reach their goals.

This thoughtful, systematic support, often beginning well before high school, when high-ability youth are beginning to focus with greater intensity on specific domains, is important for all students; but it is especially critical for high-ability students from low-income homes who have lacked opportunities to fully develop their talents or to fully

understand the steps needed to translate their exceptional abilities into meaningful, productive careers. Transitioning from high school to post-secondary settings can be difficult and stressful for students who have not been appropriately challenged to successfully manage competitive post-secondary experiences. While some are able to leave high school with the requisite skills to achieve their desired level of success, others lack the academic, social, and financial resources to realize their dreams.

To help develop the talent of our most able young people, the field of gifted education needs to fully consider a post-secondary vision of what talents we are developing. Our goal is not to map out a post-secondary curriculum, but rather to emphasize high school-to post-secondary-to-career pathway options, starting in middle school. Collaborative efforts that bring together gifted education specialists, guidance counselors, institutions of higher learning, and community members are needed to provide gifted students with the guidance and experiences needed to achieve lifelong dreams.

## **10. Stakeholder Support for Gifted Education Services in a Talent Development Framework**

NAGC has consistently recognized the importance of identifying and collaborating with essential partners who are gatekeepers, influencers, and providers of programs and services for students with gifts and talents. It was one of four compelling goals for NAGC's 2010-2015 Strategic Framework, and it was a driving force behind the creation of the NAGC Corporate Advisory Council. The business leaders and entrepreneurs who serve on the Council, as well as the corporate leaders who participated in the Talent Development Challenge in Baltimore at the 2014 NAGC convention, speak passionately about the need for a vibrant TD pipeline at every level of K-12 education.

Talent development frameworks for gifted education resonate with business leaders because they understand and support the domain-specific approach. They are experts in the skills needed in their industry, and TD models allow them to see the emphasis on those skills and, in many cases, provide opportunities (e.g., mentoring, shadowing, employees providing instruction and participating in school events) to raise awareness of and support further development of those skills. Without this systematic effort, they have reminded us, it becomes far more difficult for businesses across all sectors to obtain and retain the talent needed to be competitive. Legislators and other policymakers, too, are more likely to support initiatives such as the TALENT Act that offer practical strategies to change America's talent trajectory than less clearly defined goals of many gifted education programs.

The initial interest of corporate and policy/legislative decision-makers may focus on the maintenance of our nation's economic and political strength in an increasingly competitive world. Domain-specific development of extraordinary abilities (e.g., selective STEM or fine arts programs, mentorship opportunities, independent research projects, early enrollment in college) are practices that are already embraced by many education stakeholders and fit well within a TD framework. These domain-specific learning opportunities should be elements of a continuum of quality gifted education services. With increased support from these important stakeholders for TD initiatives, parents of gifted learners and K-12 educators are also able to raise awareness of the need to address a wide variety of challenges that impede school districts from providing appropriate services across all grade levels on a day-to-day basis for students with a wide array of gifts and talents.

### **Part Three: Recommendations for Specific Activities, Events, Reports and Other Projects Related to Talent Development**

#### **EVENTS**

1. In addition to the standard NAGC events and conferences, opportunities to share the TD definition and theories at the practitioner level should be sought. Scheduling area meetings with groups of local school districts and/or state departments of education would be helpful for sharing TD's definition, the "why" (why is this important, i.e., what brain research is telling us) and the "what" (what does it/can it look like).
2. Schedule a follow up to the *Talent Development Challenge* panel discussion held in November 2014 at the Baltimore convention. This second event could bring together people from a wider variety of fields to continue the conversation started in Baltimore. An expanded discussion, with different voices (e.g., business, government, experts in specific domains) at the table at a conference-style event could result in a publication that articulates specific recommendations for developing the abilities of young people with gifts and talents. This event could be patterned after the 2012 low-income, high-ability student summit.

#### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Identify successful school-business partnership where they have developed pipelines of TD for gifted students. Work with both the educators and business partners involved with those programs to identify the critical elements of successful partnerships, and

begin to develop publications and/or events through which NAGC could encourage other schools and businesses to develop similar opportunities.

2. Develop a TD process, framework, and template/checklist of things that need to be considered, implemented, and monitored when creating an effective TD process and program.
3. Develop partnerships with domain-specific organizations and schools such as math/science and arts schools to expand the community of gifted education supporters by working with groups that understand the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in particular professions.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

1. Seek authors for a publication based on case studies of gifted individuals to demonstrate that talent is developmental. *When did those who went on to high levels of accomplishment first realize their talents? What were influencing factors that contributed to their own discovery or awareness of their talent? What about creatively gifted students? What kinds of experiences, both within and outside of school, helped them realize their potential?*
2. Authorize the development of position papers and/or white papers on TD for gifted students. Identified authors should be instructed to use the content from this task force report as a starting point for the development of papers that, when approved, will serve as NAGC's official position on TD as a significant theoretical framework for gifted education. The TF would like to see these papers targeted toward specific audiences, e.g., parents, administrators, counselors, regular classroom, and gifted education teachers.

## **RESEARCH**

1. Survey stakeholders regarding what model(s) they support or what ideas about giftedness they hold to be true. TF members spent a lot of time distinguishing the TD model from older views, when there is little/no data to suggest how many people hold particular views about the nature of giftedness and the best ways to help gifted students fulfill their potential. It would be helpful to know where the membership is on these kinds of theoretical issues, especially to distinguish between the beliefs of researchers/scholars, coordinators/administrators, teachers, and parents. (Please note: This survey was Matt Makel's idea, and if the Board elects to act on this recommendation, the TF asks the Board to respect Makel's potential first authorship of any such work.)

2. Create a grant-funded research project to engage school districts in implementing a NAGC-approved TD framework. NAGC could study TD implementation and the results in the participating school districts. Publications would be a natural outgrowth of the study. In other words, districts apply for small grants to implement an NAGC-approved TD framework and agree to be part of one or more research studies that will be featured in a publication.

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