

Florida Gifted Network & Excellence in Education

Gifted Education

The Florida Legislature is currently reviewing two bills affecting Gifted Education. The first bill is Senate Bill 990 by Senator Steve Wise (R-Jacksonville) and the second is House Bill 297 by Representative John Legg (R-Port Richey).

On behalf of the *Florida Gifted Network and Excellence in Education*, which are grass roots advocacy organizations comprised of parents and educators, we request that the following concepts be included in the bills:

- **Please ensure that Gifted Education remains under Exceptional Student Education (ESE) in statute.** Exceptional Student Education (ESE), often referred to as the *Special Education Umbrella*, covers a broad range of students whose educational needs cannot normally be met in the regular classroom by general education teachers.

If the Legislature is going to create a program for students who are academically talented, this may be an equally important initiative, yet it is different from gifted education which is an Exceptional Student Education program. As such, an Academically Talented program should be addressed in a separate statute.

- **Please adequately fund gifted education for students in grades K-12 within the ESE Guaranteed Allocation.** Some have advocated providing funds only for students in ages K-8. Gifted Education programs are designed for students in ages K-12 and must remain available for eligible students.
- **Avoid establishing a new definition of gifted that would create a barrier to the identification of students from traditionally under-represented populations.** If the legislature chooses to define "gifted student" rather than leaving this to the Department of Education and the Florida Board of Education, care must be taken to avoid creating barriers to the identification of gifted students from poverty households and diverse cultures and languages. Equal care must be taken to ensure that any definition is fiscally supportable.
- **Ensure no unintended consequences and unfunded mandates.** Please make certain that no provision inadvertently diverts gifted education funds. For example, one provision in the original bills mandates screening for all students at elementary, middle, and high school levels. While expanding identification efforts is worthwhile, without new funding, the increased cost for additional screenings will reduce the overall funds available to provide the services for the identified students.

State contact:

Terry Wilson
863.647.3003
twilson@floridagiftednet.org
www.floridagiftednet.org

Local contact: