

Idaho Gifted and Talented Program



IDAHO STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CONTENT & CURRICULUM | GIFTED & TALENTED EDUCATION

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GIFTED & TALENTED EDUCATION AND FUNDING HISTORY

2016

The Idaho Legislature restored a line item budget for gifted education in the areas of professional development and identification of gifted students through House Bill 620. This appropriation allows districts some support in developing and implementing their Three-Year Gifted Plans for gifted education. A Department formula ensures that all schools receive a minimum dollar amount of \$3,000 per year; the remainder of the funds are distributed based on the number of gifted/talented students identified in an LEA's reports to the state. This formula reflects restoration of a loss of funds to gifted education with the intention to restore gifted/talented programs to all schools, many of whom did not have programs at that time.

2017

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sherri Ybarra, included a \$1 million-line item in the State Department of Education budget request for gifted education, approved by the Legislature through an appropriation in House Bill 620.

2018

The impact of the \$1 million-line item appropriated in House Bill 620 (2017) shows the number of students in the State of Idaho doubles from 8,207 identified Gifted students to 17,804 identified Gifted students. Idaho shows an increase from 2.75% students identified to 5.83%. Another specific indicator of first year impact of funding was through the direct count of attendees at the annual summer conference for gifted and talented educators, Edufest, showing a 40% increase in attendance.

2019

Attendance at Edufest remains steady. The number of teachers endorsed in gifted education increases from 151 in 2017 to 226 in 2019. The data indicates that identification of students decreases slightly to 4.38% of students enrolled in Idaho schools.

2020

Due to budgetary holdbacks resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the \$1 million-line item funding for gifted education was removed from the state budget. Edufest was cancelled with the hopes of returning in 2021. The identification of students as gifted and talented increases to 5.36%.

2021

The \$1 million-line item funding for gifted education is not reinstated into the state budget. Edufest resumes in a hybrid format. The identification of students as gifted and talented decreases to 5.04%.

QUALITATIVE/QUANTITATIVE DATA

- In May 2021, Idaho traditional school enrollment was 272,167 with 13,709 identified as gifted, 5.04% of all Idaho students. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that six percent of public-school students are enrolled in gifted and talented programs.
- 38% of traditional school districts in Idaho have reported zero (0) gifted students in ISEE in 2021, compared to 36% of traditional school districts in Idaho reporting zero (0) gifted students in ISEE in 2020.
- As of October 2021, fourteen traditional districts are missing current 3 Year GT Plans.
- 43% of traditional school districts in Idaho reported having no gifted education programs in 2021 even though according to IDAPA Code 171.03, *“Each school district shall develop and write a plan for its gifted and talented program.”* This is not in compliance with requirements and with the number of districts who have submitted 3 Year Plans.
- In May 2021, Idaho has 240 educators endorsed in gifted education. However, only 171 are currently employed.

IMPACT

There is a concern that 43% of Idaho traditional schools reported no gifted education programs. This is not in compliance with Idaho State Legislature 33-2003. 88% of traditional districts have submitted a current and mandated District Plan which means there is a system in place for the majority of Idaho districts to be identifying and serving their gifted and talented students through differentiation or other strategies. Before the 1-million-dollar allocation, several districts lacked a coherent 3 Year GT Plan and failed to identify gifted students for their district. However, districts are now communicating directly with the SDE about their plans and the SDE has contracted four regional facilitators to help districts with their gifted and talented programs. The infusion of dollars into gifted education makes it easy for Superintendents to realize the importance of identifying and serving gifted and talented students. The Covid-19 pandemic, which forced many districts and departments to cut budgets, pushed gifted education even farther down the priority list and has made it even more inequitable in Idaho. Wealthier and larger school districts identify more children as gifted than rural and poorer ones. Without the funding for appropriate programming and identification, we will see a decrease in quality programs and a decrease in identification numbers.

Idaho identifies and tests children in all five areas of giftedness: Academic, Intellectual, Visual/Performing Arts, Creativity, and Leadership. This makes identification in Idaho measured in relative terms and not absolute terms, allowing for a wider representation of gifted students than very high intelligence or the top 1 percent. The National Association for Gifted Children defines its target group as kids whose “ability is significantly above the norm for their age.” The impact and results of the funding allowed districts to test in multiple ways using multiple identification strategies. As a result, Idaho saw a significant increase in identification in all five areas thus resulting in an increase of identified gifted students. Prior to the funding, significant disparity for gifted education showed in the lack of recognizing students with high abilities and support in how to test and identify children in all five areas. Often small districts used the ISAT as the sole measure to identify gifted children, which is an assessment not intended for this purpose. Districts are going back to using a single criterion instead of multiple measures per IDAPA 08.02.03.171.05, because they don’t have the resources to purchase and use appropriate assessments. If testing is not consistent statewide, students that transfer from a smaller district to a larger district are not automatically accepted into the Gifted and Talented program. A child moving into another district may be retested, according to district guidelines, but even then, a seat in a gifted program may not be available for that child, especially if 43% of the state does not provide programming. Also, once a student is identified, programming, strategies, curriculum, and resources needs to be made available to continue to foster their strengths and provide challenging learning environments. Research suggests that GT students have already mastered a grade and a half of content over their same aged peers. This illustrates a need for line item funding for identification, and for increased professional development into accelerated learning strategies. Above average ability in all content areas should be a focus for not only identified gifted and talented students but for all talented students that consistently score in the top ten percent which will allow opportunities that are context specific, locally focused, and meet the needs of the learner in their specific domains.

Although House Bill 620 marks a significant shift to fund the enormous need for Idaho students in gifted education, districts will need specific line item funding to provide programming for these students. In Idaho Code 20- Education of Exceptional Children, a natural tie exists between those with disabilities and those who are gifted and talented. Those students who are twice exceptional, need services for disabilities and for gifts in one or more areas. Several states, including North Carolina, Virginia, and Colorado, are starting to include specific mention of this third area of twice exceptionalities in their state law regarding educational needs. Recognizing a population specifically in code highlights the needs a state should prioritize. Because no federal funding exists for gifted education, as it does for special education with reference to students with disabilities, our state and local districts face a great burden to recognize and meet the needs of these students.

An alarming statistic across state lines bears mentioning. Gifted students in public education suffer a similar high school dropout rate as do students from the general or other “at risk” populations. Traditionally, gifted education has been portrayed as inherently elitist and has been dominated by students from white, Asian American, and upper-income backgrounds. Gifted and talented education has many times been misperceived as a luxury when in reality it is an intervention. If we fail to challenge these students, we may lose some of our brightest students due to disengagement, which would be a significant loss for Idaho.

The overarching use of the 1-million-dollar allocation, as detailed in the required 3-year district plans, was used to identify students not receiving services and to help increase the number of teachers endorsed in gifted education. Most districts used the dollars to send educators to Edufest, Idaho’s week-long professional development for GT educators, as well as other trainings, such as university credits for gifted courses, and state and federal conferences. Several districts were able to hire more gifted teachers and district facilitators. However, many of those positions are no longer available without the allocation.

Below are a few narrative comments from GT Facilitators in their response to my question: “How has the lack of gifted and talented funding impacted your district’s ability to serve gifted students?”

Gifted funding was cut in 2020 and not restored in 2021. The meager amount of funds we received was used for testing and some PD. We were told we could use the one-time ESSER funds to pay for gifted programs. But it is difficult to use one-time monies to build an impactful lasting program. The approximately \$5000 we received in gifted funding we have historically received is not even remotely adequate to run a GT program for 15 schools.

- Chris James, Fiscal Manager, Cassia Joint School District #151

The lack of funding has made us less able to identify our underrepresented students as we no longer have funds for a universal screener. This disproportionately affects EL, low income, and twice exceptional (2e) students. We have also not been able to provide adequate professional development for teachers striving to meet the needs of these students in their classrooms. However, what is desperately needed is funding for our programs. Every GATE facilitator is an added FTE and it is very difficult to get already stretched districts to put out extra money for them. We also run out of spots in our full-time programs, and end up having students on the waitlists for full time and pull out programs for up to two years. Meaning if a student qualifies in 1st grade, we sometimes cannot serve them until 3rd grade. This can cause a lot of frustration

and stress for a gifted student. Many states full fund programs: testing, PD, staff, supplies, and busing (which is a must for equity). These students need and deserve specialized education, Underrepresented students, and rural and low-income students are not getting all of the exposure to museums, literature, art, STEAM education that more privileged students receive. Advanced younger students will lose motivation at very young ages (often by 3rd grade) if they are not challenged. Therefore, they are way less likely to go on to college and/or career training. I believe our go on rate in our state is greatly affected by this lack of exposure. Over half of the states in the nation currently partially fund gifted education...I think Idaho students are being left behind.

- Helga Frankenstein – Boise School District
Gifted and Talented Facilitator

I'm used to working with limited funding and have been able to cushion my students from those realities until recently. These last few years without any funding have directly impacted my ability to shield the Gifted students; it's obvious to them that services are being denied as our GT program has faced noticeable cuts each year. I used to serve grades 4-9, but now I only work with grades 4-5 and part-time with 6th. The timing of these cuts has also been hard on our district. Historically, our community has been small and rural, but the school district's population has boomed with an influx of new residents. Our teacher base has expanded to meet the needs of the growing population with new teachers, instructional coaches, and paraprofessionals hired and assigned to teach other populations of students, but we are barely hanging on with one GT person to serve the whole district of 6500+ students.

- Lisa Davie – Jefferson County Joint District
Gifted and Talented Facilitator and Teacher

Our most at-risk population is underserved because of lack of funding. Each year we are experiencing more and more twice-exceptional students. Currently, we are not able to provide a least restrictive environment for most gifted and talented students who have exceptional abilities and exceptional disabilities. We know these 2e students' gifts do not balance out their disabilities, yet because of their high cognitive score we are not able to provide the behavioral assistance needed. The consequences of lack of funding extremely limits the support twice-exceptional students need for success.

We may have this century's Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, or Leonardo da Vinci in our classrooms. Without more support, the talent and creativity of twice-exceptional children in Idaho will be underdeveloped.

- Sharee Barton – Madison District
Gifted and Talented Facilitator

Another specific indicator of impact of funding is through a direct count of attendees at the yearly gifted summer conference, Edufest. Below are exact numbers of attendees.

- 2016 154 Attendees (115 from Idaho)
- 2017 164 Attendees (145 from Idaho)
- 2018 205 Attendees (141 from Idaho)
- 2019 181 Attendees (145 from Idaho)
- 2020 Placed on hold because of Covid-19
- 2021 172 Attendees in Hybrid format (91 from Idaho)

Please see attached impact statement regarding Edufest.

NEED FOR ENDORSED TEACHERS IN GIFTED & TALENTED EDUCATION

As of the most recent May 2021 ISSE count, Idaho has 240 educators endorsed in gifted education. However, only 171 are currently employed. The data places the total enrollment of Idaho traditional students at 272,167 and 13,709 have been identified as gifted (5.04%). In order to serve these students, each teacher would need to serve at least *80* of these students, which is not reasonable considering the number of small rural schools in Idaho. Gifted students present a high needs population, who often require *smaller* class sizes, especially if the students are twice exceptional, students who are both gifted and have a learning disability (or disabilities) and who would be included in the gifted count and count of students with disabilities. In addition, gifted students often have unique emotional and behavioral needs not met in a larger classroom. As indicated in staffing reports, *69* gifted endorsed educators are not currently working in gifted education. Many districts who want to start a gifted program have trouble finding an endorsed educator to fill the position and must hire staff without an endorsement. Most districts that reported their use of the 2017 dollars specifically mentioned using these resources to assist a teacher with that gifted endorsement and we did see a significant increase in endorsed educators from 2017- 2021.

UNSERVED GIFTED STUDENTS IN IDAHO

- As many areas of giftedness exist, so do the needs for these students

- Idaho schools in almost every district, small and large, do not identify gifted students in three of the five areas mandated by statute: creative, leadership, visual and performing arts.
- Students have been identified in some districts as gifted, even though these districts have reported no gifted program, but have a GT 3-year plan on file with the SDE.
- Students who attend small rural schools in Idaho are less likely to be identified as gifted, and if they are, are less likely to receive services.
- Students who are twice-exceptional (meaning they have high abilities and disabilities concurrently) are often excluded from gifted programs due to lack of services, qualified staffing, and understanding on this population of students.
- 38% of traditional school districts in Idaho have reported zero (0) gifted students in ISEE in 2021. According to the National Association of Gifted Students, 3 out of every 100 students is considered gifted or potentially gifted. Based on student counts in each district that reported (0) gifted students, Idaho could be missing up to 215 rural gifted students.

NEED FOR FUTURE FUNDING

While funding dedicated to GATE has benefited Idaho in many ways, districts have identified several needs for serving gifted students. These areas include:

- Support to districts to increase the number of endorsed gifted educators;
- Financial support for districts to provide additional funds/stipends for a gifted/talented coordinator;
- District purchase of universal screening materials to find and support underserved populations that may be gifted;
- District purchase of materials and resources to support a new or reinstated gifted program;
- District payment of registration for students who cannot afford after school programs, such as technology, the arts, or enhanced reading experiences;
- District efforts to train staff on differentiation, curriculum compacting, and other research based accelerated practices;
- District efforts to identify students in all five areas of giftedness including Academic, Intellectual, Visual/Performing Arts, Creativity, and Leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

- The 1-million-dollar funding line item increased the number of students identified, the number of teachers endorsed, and solidified accountability of the development and implementation of 3 Year Gifted Plans in school districts. Without it we have an unfunded mandate that districts are struggling to meet compliance, especially rural districts.
- The gifted and talented funding allowed districts to purchase identification and evaluation tools and screeners allowing for multiple assessment strategies per code (08.02.03.171.05).
- GT funding language should require a 3 Year Gifted Plan, which is already in code, (08.02.03.171) but not always followed or implemented by districts.
- The state needs to create guidance and technical assistance training regarding reporting gifted and talented numbers in ISEE. The data for performing arts, leadership, intellectual, creativity, and academic does not match the total count of identified students.

Table 1: FY2021 GT Enrollment by District

District	GT Students	District	GT Students
001	3001	271	1498
002	2332	272	101
003	73	273	257
021	12	281	126
025	540	282	7
033	51	283	2
052	65	287	1
055	197	288	4
058	21	291	32
060	119	314	14
061	270	321	348
071	2	322	209
072	3	331	52
084	1	340	476
091	474	341	16
093	676	351	69
101	16	363	22
131	438	365	18
132	89	370	27
133	3	371	122
134	185	373	67
135	10	381	24
137	30	391	3
139	251	393	38
148	17	411	249
150	21	412	2
151	67	414	79
171	1	418	30
181	7	421	45
192	1	431	2
193	16	433	16
201	161	State Total	13709
202	62		
215	81		
221	10		
231	106		
232	18		
251	149		
253	46		
261	131		

Table 2: FY2021 GT Enrollment – Charter Schools

Public charter schools are exempt from submitting a 3 Year GT Plan, however the following public charter schools have submitted May 2021 ISEE data as identified gifted and talented students.

Charter	GT Students
452	164
454	8
455	29
457	109
463	33
464	7
472	5
473	11
477	1
479	23
480	36
487	2
488	6
492	42
493	2
494	7
496	20
498	1
534	13
768	10
785	19
796	11
813	6
State Total	565



November 19, 2021

Dear Members of the Joint Financial Committee,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Edufest, I would like to share with you the important role we serve in providing professional development for educators and families in the field of gifted education in the state of Idaho. Edufest is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing educators and parents with training and resources in the field of gifted education and to support their efforts to successfully meet the unique educational and social emotional needs of students who require enhanced and advanced instruction. Edufest has been the largest provider of professional learning in gifted education since 1998 in the state of Idaho. It was established to provide educators with research-based teaching strategies for engagement and enrichment learning for all students as well as meeting the needs of students identified for gifted education services. For one week, every summer, educators converge on the campus of Boise State University to interact with national and local speakers who specialize in gifted education to acquire teaching strategies that support the development of talent in youth. Over the last 23 years, it has provided this training to over 6,000 educators to address the academic and social emotional needs of students who may require additional challenge in the curriculum to ensure optimal growth.

In collaboration with Northwest Nazarene University and Boise State University, Edufest has served as a vehicle for teachers obtaining credits leading to the Gifted and Talented Endorsement by offering workshop sessions that align to the core areas of knowledge and skill required for teachers seeking the endorsement. Additionally, for those educators attending Edufest, it has provided professional development clock hour/continuing education units to teachers in the state of Idaho and Washington as they learn how to address the needs and develop strategies for teaching gifted and talented students.

Parents, educators, and the broader community have a responsibility to support all children as they reach for their personal best. To achieve this goal, Edufest has offered specialized institutes for parents, administrators, and counselors by hosting featured sessions at the annual conference to specifically address their roles and concerns as they support their children and students who require advanced learning experiences commensurate to their learning potential.

It has been an honor for Edufest to serve the state of Idaho in supporting its educators and families for the last 23 years, and we look forward to continuing to assist educators in developing Idaho's student talent.

Respectfully submitted,
Jann Leppien
Jann Leppien, Ph.D.
President, Edufest,
Inc.