

**Advisory Council on the  
Education of  
Gifted and Talented Children**

**2017 Report**

**Prepared by the Gifted Advisory Council  
Approved December 9, 2016  
Jefferson City, Missouri**

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December 9, 2016  
Dr. Margaret Vandeven  
Commissioner of Education  
Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education  
205 Jefferson Street  
P.O. Box 480  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480

Dear Dr. Vandeven:

I am pleased to submit this gifted report on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children. The focus of this report is fourfold:

- (1) updating state data about gifted students and programs;
- (2) reviewing progress on approved recommendations from the Council's 2015 report;
- (3) reconsideration of recommendations that were not approved from our first report; and
- (4) presenting new recommendations for 2017.

We did not include information about the Council's history or operations in this report. That information is available for review in our first report. This report also includes background information on gifted education in an Appendix rather than in the body of the report. While the first report needed background information as a foundation for our efforts, we wanted the focus of this follow-up report to be on new data and recommendations.

Over the coming months, we would be happy to discuss information in this report and support DESE efforts to implement the recommendations we have included. We would also appreciate the opportunity to share our report at a State Board of Education meeting this spring, as we did in 2015.

On behalf of the entire Council, I want to thank you for giving the Council the opportunity to positively impact the quality of education for gifted students in Missouri.

Sincerely,



Linda Smith, Ph.D.  
Chair  
Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

Cc: David Welch

Enc: Advisory Council 2017 Report

THE ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE  
EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN

*The Gifted Advisory Council was established in 2013 after passage of State Statute 161.249 by the Missouri legislature. The statute called for seven Missouri residents with expertise in gifted education to be appointed by the Commissioner of Education to serve on the advisory council. Those members were charged with the responsibility to provide advice “regarding all rules and policies to be adopted by the State Board of Education relating to the education of gifted and talented children” in Missouri.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Commissioner.....	3
Table of Contents.....	5
Listing of Figures.....	6
Listing of Tables.....	7
The 2017 Report – Executive Summary.....	8
Overview.....	8
Summary of Findings.....	8
Council Recommendations.....	10
Data on Gifted Programs, Students and Achievement.....	14
Overall Perspective.....	14
Gifted Programs by DESE Supervisory Region.....	20
Gifted Finances.....	24
Gifted Student Achievement.....	29
Recommendations for Action.....	31
2015 – Approved Recommendations – Update on #1-5.....	32
2015 – Not Approved Recommendations – Update on #6-10.....	33
2017 – New Recommendations for Action - #11-13.....	40
Concluding Remarks.....	43
References.....	44
Appendices.....	45
A. Recommendations for Action – 2015.....	45
B. Recommendations for Action – 2017.....	46
C. Administrative Memo – December 8, 2015.....	47
D. Historical Data on State Approved Gifted Programs.....	48
E. Chronology of Gifted Education Developments in Missouri.....	50
F. Background Information on Gifted Education.....	51

## LISTING OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Number of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs.....	15
Figure 2: Percent of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs.....	16
Figure 3: Number of Missouri Students Served in State Approved Programs.....	16
Figure 4: Number of Missouri Gifted Students Identified/Not Served in State Approved Programs.....	17
Figure 5: Number of Teachers in State Approved Programs.....	17
Figure 6: Number of Missouri District with State Approved Programs.....	19
Figure 7: Number of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs – Forecast.....	19
Figure 8: DESE Supervisory Regions.....	20
Figure 9: Percent of Missouri Students and Gifted Students Served by DESE Supervisory Region.....	22
Figure 10: Percent of Districts Within DESE Supervisory Regions Without State Approved Program.....	22
Figure 11: State Aid for State Approved Programs for Gifted Children.....	25
Figure 12: School District Actual Expenditures on Gifted, Statewide.....	25
Figure 13: School District Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students, Statewide.....	26
Figure 14: School District Actual Expenditures on Gifted, Statewide, Disaggregated by Object.....	26
Figure 15: Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students, Statewide, Disaggregated by Object.....	27
Figure 16: Actual Expenditures on Gifted by DESE Supervisory Region.....	27
Figure 17: Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students by DESE Supervisory Region...	28
Figure 18: Gifted and State Totals, MAP Communication Arts.....	29
Figure 19: Gifted and State Totals, MAP Mathematics.....	30
Figure 20: Gifted and State Totals, Scale Score Differences.....	30

## LISTING OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Comparison – Percent of Students in State and in State Approved Gifted Programs, 2014-2015.....	18
Table 2: Subgroup Comparison – Percent in State and in State Approved Gifted Programs, 2014-2015.....	18
Table 3: Demographic Comparison, Enrollment and Free/Reduced Priced Lunch.....	18
Table 4: Demographic Comparison, Student Ethnicity.....	18
Table 5: Count and Percent of Missouri Students, Gifted Identified and Served, and Gifted Identified but Not Served by DESE Supervisory Region, 2014-2015.....	21
Table 6: Count and Percent of Gifted Missouri Students, Served and Not Served by DESE Supervisory Region, 2014-2015.....	21
Table 7: Additional Number of Students Needed to Reach 5% and 10% of Student Population, 2014-2015.....	23

# THE 2017 REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

This document represents the second report from the Council since its inaugural meeting in January 2014. This report focuses on four areas:

- new data on gifted students and programs, and how that data compares to prior years;
- progress on 2015 recommendations that were approved (#1-5);
- reexamination of 2015 recommendations that were not approved (#6-10);
- new recommendations for 2017 (#11-13).

This report does not include the background information about the Council's formation or operations. That information was incorporated into the 2015 report and can be reviewed if questions about the Council arise.

Data for the work of the Council was obtained from a variety of sources, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), and the Davidson Institute in Nevada. The raw data on gifted programs provided by DESE was analyzed with the assistance of EducationPlus, a non-profit educational organization providing support and advocacy for school districts in the St. Louis region as well as the state as a whole.

## Summary of Findings

1. ***Gifted programs continue to decline in many regions of Missouri.*** The number of districts offering state approved gifted programs has declined by 37%, from a high of 333 districts in 2003 to 211 districts in 2015. Between 2014 and 2015, nineteen fewer districts reported having gifted programs (230 versus 211). As a result, now only 38% of Missouri districts offer state approved gifted programs. That is a drop from a high of 64% of districts in 2003. The trend line projects a continuing decline of gifted programs over time if there is no change in policy or funding in the state. Of note is that the decline of state-approved gifted programs from 230 to 211 districts was reached in one year versus the projected two years in the Council's 2015 report. This is certainly cause for alarm. (See Figures 1, 2, 6, 7; Tables 1, 2.)
2. ***While the number of gifted programs has declined, the number of students identified as gifted has increased in the last year.*** In 2014-2015, 40,984 students were identified and served, as compared to 36,650 in 2013-2014. The percentage of gifted students increased from 4.5% to 4.7% in this one year. This increase may be due to a larger than usual increase in the number of students taking AP and IB courses in Missouri. It should be noted that starting with the October 2016-2017 Core Data cycle, students enrolled in AP and IB classes will no longer be counted as gifted. This change follows a recommendation from the Council and is anticipated to result in a more accurate count of gifted students identified and served in Missouri. (See Appendix C for Administrative Memo describing changes to the 2016-2017 October Core Data cycle.)
3. ***While the number of gifted students in state approved programs has increased, the number of certified teachers in gifted programs declined from 820 to 792 (3.5%) between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.*** This decline in staffing of gifted programs is consistent with the decline of gifted programs in the state. Unfortunately, the data is conclusive in this regard – there are fewer

programs and fewer gifted teachers available in Missouri districts to address the special learning needs of gifted students. (See Figure 5.)

4. ***Illinois is the only neighboring state that, like Missouri, does not have a gifted mandate or earmarked funds for gifted programming.*** In Iowa and Oklahoma, gifted programming is mandated and fully funded by the state. In Kansas, Arkansas, Tennessee, Nebraska and Kentucky, gifted programming is mandated and partially funded by the state.
5. ***Of the “Top 10 by 20” DESE comparison states, six have a mandate for gifted programming.*** The six states with mandates are Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, Virginia and Wisconsin. Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Vermont have no mandate. Four of the states, Maine, Minnesota, Virginia and Wisconsin, have partial funding for gifted programming.

#### Gifted Programs by DESE Supervisory Region

6. ***Gifted students in many of the state’s regions are underserved.*** Of the gifted students currently identified in Missouri, 79% are in the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Southwest regions of the state. The remaining 20% of gifted students are in the other six regions of the state. For comparative purposes, 65% of all Missouri’s students are in the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Southwest regions. The remaining 35% of Missouri students are in the other six regions of the state. (See Tables 5, 6 and Figures 9, 10.) Thus, gifted students in rural parts of the state are disproportionately harmed by lack of appropriate educational opportunity. In order for all regions to serve at least 5% of their student population, districts would need to increase their identified students from 5% (Kansas City region) to over 200% (West Central region). Overall, Missouri would need a 23% increase in identified gifted students for the state to have 5% of its students identified as gifted. (See Table 7.) If the target was 10% of students, this translates to more than double the current number of gifted students in Missouri if the target was 10% of students.

#### Gifted Finances

7. ***Funding by school districts of gifted programs declined by 20%, going from \$55,716,762 to \$44,683,264 between 2009 and 2015. In the past year alone, funding decreased by over \$2,000,000.*** The majority of all funds allocated for gifted programs are for teacher salaries and benefits. Thus, the decrease in funding of gifted programs across the state is primarily due to a reduction in the number of gifted teachers employed by school districts. From the perspective of per pupil expenditure, the years between 2009 and 2015 saw per pupil expenditure decline, statewide, from \$62.60 to \$50.50. (See Figures 12-17.)

#### Gifted Student Achievement

8. ***Students served in gifted programs outperform all other students in Missouri on MAP tests at all grade levels tested.*** The gap between gifted students and all Missouri students combined is significant in both Communication Arts and Math. In grades five through eight, the gap grows even wider in the area of Math, with gifted students performing dramatically better than the population as a whole. (See Figures 18, 19, 20.) With enhanced academic opportunities and guidance, these gifted students are likely to be the leaders of innovation and economic growth.

## Council Recommendations

Recommendations from the Council's 2015 report are reviewed on the following two pages and on pages 32-38 of this report. The first page summarizes progress on Recommendations #1-5. These recommendations were approved for implementation in 2015.

- **Recommendations #1 and 2**, which focus on gifted program data, have not yet been implemented by DESE. Action needs to be taken in the near future to generate specific information about gifted programs on an annual basis as well as to make districts' gifted program information easily accessible to the public.
- **Recommendation #3** has been implemented in full. An Administrative Memo was issued on December 8, 2015 that reverses the decision to count students enrolled in AP and IB classes as gifted. These students, like all students, must comply with established administrative rules for identifying gifted students in state approved gifted programs.
- **Recommendations #4 and 5** have been implemented in full. A document entitled "Identifying and Serving Traditionally Underrepresented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts" was developed in cooperation with the Council and is currently posted on the DESE website.

Information related to **Recommendations #6-10** is summarized on page 12 and again starting on page 33. These 2015 recommendations are not yet approved and therefore have not been addressed. Later in the document (pages 34-39), the original 2015 Problem/Recommendations/Rationale statements related to these recommendations are provided, as well as some additional information for consideration. We respectfully request another review of these recommendations. The Council believes these recommendations should be approved and moved forward to enhance educational opportunities for gifted students in the years ahead.

Since the 2015 report, the Council has discussed a variety of other needs related to educating gifted students in Missouri. From these discussions, the Council has voted to move three new recommendations forward in this 2017 report. These recommendations—**Recommendations #11-13** – fall within the "Programming for Gifted Students" domain and are each accompanied by a problem statement and rationale (see page 13 and pages 40-42). We believe implementing these new recommendations will support the development of gifted programs and gifted learners throughout the state.

**Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children**

**UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS #1-5**

**APPROVED IN 2015**

<b>Reporting Data on Gifted Students and Programs</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b> DESE should make district information related to state-approved gifted programs readily accessible to the public.	<b>APPROVED BUT NOT YET ACCOMPLISHED</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b> DESE should generate an annual state data report in October on gifted students and state approved gifted programs.	<b>APPROVED BUT NOT YET ACCOMPLISHED</b>
<b>Identification of Gifted Students</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b> DESE should eliminate the practice of reporting students as gifted based on the criterion of being enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course. Additionally, AP and/or IB courses should not be counted as part of a state-approved gifted program.	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See the Administrative Memo dated December 8, 2015 in Appendix C.</i>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b> DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying and serving students who are traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs, the goal being to have program participants more closely reflect the ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic diversity of individual school districts.	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See document entitled "Identifying and Serving Traditionally Under-Represented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts" (<a href="https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf">https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf</a>).</i>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b> DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying students who are twice exceptional (students with both learning challenges due to disabilities and/or physical impairments and exceptional learning abilities).	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See document entitled "Identifying and Serving Traditionally Under-Represented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts" (<a href="https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf">https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf</a>).</i>

**Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children**

**UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS #6-10  
NOT APPROVED IN 2015**

<b>Educator Preparation and Professional Development</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b> DESE should require all Missouri districts to have a policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration. The policy should include subject acceleration and whole grade acceleration, among other opportunities.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rational information on page 34.</i></p>
<b>Programming for Gifted Students</b>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b> DESE should require teacher preparation programs to include a minimum of one three-credit hour course addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rational information on pages 36-37.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b> DESE should require all districts to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. Professional development may include such options as staff development, university coursework, professional conferences, workshops and web-based learning.</p>	
<b>Requiring and Funding Gifted Education</b>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9:</b> Gifted identification and programming should be required in Missouri.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rationale information on pages 38-39.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10:</b> Earmarked funds should be allocated for gifted identification and programming in Missouri.</p>	

## Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION – 2017

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#### PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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**RECOMMENDATION 11:** DESE should be proactive in taking advantage of the new opportunities presented in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to focus on the needs of gifted students. Specifically, DESE should:

- Include the scores of gifted students as a separate subgroup on the state and local report cards;
- Encourage local districts to take advantage of the allowable use of Title I funds to help better identify and provide gifted services for the traditionally underrepresented populations;
- Include explicit language requiring the use of Title II funds to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to better understand the nature and needs of gifted students and how to provide these students with appropriate curriculum and instruction;
- Include grants that provide for the explicit use of Title IV funds to pay for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam fees of low-income students.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** DESE should change the administrative rules for gifted programs to include (1) an identification appeal process for parents or guardians of students applying for gifted services; (2) a board-approved policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration; and (3) a plan for annual professional development for gifted staff on educating gifted learners.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** DESE should develop a document providing guidance to districts on best practice approaches for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. This document should incorporate key elements of Response to Intervention (RtI) for gifted students and a Levels of Services (LoS) approach that identifies a wide range of services to meet the varied and complex needs of gifted learners.

## DATA ON GIFTED PROGRAMS, STUDENTS AND ACHIEVEMENT

This section analyzes information related to gifted education in Missouri. Data was accessed from the Gifted Growth Chart maintained by DESE (see Appendix A), information available from the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (MCDS), and through the 5Sight tool of Forecast5 Analytics.

It should be pointed out that the data analyzed is not without flaws. Those flaws include the fact that data on gifted is based on self-report by districts, is reported at different times of year, and that since 2007, districts have been permitted to include Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs and students in the counts for gifted students served. That being said, we believe that the scale and scope of available data reveals some meaningful realities about gifted education in Missouri.

Also of note is that some of the charts are presented with fewer years of data. In the first report, we felt it was important to look at data from an historical perspective. Thus, many charts included data from 1974 when the gifted program in Missouri first started. Other charts had data from 1981 or 1991, when targeted information could be retrieved. For this report, in most cases we examined data only from the past ten years to give a more contemporary view of gifted programming in Missouri. In addition, this time period represents the years since the categorical funding for gifted was eliminated. Thus, we can see the impact of this funding change by looking at data beginning in 2005-2006 (the year before the change was made) and 2006-2007 and beyond, after gifted was folded into the foundation formula.

### Overall Perspective

The broadest conclusion that can be drawn from available data is that state approved gifted programs continue to decline in the state. As seen in Figure 1, twelve fewer districts have gifted programs in 2014-2015 than in 2013-2014. In the 2014-2015 school year, only 211 Missouri districts (38%) offer state approved gifted programs, representing a decline from the prior year when 223 districts (43%) had such programs (Figure 2). To put this in longer-term perspective, in 2003, 333 districts (64%) had state approved gifted programs, a decline of 33% in the past 12 years.

Despite the decline in districts serving gifted students, the number of students identified as gifted in the state has increased from 36,650 in 2013-2014 to 40,984 in 2014-2015 (Figure 3). This increase may be due to a larger-than-usual increase in the number of students taking AP and IB courses in Missouri. It should be noted that starting with the October 2016-2017 Core Data cycle, students enrolled in AP and IB classes will no longer be counted as gifted. This change follows a recommendation from the Council and is anticipated to result in a more accurate count of gifted students identified and served in Missouri. (See Appendix C for Administrative Memo describing changes to the 2016-2017 October Core Data cycle.)

The number of 'identified but not served' students was very similar during this period of time. As shown in Figure 4, those counts were 6046 and 6052, respectively. These numbers represent approximately 13% of all Missouri gifted students.

The increase in identified students in 2014-2015 did not result in a parallel increase in teachers of the gifted. As can be seen in Figure 5, teachers of the gifted decreased from 820 to 792, a 3% decline. This year, 40,744 students were identified and served, which represents approximately 4.7% of

Missouri students. Starting in 2007, DESE permitted districts to count students enrolled in AP and IB classes as gifted, resulting in a dramatic increase in gifted students in Missouri. The Council's recommendations to reinstitute the more generally accepted approach to identifying gifted students that existed prior to 2007 was supported by DESE. Starting with the October 2016-2017 Core Data cycle, students enrolled in AP and IB classes will no longer be counted as gifted (see Appendix C).

The number of teachers in gifted programs declined from a high in 2012 of 920 to 792 in 2015, a decrease of 14% (Figure 5). The one-year decline from 2014 to 2015 was 28 gifted teachers, or 4% of all Missouri's gifted teachers. This decline would be greater if the counts did not include AP and IB teachers.

Figure 1: Number of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs

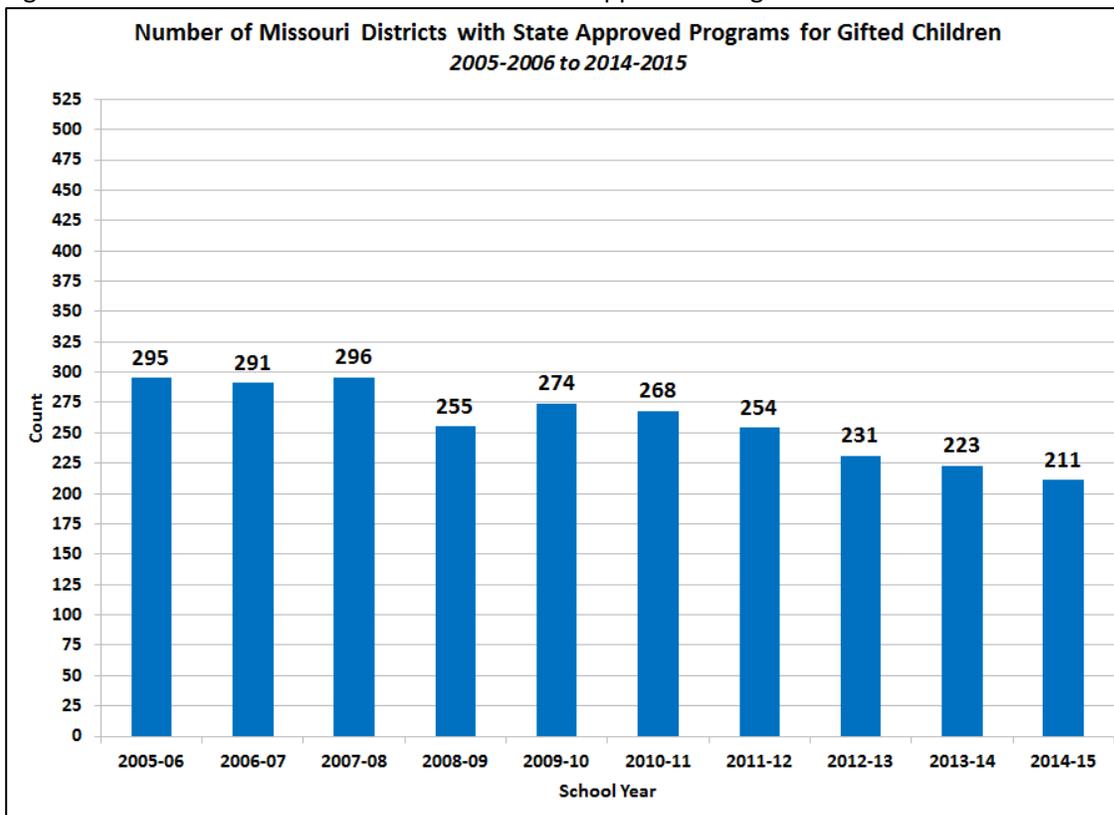


Figure 2: Percent of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs

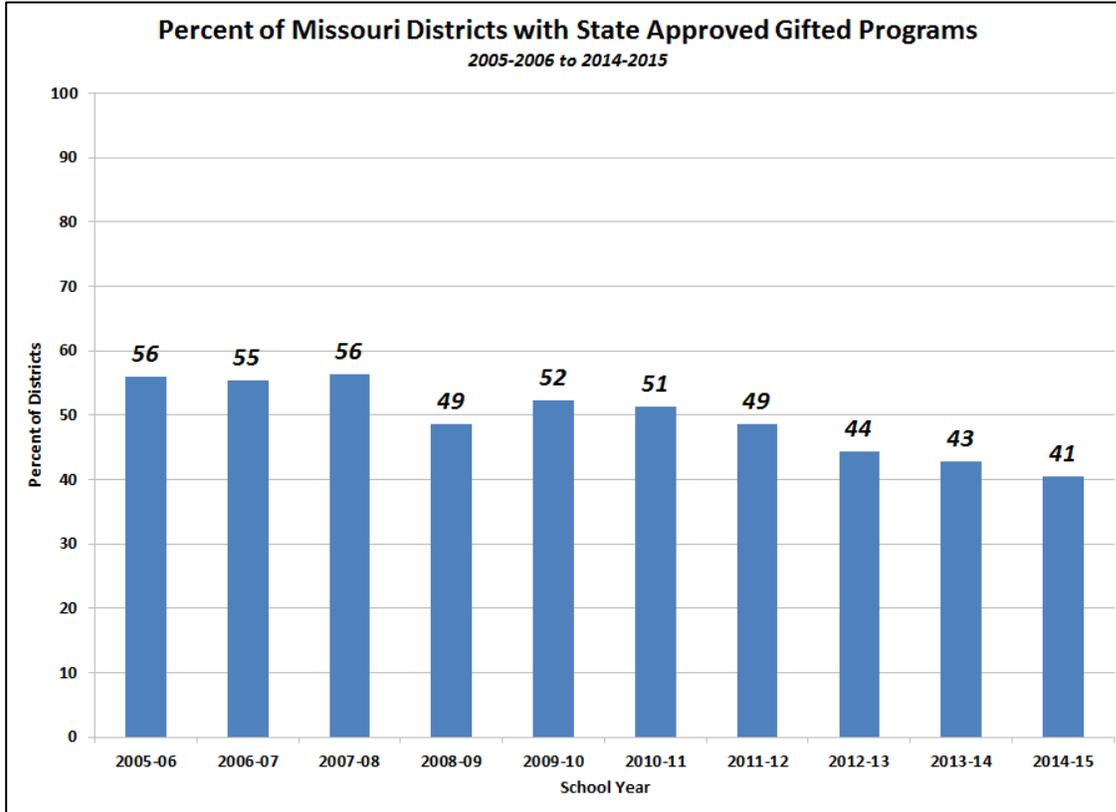


Figure 3: Number of Missouri Students Served in State Approved Programs

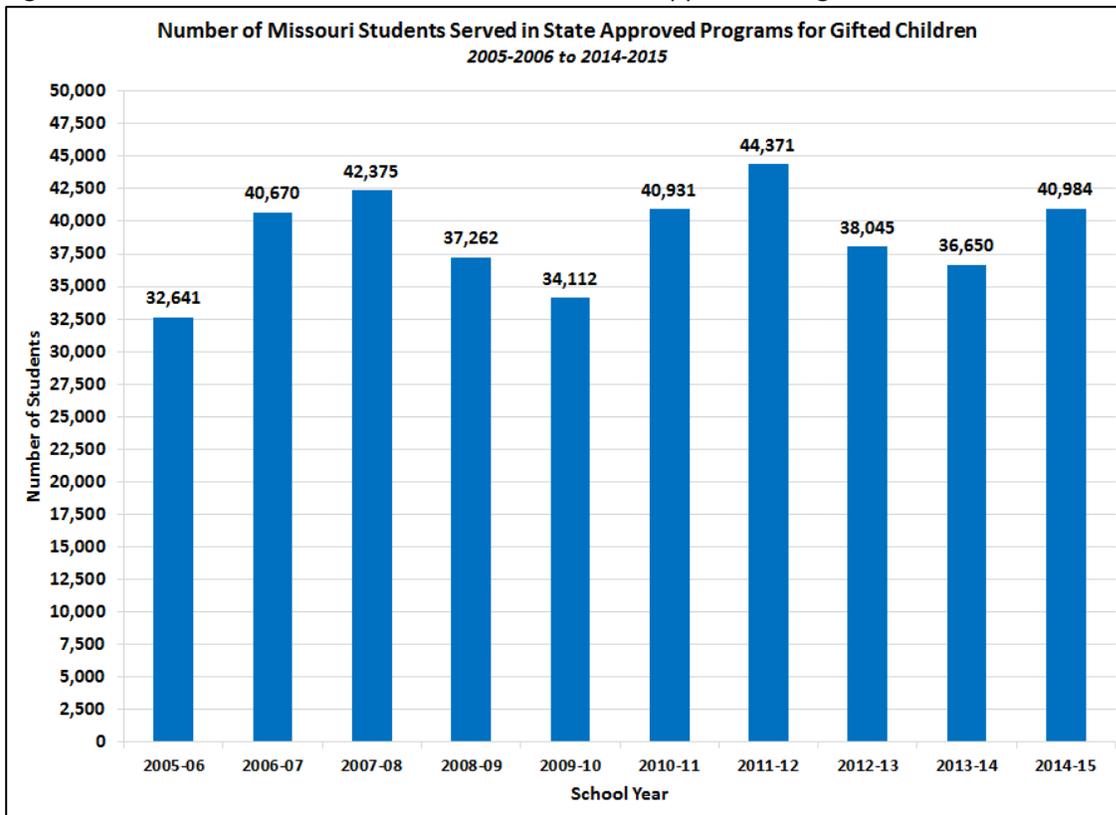


Figure 4: Number of Missouri Gifted Students Identified/Not Served in State Approved Programs

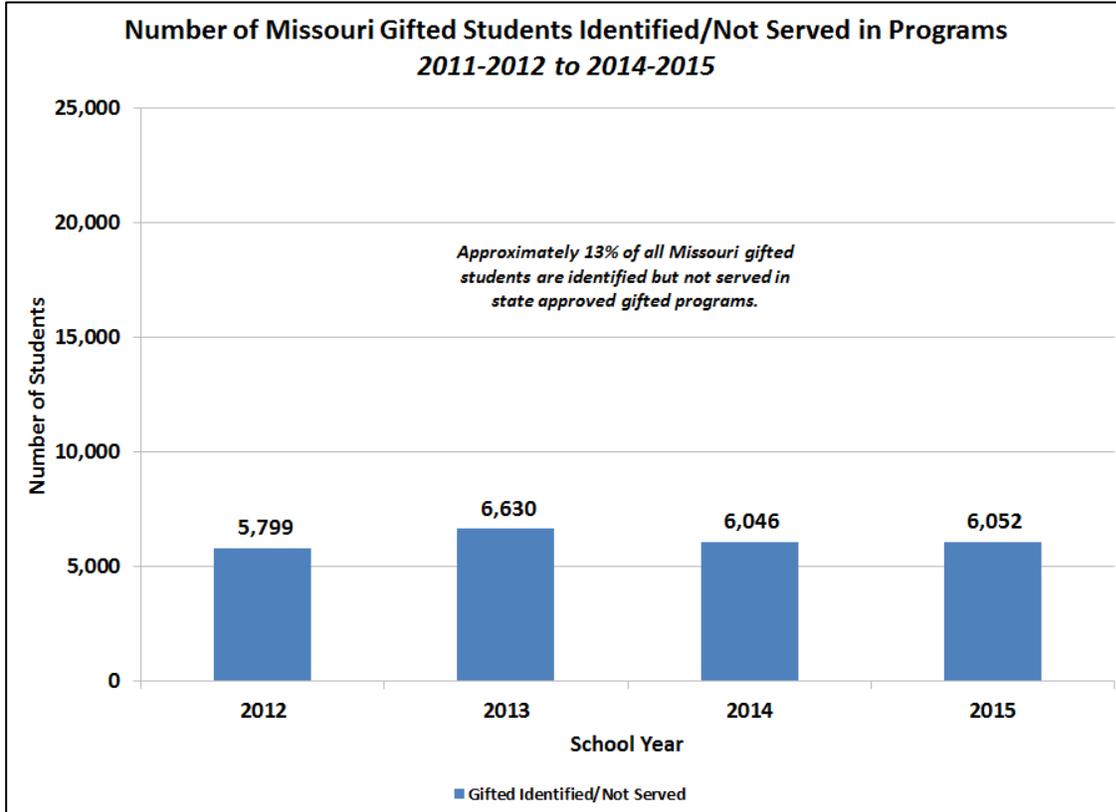
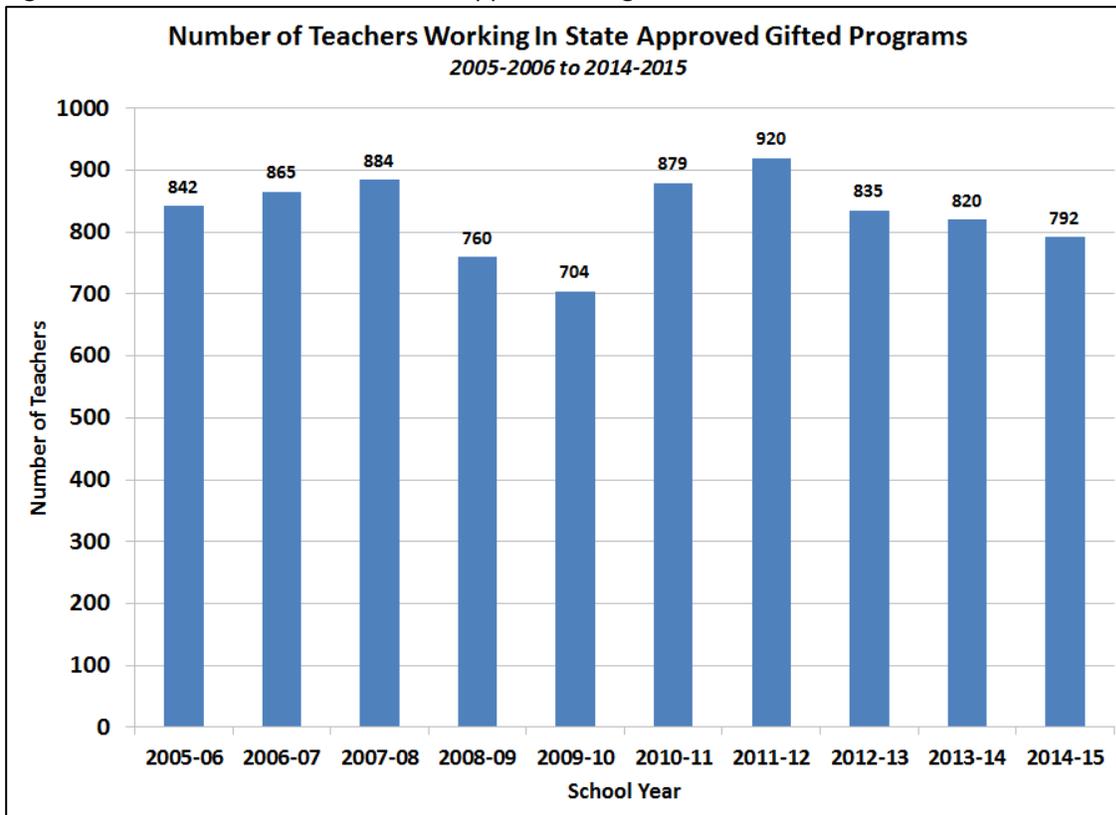


Figure 5: Number of Teachers in State Approved Programs



What are the demographics of gifted program participants? How do these demographics compare to the state as a whole? The percentages shown in Tables 1 and 2 shows the breakdown of key demographic groups in the state and in state approved gifted programs. Percentage-wise, White students represent the majority in both the state and in gifted programs, with a 5% difference between the two categories. There is a 6.5% difference in Black enrollment, with a higher percentage in the state than in gifted programs. There was only a 2% difference in Hispanic enrollment. Statewide, there is a greater discrepancy between gifted students and all other students when looking at Individualized Education Plans, Limited English Proficiency and Free/Reduced Priced Lunch counts.

Table 1: Demographic Comparison – Percent of Students in State and in State Approved Gifted Programs, 2014-2015

	Black	Hispanic	White	All Others
Percent in State	15.1	5.4	74.1	5.4
Percent in Programs	8.6	3.4	79.0	9.0

All Others Includes Asian, Indian, Pacific Islander, Multi

Table 2: Subgroup Comparison – Percent in State and in State Approved Gifted Programs, 2014-2015

	IEP	LEP	FRL
Percent in State	12.7	3.3	50.7
Percent in Programs	3.1	1.3	24.5

Programs=State Approved Gifted Programs, IEP=Individualized Education Plan, LEP=Limited English Proficient, FRL=Free/Reduced Priced Lunch

Tables 3 and 4 analyze demographic data in districts with gifted programs and without gifted programs. The data reveals that districts without state approved gifted programs tend to be smaller and have a higher percentage of White students and students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. They also fall predominantly in the Southeast, West Central, South Central, Northwest and Northeast regions of the state.

Table 3: Demographic Comparison, Enrollment and Free/Reduced Priced Lunch, 2014-2015

	Average District Enrollment	Average of FRL Percent	Total Enrollment	FRL Count Total	Calculated FRL Percent
Districts With Gifted Program	3,394	52.67	712,669	337,691	47.38
Districts Without Gifted Program	490	60.04	151,927	93,680	61.66

Gifted Program=State Approved Gifted Program; FRL=Free/Reduced Priced Lunch

Table 4: Demographic Comparison, Student Ethnicity, 2014-2015

	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Am. Indian/ Alaska Native	Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial	White
Districts With Gifted Program	2.18	15.17	5.87	0.45	0.24	3.21	72.88
Districts Without Gifted Program	0.65	14.65	2.97	0.31	0.08	1.28	80.06

Gifted Program=State Approved Gifted Program

The total number of Missouri districts with state approved programs from 2005-2015 is presented in Figure 6. The trend line projects a continuing decline of gifted programs over time if there is no change in policy or funding in the state (Figure 7).

Figure 6: Number of Missouri District with State Approved Programs

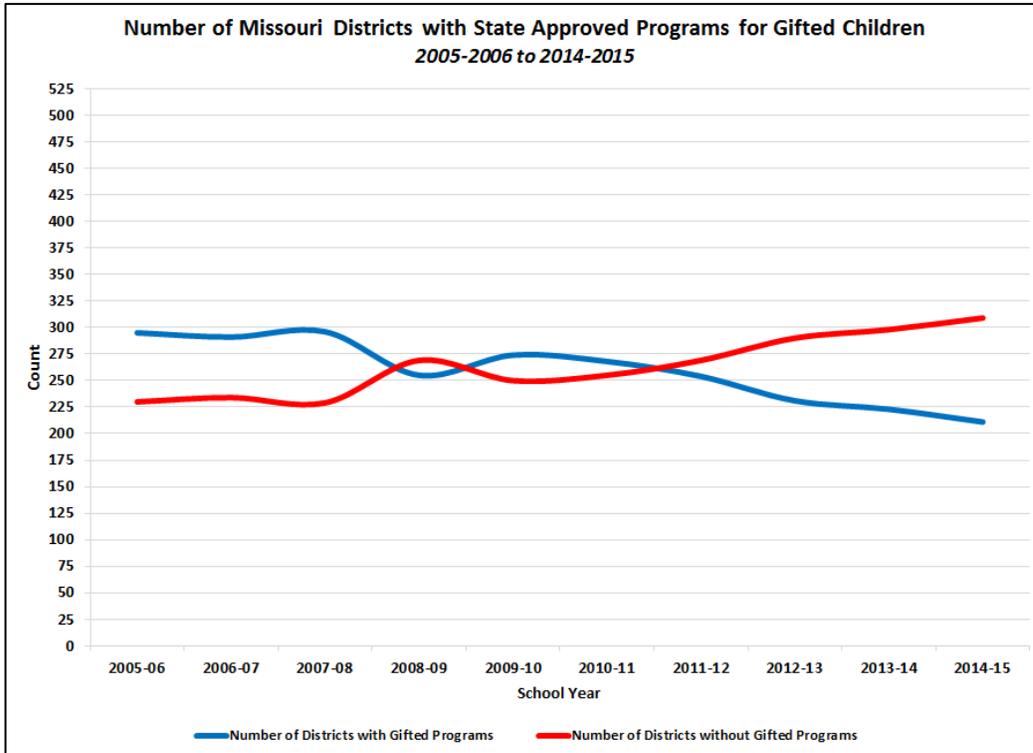
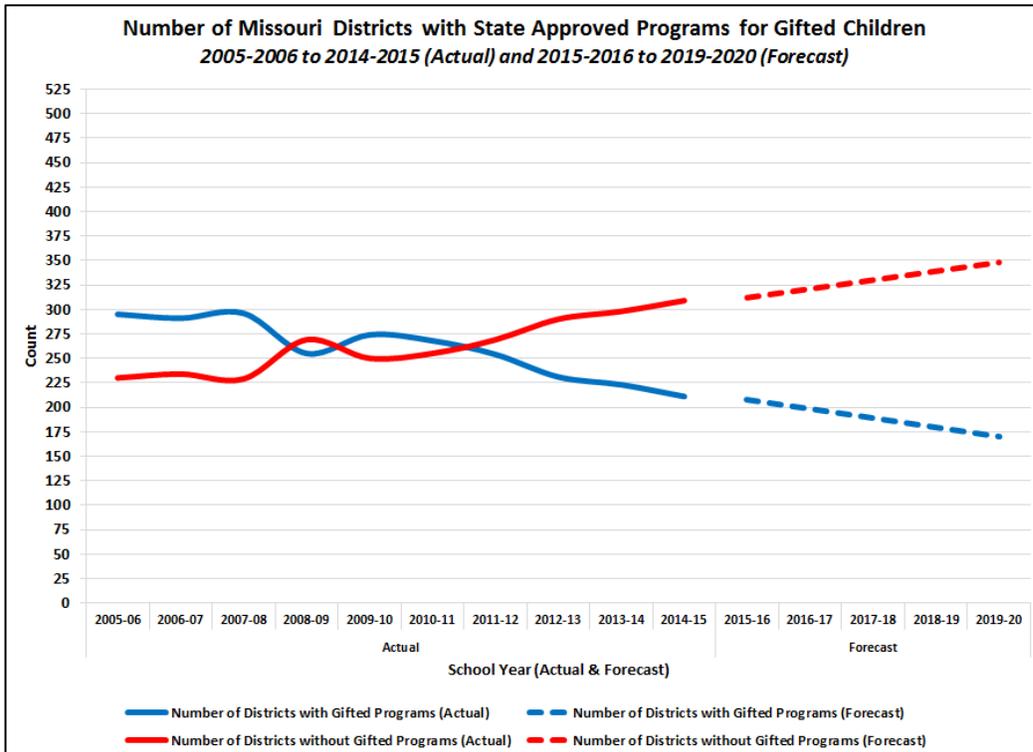


Figure 7: Number of Missouri Districts with State Approved Programs – Forecast



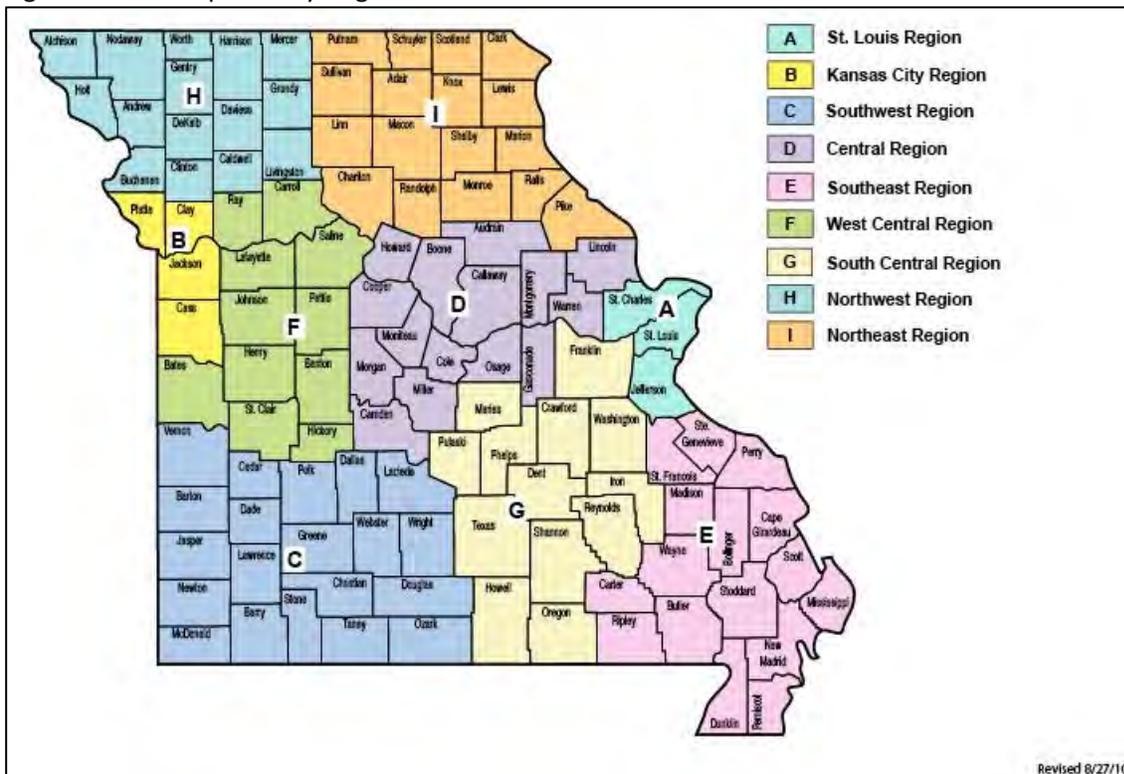
## Gifted Programs by DESE Supervisory Region

DESE has nine supervisory regions in the state (Figure 8). Data was analyzed to understand the prevalence of gifted education within these supervisory regions (Table 5-6, Figure 9). The analyses tell us several things. First, the St. Louis region educates approximately 30% of all Missouri students but serves close to 50% of Missouri's gifted students. This scenario suggests that the St. Louis region not only has a high density of talented students but is also proactive in recognizing and financially supporting services for gifted students.

Second, it appears that the Southwest region has the highest percentage of the state's gifted students who are identified but are not receiving gifted program services. At the same time, it should be noted that there are students in every region of the state who are identified and not served by gifted programs. While there are multiple explanations for this situation, the important point is that efforts are needed to ensure that all identified students are served, K-12.

Third, the majority of districts in the Southeast, West, South, Northwest and Northeast regions do not offer state approved gifted programs (Figure 10). The St. Louis area has the lowest percent of districts not offering gifted programs. That percentage stands at 18%, up from 5% in just one year. The Kansas City, Southwest and Central regions have 28%, 54% and 55%, respectively, of its districts do not offer state approved gifted programs. That is up dramatically from 19%, 37% and 39%, respectively. The other regions in the state have from 68% to 74% of districts without state approved gifted programs. Because gifted programs are not mandated in Missouri, many students do not have their needs recognized or addressed and different parts of the state have widely varying opportunities for these students.

Figure 8: DESE Supervisory Regions



Revised 8/27/10

Table 5: Count and Percent of Missouri Students, Gifted Identified and Served, and Gifted Identified but Not Served by DESE Supervisory Region, 2014-2015

	Student Enrollment		Gifted Identified and Served		Gifted Identified but Not Served	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
A-St. Louis	254,423	29.4	19,439	47.7	1,052	18.3
B-Kansas City	166,553	19.3	7,953	19.5	605	10.6
C-Southwest	142,118	16.4	4,706	11.6	1,792	31.3
D-Central	79,278	9.2	3,593	8.8	838	14.6
E-Southeast	65,215	7.5	1,431	3.5	269	4.7
F-West Central	37,738	4.4	620	1.5	277	4.8
G-South Central	57,013	6.6	1,491	3.7	205	3.6
H-Northwest	33,922	3.9	811	2.0	424	7.4
I-Northeast	28,336	3.3	700	1.7	272	4.7
Total	864,596	100%	40,744	100%	5734	100%

Table 6: Count and Percent of Gifted Missouri Students, Served and Not Served by DESE Supervisory Region, 2014-2015

	Gifted Students Identified	Served		Not Served	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent
A-St. Louis	20,591	19,439	94.4	1,052	5.6
B-Kansas City	8,558	7,953	92.9	605	7.1
C-Southwest	6,498	4,706	72.4	1,792	27.6
D-Central	4,431	3,593	81.1	838	18.9
E-Southeast	1,700	1,431	84.2	269	15.8
F-West Central	897	620	69.1	277	30.9
G-South Central	1,696	1,491	87.9	205	12.1
H-Northwest	1,235	811	65.7	424	34.3
I-Northeast	972	700	72.0	272	28.0

Figure 9: Percent of Missouri Students and Gifted Students Served by DESE Supervisory Region

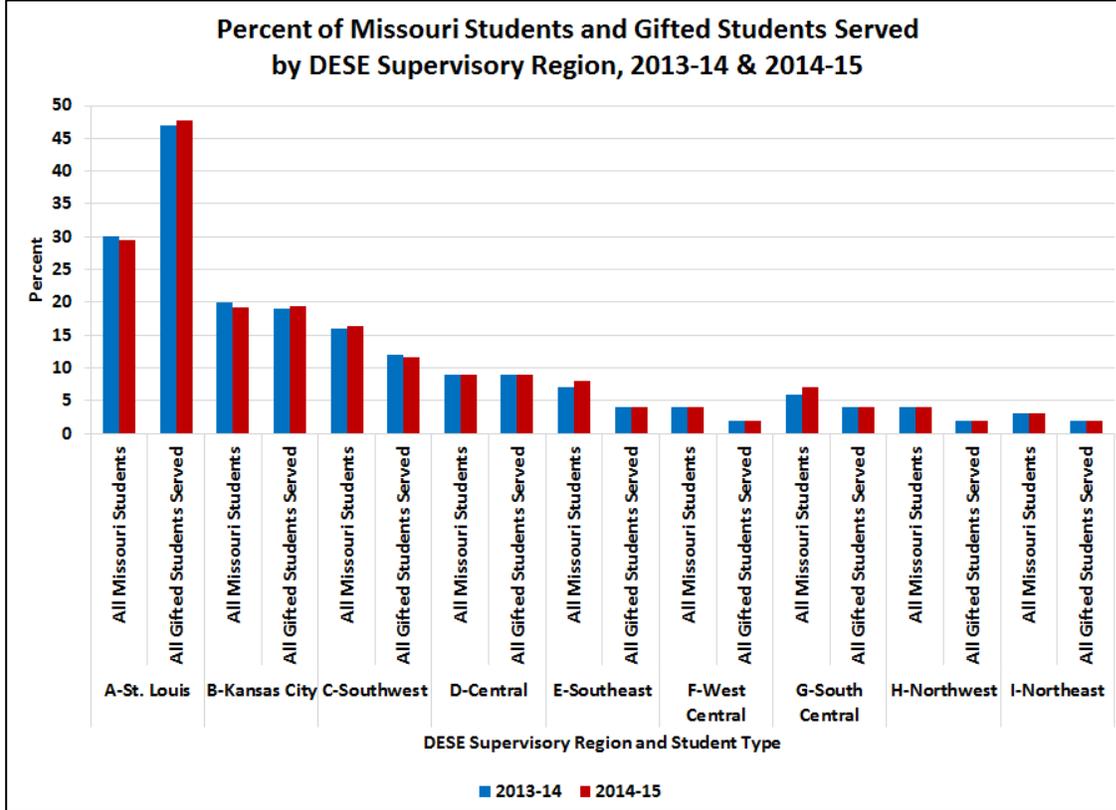
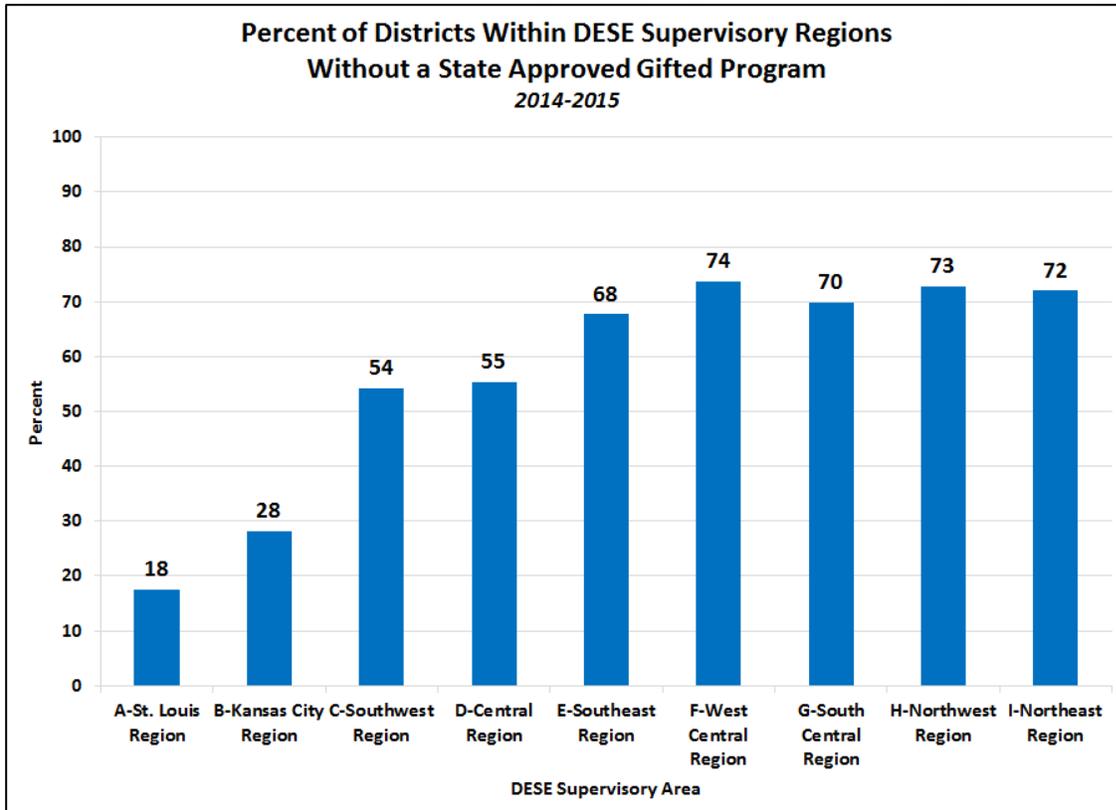


Figure 10: Percent of Districts Within DESE Supervisory Regions Without State Approved Program



Given current numbers, what would it take to have districts serve a minimum of 5% of Missouri’s students through a state approved gifted program? As can be seen in Table 7, there would need to be a dramatic increase in the regions with the fewest gifted programs. Those increases would range from 51% in the Southwest to 204% in the West Central regions. Currently, the St. Louis region is the only region that has more than 5% of students served by a state approved gifted program. The Kansas City and Central regions would need an increase of 5% and 10%, respectively. To reach 10% of the student population, increases would range throughout the state from 31% in St. Louis to over 500% in West Central.

Table 7: Additional Number of Students Needed to Reach 5% and 10% of Student Population, 2014-2015

Region	MO Public School Students	Actual Gifted Students Identif. and Served	Current Percent of Students Identif. and Served	5%			10%		
				Students Identif. and Served	Add'l Students to Reach 5%	Pct. Increase to Reach 5%	Students Identif. and Served	Add'l Students to Reach 10%	Pct. Increase to Reach 10%
A-St. Louis	254,423	19,439	7.6%	12,721	n/a	n/a	25,442	6,003	31%
B-Kansas City	166,553	7,953	4.8%	8,328	375	5%	16,665	8,702	109%
C-Southwest	142,118	4,706	3.3%	7,106	2,400	51%	14,212	9,506	202%
D-Central	79,278	3,593	4.5%	3,964	371	10%	7,928	4,335	121%
E-Southeast	65,215	1,431	2.2%	3,261	1,830	128%	6,522	5,091	356%
F-West Central	37,738	620	1.6%	1,887	1,267	204%	3,774	3,154	509%
G-South Central	57,013	1,491	2.6%	2,851	1,360	91%	5,701	4,210	282%
H-Northwest	33,922	811	2.4%	1,696	885	109%	3,392	2,581	318%
I-Northeast	28,336	700	2.5%	1,417	717	102%	2,834	2,134	305%
MISSOURI TOTAL	864,596	40,744	4.7%	43,230	9,204	23%	86,460	45,716	112%

## Gifted Finances

District financing of gifted education was studied by referring to the Missouri Financial Accounting Function Code 1210-1211 - Gifted and Talented, which reads:

*“Programs for pupils who exhibit precocious developments of mental capacity and learning potential and/or talents as determined by competent professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth and stimulation could best be served by academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade level curriculum.”*

Prior to fiscal year 2007, gifted education was considered a categorical in Missouri’s School Foundation Formula and was funded at \$24.8 million (Figure 11). Starting in fiscal year 2007, a new foundation formula was instituted, with funding for gifted education folded into the foundation formula. The funds received by districts with pre-existing state approved gifted programs were no longer earmarked for gifted education. Rather, funds could be used at district discretion to support any program or need.

As can be seen in Figures 12-15 below, there has been a dramatic decline in district funding of gifted programs in the state since the Foundation Formula change. Funding by school districts of state approved gifted programs from 2009 to 2015 declined by 16%, going from \$55,716,762 to \$46,683,387. Between 2014 and 2015, the decline continued, dropping another \$2,000,123. The current expenditure of \$44,683,264 represents a 4.3% reduction in the last year. These declines would be even more significant if cost of living increases were entered into the calculations. The per pupil expenditure, statewide, declined from \$63.88 to \$50.50 in the same time period. The majority of all funds allocated for gifted programs are for teacher salaries and benefits.

If one looks at actual expenditures by DESE supervisory area rather than the state as a whole (Figures 16, 17), one sees that the majority of gifted spending, both total and per pupil, is by regions with the largest populations, including St. Louis, Kansas City and Southwest. In every region of the state, per pupil expenditure for gifted (Figure 20) has declined from the level allocated in 2009. In 2015, slight increases in gifted spending in Kansas City, West Central and Northwest was offset by declines in St. Louis, Southwest, Central, Southeast, South Central and Northeast.

Finally, it should be noted that based on the US Department of Labor’s CIP Inflation Calculator, one would need approximately \$28.8 million to match the ‘buying power’ of \$24.8 million, the amount assigned from the gifted categorical to the overall foundation formula in 2007.

Figure 11: State Aid for State Approved Programs for Gifted Children

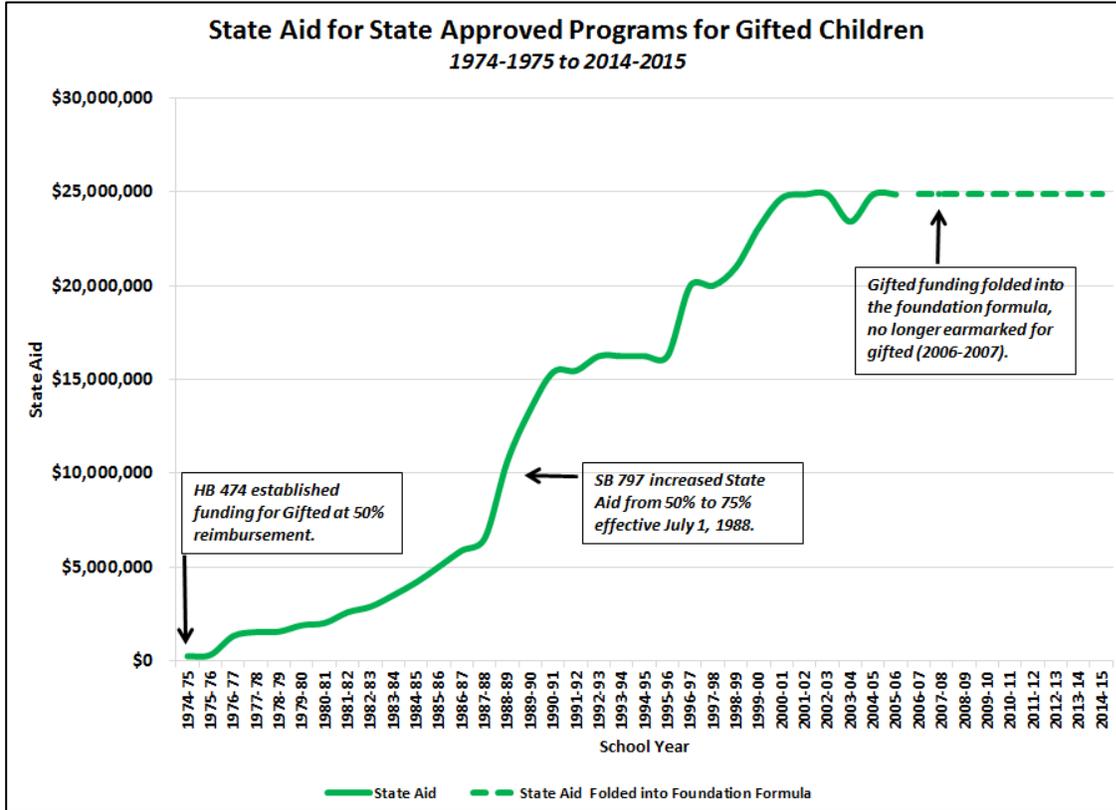


Figure 12: School District Actual Expenditures on Gifted, Statewide

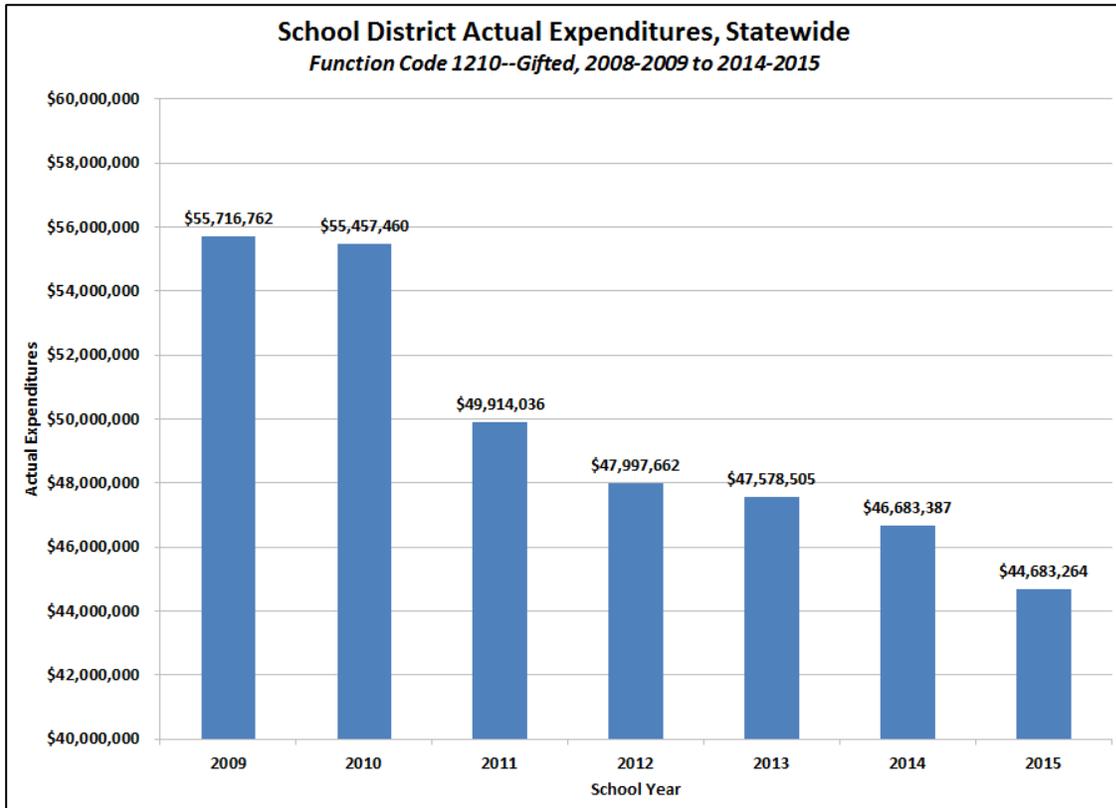


Figure 13: School District Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students, Statewide

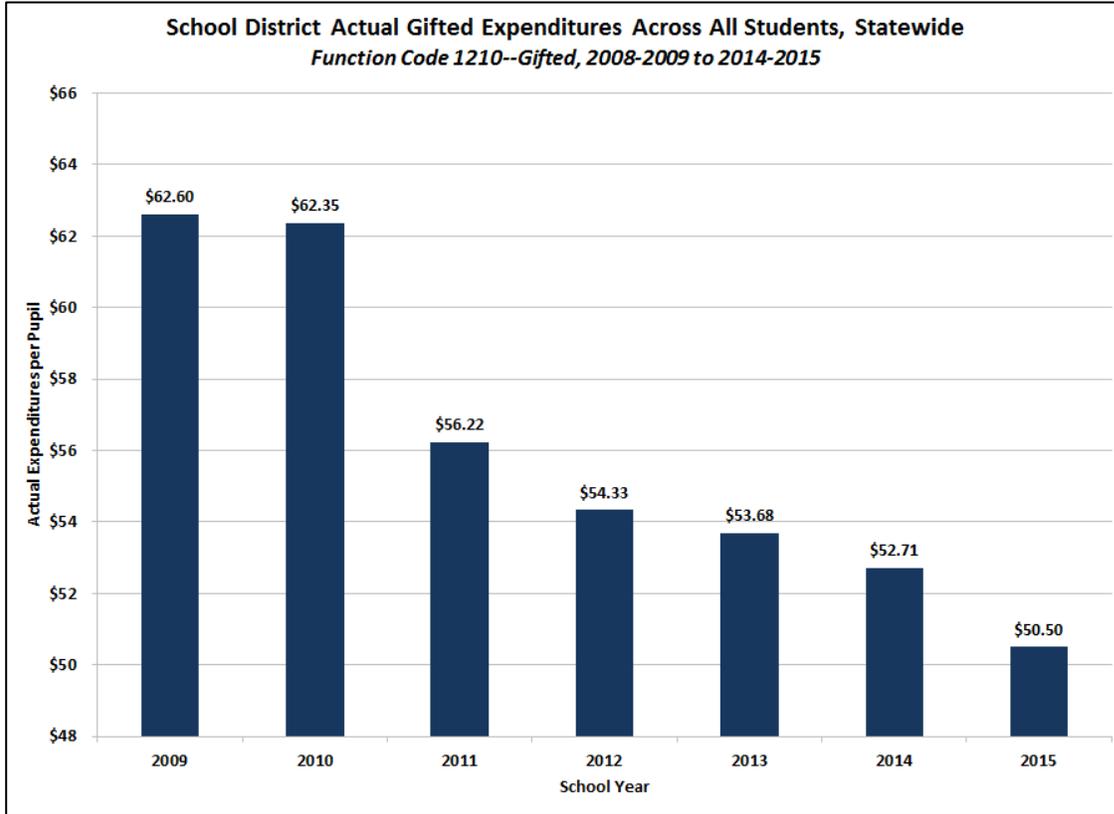


Figure 14: School District Actual Expenditures on Gifted, Statewide, Disaggregated by Object

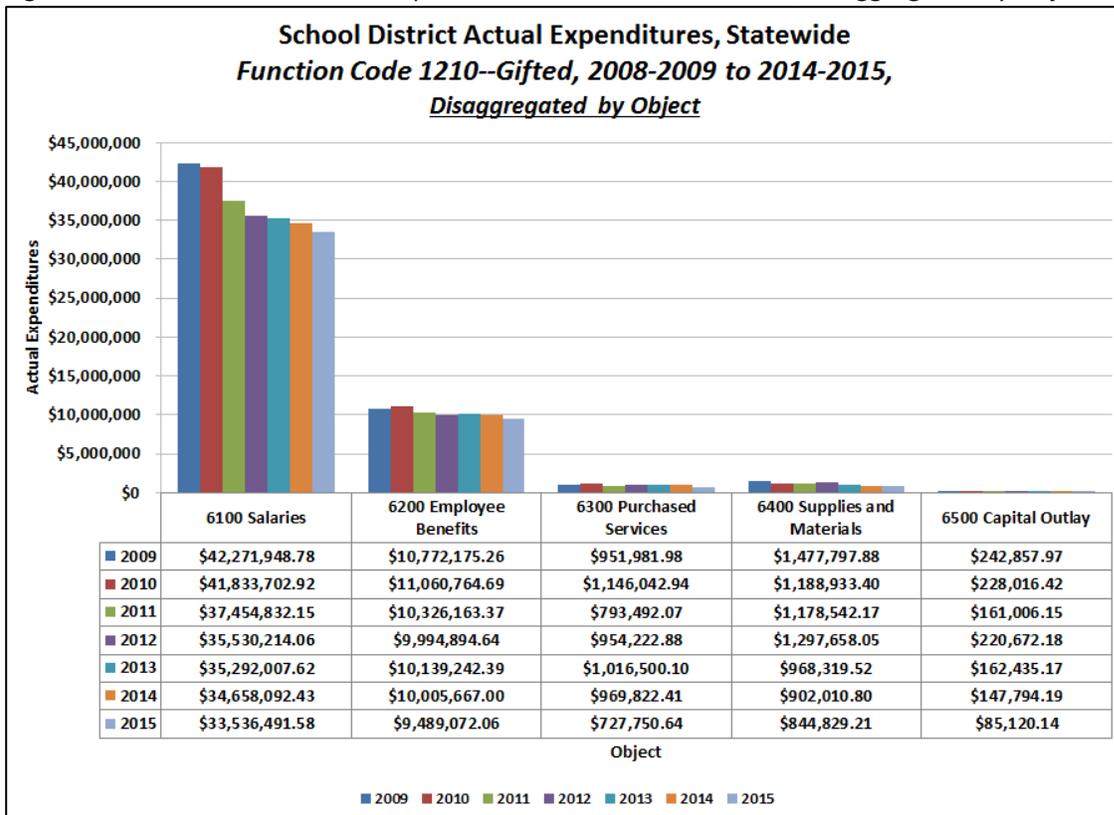


Figure 15: Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students, Statewide, Disaggregated by Object

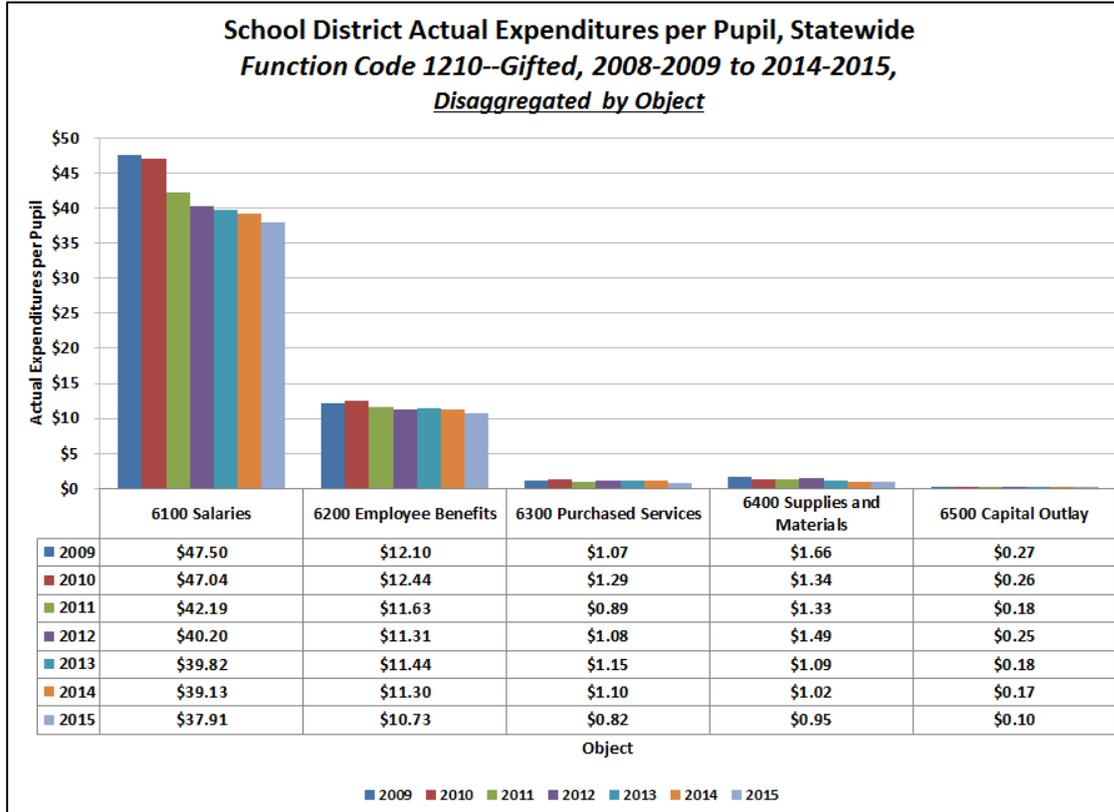


Figure 16: Actual Expenditures on Gifted by DESE Supervisory Region

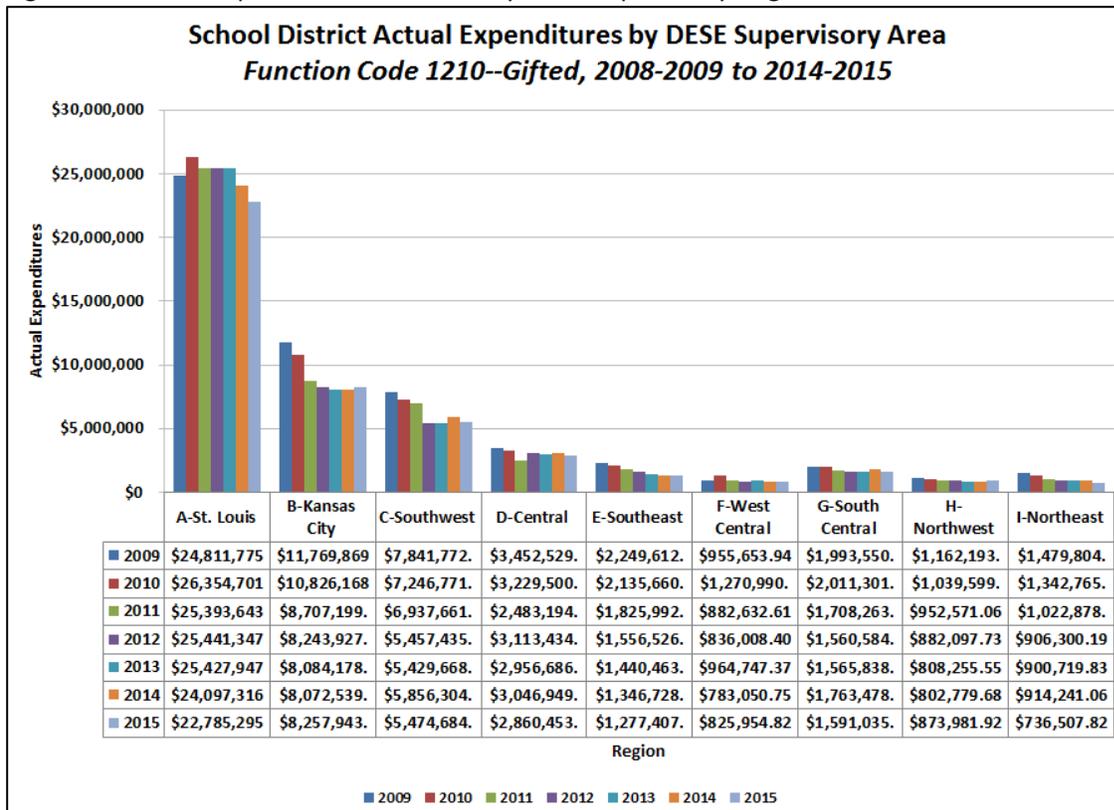
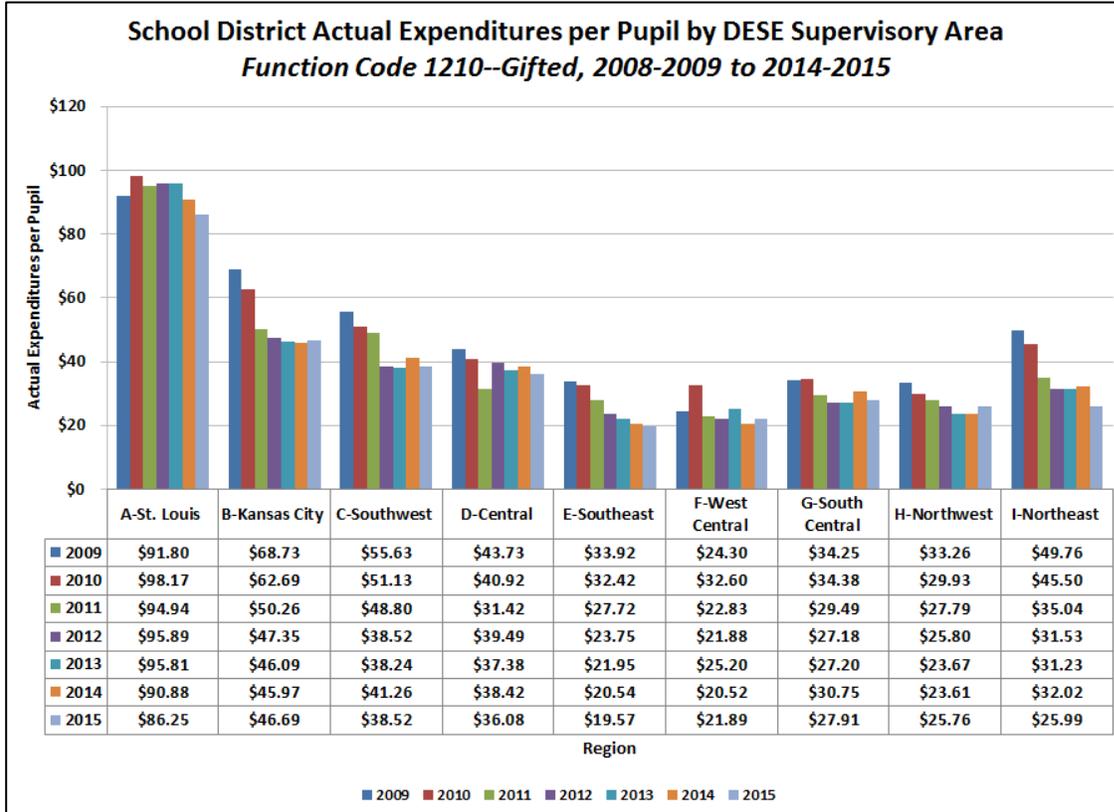


Figure 17: Actual Gifted Expenditures Across All Students by DESE Supervisory Region



## Gifted Student Achievement

An analysis was done of MAP scores to assess the level of success of gifted students, both as an identified group and in comparison to all other students in each grade level (Figures 18-20). Students served in gifted programs outperform all other students in Missouri on MAP tests at all grade levels tested. The gap between gifted students and all Missouri students combined is significant in both Communication Arts and Math. In grades five through eight, the gap between gifted students and all others is even wider in the area of Math. It should be noted that gifted student scores are included in the combined scores labeled as “State Totals.” Thus, the gap in achievement level would be even greater if gifted students scores were compared with all students minus gifted students. Accessing that modified comparison group will require changes in how data is reported by the state.

Figure 18: Gifted and State Totals, MAP Communication Arts

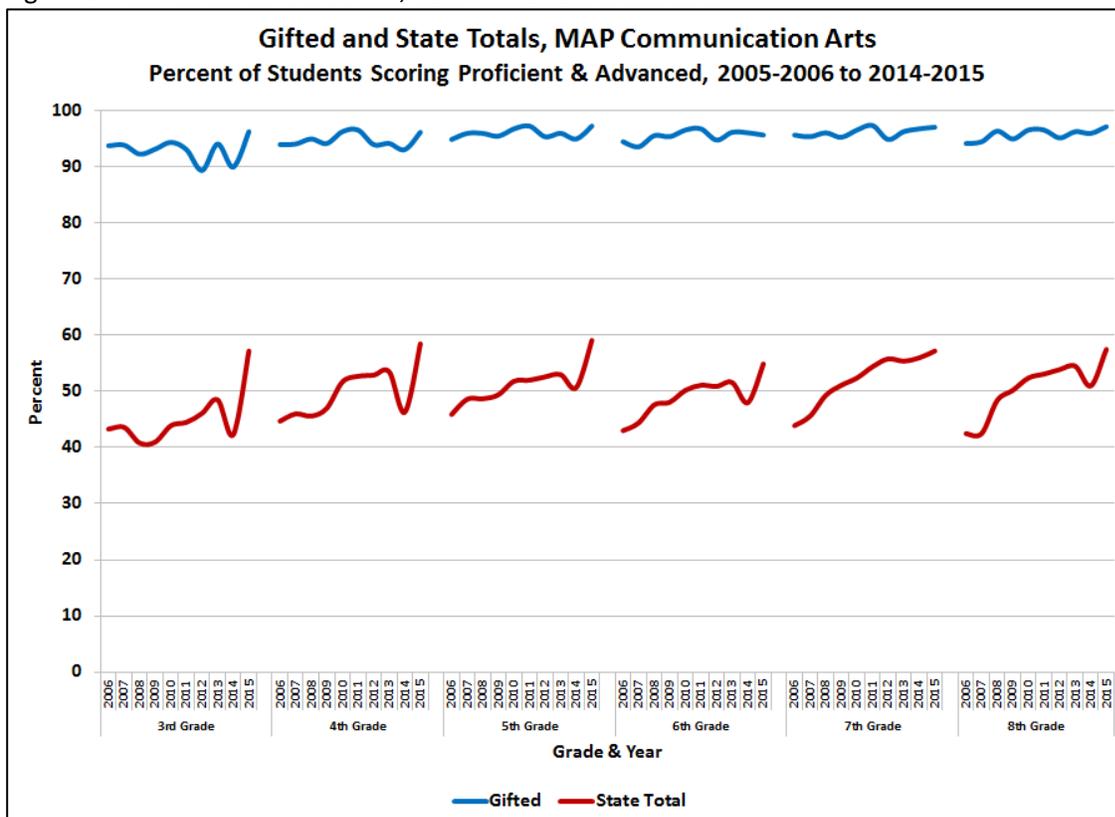


Figure 19: Gifted and State Totals, MAP Mathematics

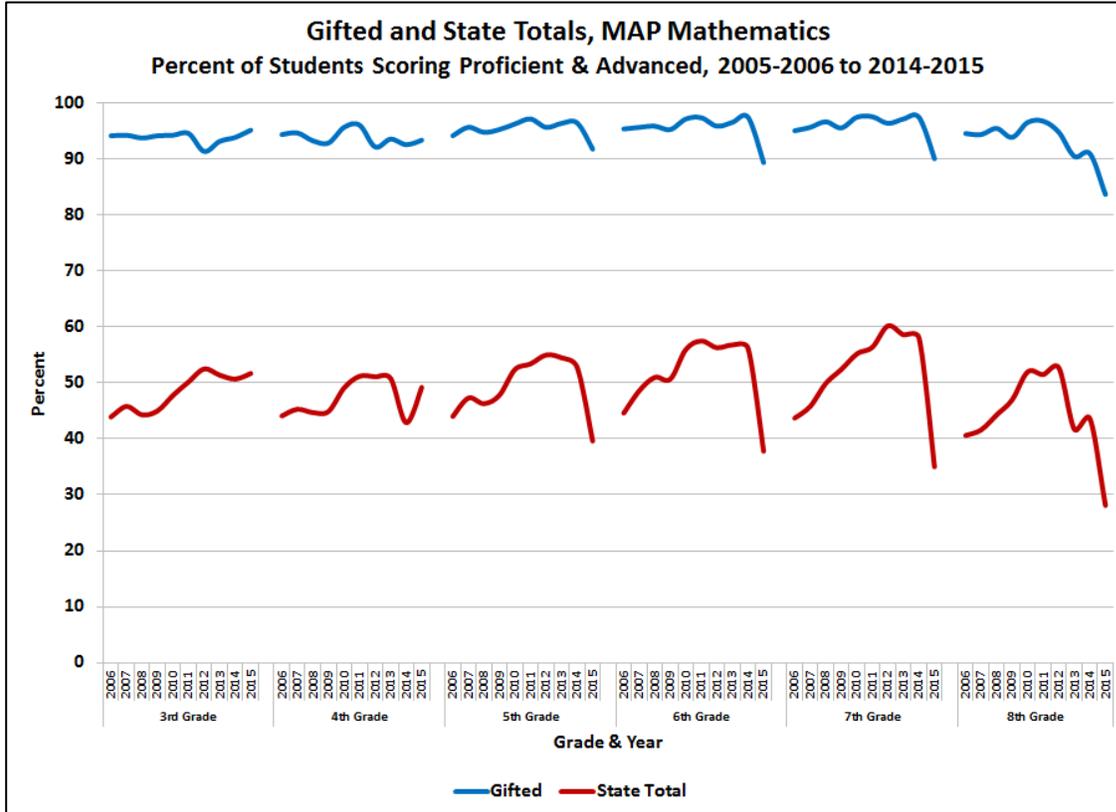
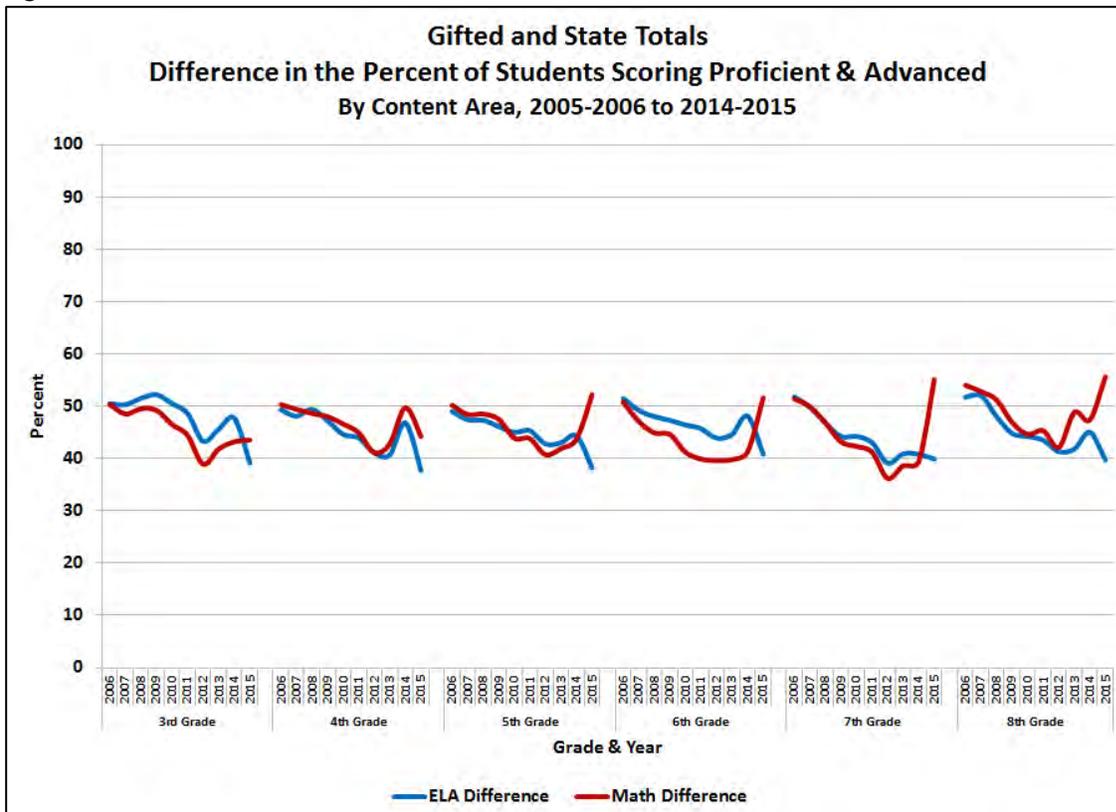


Figure 20: Gifted and State Totals, Scale Score Differences



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Recommendations from the Council’s 2015 report are reviewed on pages 32-38 of this report. Page 32 summarizes progress on Recommendations #1-5. These recommendations were approved for implementation in 2015.

- **Recommendations #1 and 2**, which focus on gifted program data, have not yet been implemented. We hope that action will be taken in the near future to generate specific information about gifted programs on an annual basis and make districts’ gifted program information easily accessible to the public.
- **Recommendation #3** has been implemented in full. An Administrative Memo was issued on December 8, 2015, that reverses the decision to count students enrolled in AP and IB classes as gifted. These students, like all students, must comply with established administrative rules for identifying gifted students in state approved gifted programs.
- **Recommendations #4 and 5** have been implemented in full. A document entitled “Identifying and Serving Traditionally Underrepresented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts” was developed in cooperation with the Council and is currently posted on the DESE website.

Information related to **Recommendations #6-10** is summarized on page 33. These 2015 recommendations were not approved and therefore have not been addressed. On pages 34-39, the original 2015 Problem/Recommendations/Rationale statements related to these recommendations are provided, as well as some additional information for consideration. We respectfully request another review of these recommendations. It is our hope that these recommendations will be approved and moved forward to enhance educational opportunities for gifted students in the years ahead.

Since the 2015 report, the Council has discussed a variety of other needs related to educating gifted students in Missouri. From these discussions, the Council has voted to move three new recommendations forward in this 2017 report. These recommendations – **Recommendations #11-13** – fall within the “Programming for Gifted Students” domain and are each accompanied by a problem statement and rationale (see pages 40-42). We believe implementing these recommendations will enhance educational experiences for gifted learners throughout the state.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION – 2015

## Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

### UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS #1-5

APPROVED IN 2015

<b>Reporting Data on Gifted Students and Programs</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b> DESE should make district information related to state-approved gifted programs readily accessible to the public.	<b>APPROVED BUT NOT YET ACCOMPLISHED</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b> DESE should generate an annual state data report in October on gifted students and state approved gifted programs.	<b>APPROVED BUT NOT YET ACCOMPLISHED</b>
<b>Identification of Gifted Students</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b> DESE should eliminate the practice of reporting students as gifted based on the criterion of being enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course. Additionally, AP and/or IB courses should not be counted as part of a state-approved gifted program.	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See the Administrative Memo dated December 8, 2015 in Appendix C.</i>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b> DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying and serving students who are traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs, the goal being to have program participants more closely reflect the ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic diversity of individual school districts.	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See document entitled "Identifying and Serving Traditionally Under-Represented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts" (<a href="https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf">https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf</a>).</i>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b> DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying students who are twice exceptional (students with both learning challenges due to disabilities and/or physical impairments and exceptional learning abilities).	<b>APPROVED AND ACCOMPLISHED</b> <i>See document entitled "Identifying and Serving Traditionally Under-Represented Gifted Students: Guidance for Missouri School Districts" (<a href="https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf">https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/qs-Gifted-Underrepresented-Gifted-Students-2016.pdf</a>).</i>

## Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

### UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS #6-10 NOT APPROVED IN 2015

<b>Educator Preparation and Professional Development</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b> DESE should require all Missouri districts to have a policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration. The policy should include subject acceleration and whole grade acceleration, among other opportunities.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rationale information on page 34.</i></p>
<b>Programming for Gifted Students</b>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b> DESE should require teacher preparation programs to include a minimum of one three-credit hour course addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rationale information on pages 36-37.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b> DESE should require all districts to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. Professional development may include such options as staff development, university coursework, professional conferences, workshops and web-based learning.</p>	
<b>Requiring and Funding Gifted Education</b>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 9:</b> Gifted identification and programming should be required in Missouri.</p>	<p><b>NOT APPROVED – RECONSIDER AS SUBMITTED</b></p> <p><i>See additional rationale information on pages 38-39.</i></p>
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 10:</b> Earmarked funds should be allocated for gifted identification and programming in Missouri.</p>	

## 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION RECONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS #6-10

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### PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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**PROBLEM:** While acceleration is the best-researched programming option for gifted students, too few Missouri districts have formal, board-approved acceleration policies. In addition, many administrators and teachers are unaware of the strong academic, social, and emotional benefits of acceleration for gifted students.

### 2015

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** DESE should require all Missouri districts to have a policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such advancement. The policy should include subject acceleration and whole grade acceleration, among other opportunities.

**RATIONALE:** Acceleration is the most studied and highly regarded accommodation for gifted students. In the book, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* (2004), Dr. Colangelo lists 18 types of acceleration available to bright students. These approaches fall into two broad categories: (1) grade-based acceleration, that allows students with advanced skills and content knowledge to skip to a higher grade level, and (2) subject-based acceleration that allows for advanced content earlier than customary within grade levels. The key question raised in the book is not whether to accelerate a gifted learner but rather how to do so.

Acceleration strongly benefits gifted students' academic performance and, despite myths to the contrary, tends to have a positive effect on social and emotional well-being. Rogers' (2007) meta-analysis of hundreds of studies found strong academic gains for grade-level acceleration (grade skipping) and subject acceleration along with social and emotional benefits. Requiring districts to have acceleration policies in place is a win-win situation. Acceleration does not require any additional funding by the district, and gifted students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally. Given that many classroom teachers are not trained to meet the needs of gifted students and that only 43% of Missouri districts have a state approved gifted programs, there are large differences in student opportunities depending on the district students attend and the teachers to whom gifted students are assigned. This inequity in gifted student services is at least partially remedied by having an acceleration policy and allowing students who are interested and meet policy criteria to accelerate their learning through grade skipping or subject acceleration.

### 2017

**ADDITIONAL RATIONALE INFORMATION: RATIONALE:** In their updated national report, *A Nation Empowered: Evidence Trumps the Excuses Holding Back America's Brightest Students* (2015), Assouline and colleagues now list 20 types of acceleration available to advanced students and the powerful research evidence behind them, including meta-analyses. Most recently, for example, Stenbergen-Hu and Moon (2011) reviewed 40 studies and found strong academic gains for accelerants as well as social and emotional benefits. This is in line with Rogers' (2004) earlier review of 308 studies. While many interventions for the gifted are expensive and have unknown

*effectiveness, they show that acceleration is a highly cost-effective intervention with well-documented long-term effectiveness. The key question raised in the report is not whether to accelerate a gifted learner, but rather how to do so. Acceleration requires little if any additional funding by the district and gifted students benefit academically, socially, and emotionally. Fewer years in school for some students may even present cost savings to the state.*

*Seventeen states, including the "Top 10 by 20" states of Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, and Wisconsin, have all made recent progress in acceleration policy (NAGC). There are well-vetted instruments for determining which students are ready to accelerate, and there are already excellent examples of district-developed acceleration policies in Missouri. Along with other key resources, these examples would be made available to assist districts that do not currently have such a policy.*

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## EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**PROBLEM:** Pre-service teachers are not adequately instructed concerning the nature and needs of gifted students or modifying curriculum and instruction to address those needs.

**2015**

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** DESE should require all teacher preparation programs to include a minimum of one 3-semester course addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.

**RATIONALE:** Public school teachers are responsible for delivering instruction to a wide range of learners, including students with differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as varying levels of content readiness. In order to equip teachers to effectively tailor learning to students with different needs, the state of Missouri requires teacher candidates to receive exposure to differentiated instruction. While preparatory courses address this topic, there is no direct instruction required in the area of gifted education. Without background in how to identify and respond to students who are ready for advanced curriculum and instruction, efforts to differentiate will be inadequate or misdirected. A separate course that includes background on the nature and needs of gifted students, and effective strategies for meeting those needs, is necessary to give pre-service teachers the skills and confidence to adjust instruction and engage exceptional learners in appropriately challenging learning experiences.

**2017**

**ADDITIONAL RATIONALE INFORMATION:** *Teacher preparation curriculum does not adequately prepare teachers to meet the needs of gifted and talented learners. While instruction in differentiation introduces pre-service teachers to some tools for responding to differences among students, the unique challenges and social/emotional needs of gifted students are insufficiently explored prior to entering the teaching profession. In most university classes, there is no more than one lecture on giftedness; course assignments oftentimes do not offer a gifted option; and textbooks may provide at best a single chapter on gifted learners. As a result, pre-service teachers have an insufficient understanding of gifted students, despite the fact that the vast majority of gifted students in Missouri spend the majority of their time in regular classrooms. Thus, while we agree with Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation standards calling for preparation to teach all learners, in action, advanced learners are often excluded. In the interest of these learners, it is our recommendation that a dedicated course on educating gifted students be required for all teachers in teacher preparation programs.*

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## EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**PROBLEM:** Most teachers do not receive professional development concerning the nature and needs of gifted students or modifying curriculum and instruction to address those needs.

**2015**

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** DESE should require all districts to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. Professional development may include such options as staff development, university coursework, professional conferences, workshops, and web-based learning.

**RATIONALE:** Most gifted students spend the majority of their school time in the regular classroom setting. Their teachers oftentimes have had no coursework in gifted education. In fact, a recent survey found that 65% of classroom teachers report that they have received little or no training on working with gifted students (Farkas & Duffett, 2008). Working effectively with gifted students is a challenge, regardless of students' age, grade or level of learning. In order to equip teachers to do this work well, it is important for teachers to understand the nature and needs of gifted students, and the unique ways they approach and make sense of information. Exposure to differentiated instruction is good but not sufficient to be effective at this task. Teachers need a conceptual understanding of the social, emotional and academic components of giftedness, as well as recommended approaches to curriculum, instruction and assessment. As teachers' understanding of individual differences and instructional strategies expand to meet the needs of gifted students, it is likely that all students will benefit from teachers with this broadened knowledge and skill set.

**2017**

**ADDITIONAL RATIONALE INFORMATION:** *To be in compliance with Title II Professional Development requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, DESE should require all districts to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.*

*The following is key information from the Every Student Succeeds Act: Title II – Professional Development, including needs of gifted learners required in state Title II plans; Sec. 2101 Formula Grants to States (p 308) (d)(2) (p 326) State Application Contents: Each application described under paragraph (1) shall include the following: (J) A description of how the State educational agency will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented, and students with low literacy levels, and provide instruction based on the needs of such students. (p 328)*

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## REQUIRING AND FUNDING GIFTED PROGRAMS

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**PROBLEM:** Many school districts in Missouri do not identify gifted students or provide programs to meet their unique needs.

### 2015

#### **RECOMMENDATION 9: Gifted identification and programming should be required in Missouri.**

**RATIONALE:** Gifted children have unique characteristics that set them apart from their school-age peers, much the way children at the other end of the learning continuum have unique characteristics that set them apart from their school-age peers. Both groups of students need curriculum and instruction tailored to their learning capacity so they are challenged and supported at a level that promotes their cognitive and affective growth. The more extreme the giftedness or learning difference, the more extensive the response needs to be. When such interventions are not implemented, student motivation decreases, performance suffers and negative behaviors oftentimes result (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Cross, 2011).

Equal opportunity to learn and grow does not mean providing the same services or learning opportunities for all. It means affording all children opportunities to learn according to their individual strengths, abilities and aptitudes. While education for students with special needs is mandated by federal law, giftedness as a special need is often overlooked. Currently, over 60 percent of Missouri's school districts do not have a state approved gifted education program. Yet, gifted students exist in every region, district and school in Missouri. It is time to require gifted identification and programming by all Missouri districts. The requirement would align Missouri with the best practices of neighboring states and the majority of states in Missouri's "Top 10 by 20" initiative.

### 2017

**ADDITIONAL RATIONALE INFORMATION:** *The National Association for Gifted Children issued a State of the States Report for 2014-2015. Fully 80% of reporting states (32 of 40) have some form of mandate related to gifted education. The authority for these mandates derived from sources ranging from state law, to state department of education policy, to administrative rule, etc. Almost all reporting states have mandates for both identification and services (28 of 32).*

*Based on information from the Davidson Institute, all of Missouri's border states except Illinois have a mandate for serving gifted students. Those states include Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee. Of Missouri's "Top 10 by 20" comparison states, mandates are present in Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, Montana, Virginia and Wisconsin.*

*The Gifted Advisory Council reiterates the need for requiring identification and programming for gifted students. Missouri needs to join the ranks of states that require appropriate educational services for this identifiable group of special needs students.*

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## REQUIRING AND FUNDING GIFTED PROGRAMS

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**PROBLEM:** Earmarked funding for gifted programs was eliminated in 2006, resulting in fewer districts identifying and providing programming for gifted students.

**2015**

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** Earmarked funds should be allocated for gifted identification and programming in Missouri.

**RATIONALE:** Categorical funding for Missouri gifted programs began in 1974. The amount of state funding increased from \$249,311 in 1974 to a high of \$24,870,104 in 2000. This level of funding remained static until 2006, when the state legislature eliminated all categorical funding, including gifted education. While gifted funding is technically still included in the annual educational funding package, it is no longer earmarked for the education of gifted students. The funds can be used for any purpose districts see fit to support. As a result of this change, many school districts have reduced or eliminated their gifted education programs. The total number of school districts with a gifted program is at the lowest level since 1988. Today, only 230 districts have state approved gifted programs. With dedicated funding, this trend will be reversed. Districts will have the incentive to identify gifted students and start or enhance gifted programs across the state.

**2017**

**ADDITIONAL RATIONALE INFORMATION:** *The number of state approved gifted programs continues to decline. In 2014-2015, only 211 districts, or 38% of Missouri districts, report having a state-approved gifted program. We believe this decline is due, in large measure, to the lack of categorical funding for gifted education. To reverse this trend, the Council recommends that the \$24.8 million in funds once dedicated to gifted education be spent on gifted programming.*

*It should be noted that Missouri is falling further behind neighboring states with regard to funding gifted education. Iowa and Oklahoma fully fund their gifted programs. Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kansas and Nebraska offer partial, dedicated funding. Missouri and Illinois are the only states that do not offer earmarked funding for gifted education. Of the "Top 10 by 20" DESE comparison states, four of the states have partial, dedicated funding for gifted programming. Those states are Maine, Minnesota, Virginia and Wisconsin.*

## NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION – 2017

Based on resources and data and reviewed by the Council, three new recommendations for action were developed. These recommendations fall within the “Programming for Gifted Students” category. Each recommendation is preceded by a problem statement describing the issue of concern and is followed by a rationale.

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### PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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**PROBLEM:** The needs of gifted and talented students have been largely ignored in major education legislation. The lack of explicit legislative language related to gifted students has resulted in a focus of effort and money on bringing students to a minimal level of proficiency. Consequently, bringing students to even higher levels of achievement has been largely ignored.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** DESE should be proactive in taking advantage of the new opportunities presented in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to focus on the needs of gifted students. Specifically, DESE should:

- **Include the scores of gifted students as a separate subgroup on the state and local report cards;**
- **Encourage local districts to take advantage of the allowable use of Title I funds to help better identify and provide gifted services for the traditionally underrepresented populations;**
- **Include explicit language requiring the use of Title II funds to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to better understand the nature and needs of gifted students and provide them with appropriate instruction;**
- **Include grants that provide for the explicit use of Title IV funds to pay for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam fees of low-income students.**

**RATIONALE:** Most education legislation has included language that promotes meeting the needs of all students. Unfortunately, when this gets implemented in local districts and schools it becomes a focus only on those students not performing well and are explicitly singled out on the accountability process or publically noted in state reports. As a consequence, gifted and talented students educational needs are rarely included in those intended for “all” students. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for the first time explicitly names gifted and talented students as a subgroup that needs to be included. DESE should take advantage of this opportunity to ensure that the legislative intent to include the needs of gifted students is clearly communicated and facilitated by creating a new gifted subgroup that has its assessment results reported in the state and local report cards; includes explicit language in its guidance to local districts that encourages them to use some of their Title I funds to better identify and serve traditionally underrepresented students in their gifted programs; explicitly requires the use of Title II funds to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers to better understand the nature and needs of gifted students and provide them with appropriate instruction; and provide Title IV grants to pay for the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam fees for low income students.

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## PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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**PROBLEM:** Key elements of high quality gifted programs are missing from Missouri's administrative rules.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** DESE should change the administrative rules for gifted programs to include:

- (1) an identification appeal process for parents or guardians of students applying for gifted services;
- (2) a board-approved policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration; and
- (3) a plan for annual professional development for gifted staff on educating gifted learners.

**RATIONALE:** In addition to having a high quality, defensible system for identifying gifted students, it is essential for districts to have a procedure for parents or guardians to request reconsideration of an identification decision. While parental rights are clearly spelled out within special education, there is often no recourse provided for parents within gifted education. A defined appeal process would enhance the credibility of the gifted identification system and give parents a partnership role with the school. At the same time, it would define the parameters for seeking an appeal and establish criteria for providing such input. Examples of high quality appeal procedures within gifted education are available online. These examples can help Missouri districts develop procedures tailored to their local needs.

State approved gifted programs should also have a Board-approved acceleration policy. Acceleration is the most studied and highly regarded accommodation for gifted students. It is a low cost, high impact intervention that has demonstrated its effectiveness over the course of decades of implementation and research. Acceleration policies differ based on district philosophy but need to provide flexibility for individual students based on their unique educational needs. Examples of high quality acceleration policies are readily available for reference in both Missouri and elsewhere in the country.

Professional Development about the nature and needs of gifted students should be a planned component of each district's gifted program. State approved gifted programs should include defined efforts to build gifted program staffs' understanding of students' social and emotional needs and skill in offering content and instruction that is challenging, complex, differentiated and personalized.

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## PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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**PROBLEM:** DESE does not provide districts with best practice recommendations for delivering services to gifted students and modifying curriculum and instruction to meet their unique learning needs.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** DESE should develop a document providing guidance to districts on best practice approaches for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. This document should incorporate key elements of Response to Intervention (RtI) for gifted students and a Levels of Service (LoS) approach that identifies a wide range of services to meet the varied and complex needs of gifted learners.

**RATIONALE:** According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), it is essential to provide educational opportunities at the appropriate level of challenge for advanced learners. NAGC recommends six guiding principles of program design, three of which are:

- Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners.
- Gifted education programming services must be an integral part of the general education school day.
- Flexible groupings of students must be developed in order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.

The use of a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework and Levels of Service (LoS) approach for gifted students would both identify and support the advanced learning needs of children with respect to their curriculum and instruction. As noted by Selby and Young (2003), this approach would allow educators to “search for interested students, identify those with high potential based on performance, and develop individual expertise commensurate with the student's passion. As a student's skills develop to higher levels, instruction and opportunities for performance become more individualized and challenging.”

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As noted in the Council's first report, the Council has three goals for its reports on gifted education in Missouri. The first goal is to create a data-driven understanding of the status of gifted programs in the state. The second goal is to make recommendations for improvement in Missouri's efforts related to gifted and talented children. Toward that end, we included ten recommendations in the first report and three additional recommendations in the current report. These recommendations are considered priorities for strengthening and broadening high quality educational opportunities for gifted students in Missouri. The third goal was to establish a 'baseline' for future analyses and recommendations. Our focus in all reports is on assessing progress with prior recommendations, studying new data to understand programming trends, and making new recommendations based on research, best practices, and input from key audiences around the state.

The Council would once again like to thank Dr. Matt Goodman, acting Executive Director at EducationPlus, for providing statistical expertise to the Council. His efforts included analyzing program and student data and preparing the figures and tables presented in this report. EducationPlus is a non-profit educational organization providing support and advocacy for school districts in the greater St. Louis region as well as the state as a whole.

We would also like to thank David Welch, DESE's Director of Gifted Programs, and Renee Hasty, Administrative Assistant, for support of Council meetings, as well as DESE's Office of Data Systems Management, for providing the Council with statewide data on student achievement and enrollment in gifted programs.

Our appreciation is extended to members of the Missouri legislature for forming the Gifted Advisory Council in 2013. Council members consider it a privilege to work with the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education to effectively address the educational needs of Missouri's gifted and talented children.

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### WEBSITES

<http://www.collegeboard.org>

<http://www.davidsongifted.org>

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/gifted-advisory-council>

<http://www.nagc.org>

## APPENDIX A

### Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION – MARCH 2015

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#### Reporting Data on Gifted Students and Programs

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**RECOMMENDATION 1:** DESE should make district information related to state approved gifted programs readily accessible to the public. Specifically, information available on DESE's website should include but not be limited to grade levels served, identification criteria, service delivery model by level (per DESE categories), contact minutes per week by level, number of gifted teachers by level and the student-to-teacher ratio by level.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** DESE should generate an annual state data report in October on gifted students and state assisted gifted programs. The report should use data from the prior school year and include but not be limited to:

- Number and percent of districts with state approved gifted programs (state totals and disaggregated by DESE region and county)
- Number and percent of gifted students served in state approved programs (state totals and disaggregated by DESE region and county; by grade level and as a percent of all Missouri students in grade level)
- Number and percent of gifted students identified and not served in state approved programs (state totals and disaggregated by DESE region and county; by grade level and percent of all identified gifted students)
- Gifted teacher certification in state approved gifted programs by level (Elementary, Middle School, High School and total)
- Gifted program types and contact minutes per week (state total by program type, level, DESE region and county; average contact minutes by level, DESE region and county)
- Gifted student demographics by DESE region (district cells merged so actual count is possible) and total
- Gifted student achievement (MAP) by grade level tested and in comparison to all students at grade levels tested

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#### Identification of Gifted Students

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**RECOMMENDATION 3:** DESE should eliminate the practice of reporting students as gifted based on the criterion of being enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) course. Additionally, AP and/or IB courses should not be counted as part of a state approved gifted program.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying and serving students who are traditionally under-represented in gifted programs, the goal being to have program participants more closely reflect, percentage-wise, the ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic diversity of individual school districts. The best practice model should include research-based recommendations on identification, interventions to scaffold learning and delivery of gifted program services.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** DESE should provide a best practice model for districts to use in identifying students who are twice exceptional (students with both learning challenges due to disabilities and/or physical impairments and exceptional learning abilities).

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#### Programming for Gifted Students

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**RECOMMENDATION 6:** DESE should require all Missouri districts to have a policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration. The policy should include subject acceleration and whole grade acceleration, among other opportunities.

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#### Educator Preparation and Professional Development

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**RECOMMENDATION 7:** DESE should require teacher preparation programs to include a minimum of one 3-credit course addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** DESE should require all districts to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. Professional development may include such options as staff development, university coursework, professional conferences, workshops and web-based learning.

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#### Requiring and Funding Gifted Education

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**RECOMMENDATION 9:** Gifted identification and programming should be required in Missouri.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** Earmarked funds should be allocated for gifted identification and programming in Missouri.

## APPENDIX B

### Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION - 2017**

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#### **PROGRAMMING FOR GIFTED STUDENTS**

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**RECOMMENDATION 11:** DESE should be proactive in taking advantage of the new opportunities presented in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to focus on the needs of gifted students. Specifically, DESE should:

- Include the scores of gifted students as a separate subgroup on the state and local report cards;
- Encourage local districts to take advantage of the allowable use of Title I funds to help better identify and provide gifted services for the traditionally underrepresented populations;
- Include explicit language requiring the use of Title II funds to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to better understand the nature and needs of gifted students and provide them with appropriate curriculum and instruction;
- Include grants that provide for the explicit use of Title IV funds to pay for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam fees of low-income students.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** DESE should change the administrative rules for gifted programs to include (1) an identification appeal process for parents or guardians of students applying for gifted services; (2) a board-approved policy allowing acceleration for students demonstrating advanced performance or potential for advanced performance and the social/emotional readiness for such acceleration; and (3) a plan for annual professional development for gifted staff on educating gifted learners.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** DESE should develop a document providing guidance to districts on best practice approaches for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students. This document should incorporate key elements of Response to Intervention (RtI) for gifted students and a Levels of Services (LoS) approach that identifies a wide range of services to meet the varied and complex needs of gifted learners.

## APPENDIX C



Chris Neale, Ed.D. • Assistant Commissioner

Office of Quality Schools

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### Administrative Memo

TO: School Administrators  
FROM: David Welch, Director of Gifted Education Programs, Office of Quality Schools  
DATE: December 8, 2015  
SUBJECT: QS-15-015 - State Approved Gifted Programs and Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

On May 19, 2015, the State Board of Education accepted the recommendation of the State Advisory Council for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children to discontinue counting Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) students and courses as part of a state approved gifted program unless the courses comply with the established administrative rule for state gifted programs. Starting in the 2016-2017 school year, students in Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses are not to be labeled as Gifted Served (GS) in MOSIS.

Administrative rule 5 CSR 20-100.110 for state approved gifted programs requires that a gifted certified teacher is teaching any class labeled as an (08) state approved gifted class and students identified as gifted served (GS) in MOSIS have met three of the four criteria areas with state minimum qualifications. AP or IB classes are not to be labeled as (08) state approved gifted classes in the October Cycle of Core Data unless the teacher of the class has gifted certification. If the teacher has gifted certification, the class may be labeled as a state approved gifted class (08) in the October cycle of Core Data collection.

Appropriate and accurate reporting of MOSIS and Core Data information about state approved gifted programs is required to meet the statutory requirement set forth in Senate Bill (SB) 599, RSMo. 160.522. This information is to be more thoroughly examined to insure it is accurate as important decisions are being made based on this information.

This letter is designed to provide you with sufficient advanced knowledge of this change to insure accurate reporting in the October Core Data cycle for 2016-2017. In addition, the MOSIS and Core Data Manual has been updated to reflect this change.

If you have any questions, please contact David Welch at [david.welch@dese.mo.gov](mailto:david.welch@dese.mo.gov) or (573) 571- 7754.

APPENDIX D



**HISTORICAL DATA ON STATE APPROVED PROGRAMS FOR  
GIFTED CHILDREN IN MISSOURI**

School Year	Number of Districts with Programs	Number of Students Served in Programs	Number of Teachers Working In Programs	State Aid	Percent of Reimbursement
1974-75	7	1,465		◆\$249,311	50%
1975-76	10	2,343		\$323,651	50%
1976-77	13	3,943		\$1,325,264	50%
1977-78	27	6,196		\$1,539,362	50%
1978-79	39	7,665		\$1,560,362	50%
1979-80	58	8,546		\$1,900,336	50%
1980-81	68	8,757		\$2,017,492	50%
1981-82	79	10,078	244	\$2,591,692	50%
1982-83	89	10,666	250	\$2,886,159	50%
1983-84	109	11,686	253	\$3,493,822	50%
1984-85	132	12,375	306	\$4,184,007	50%
1985-86	162	13,333	333	\$5,022,991	50%
1986-87	189	13,645	353	\$5,886,109	50%
1987-88	214	16,361	551	\$6,529,558	50%
1988-89	227	17,472	590	■\$10,663,156	75%
1989-90	259	17,921	641	\$13,398,433	75%
1990-91	266	18,050	653	\$15,400,199	75%
1991-92	270	22,511	674	\$15,474,704	73%
1992-93	264	24,082	700	\$16,249,489	69%
1993-94	269	24,877	817	\$16,249,489	65%
1994-95	289	25,644	863	\$16,249,489	64%
1995-96	292	27,000	→810	\$16,249,489	56%
1996-97	291	28,525	790	\$20,000,000	72%
1997-98	293	26,219	804	\$20,000,000	70%
1998-99	303	27,916	831	\$21,000,000	70%
1999-00	310	27,738	839	\$23,100,000	72%
2000-01	320	28,060	877	\$24,671,753	74%
2001-02	333	30,487	933	\$24,864,153	67%
2002-03	330	30,487	899	\$24,864,153	65%
2003-04	307	32,559	829	\$23,415,942	63%
2004-05	293	32,673	820	\$24,870,104	65%
2005-06	295	32,641	842	\$24,870,104	62%
2006-07	291	❖ 40,670	❖ 865	*\$24,870,104	0%
2007-08	296	❖ 42,375	❖ 884	*\$24,870,104	0%

Rev: December 11, 2015

School Year	Number of Districts with Programs	Number of Students Served in Programs	Number of Teachers Working In Programs	State Aid	Percent of Reimbursement
2008-09	255	❖ 37,262	❖ 760	*\$24,870,104	0%
2009-10	274	❖ 34,112	❖ 704	*\$24,870,104	0%
2010-11	268	❖ 40,931	❖ 879	*\$24,870,104	0%
2011-12	254	❖ 44,371	❖ 920	*\$24,870,104	0%
2012-13	231	❖ 38,045	❖ 835	*\$24,870,104	0%
2013-14	223	❖ 36,650	❖ 820	*\$24,870,104	0%
2014-15	211	❖ 40,984	❖ 792	*\$24,870,104	0%

- ◆ HB 474 established funding for Gifted at 50% reimbursement
- SB 797 increased State Aid from 50 to 75% effective July 1, 1988.
- Mandatory certification endorsement became effective September 1, 1995.
- \* Gifted funding folded into the foundation formula
- ❖ Number of students and teachers in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes included.

Gifted Education  
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## APPENDIX E

### CHRONOLOGY OF GIFTED EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTS IN MISSOURI

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1974	House Bill 474 established funding for Gifted at 50% reimbursement.
1984	Missouri Scholar's Academy was launched.
1988	Senate Bill 797 increased State Aid from 50 to 75% effective July 1, 1988.
1995	Mandatory certification endorsement became effective September 1, 1995.
1996	Missouri's Fine Arts Academy was launched.
2001	Gifted programs were at an all-time high in Missouri, with 333 districts or 64% of all districts having a state-approved gifted program.
2006	Gifted funding folded into the foundation formula. A temporary penalty clause was included to deter districts from decreasing gifted program enrollment.  Number of students and teachers in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes began being included in gifted student count.
2012	Senate Bill 599 required districts to report on their annual report card whether the school district has a state approved gifted education program, and the percentage and number of students currently being served in the program.
2013	State Statute 161.249 established the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children. The Council's first report was issued on March 4, 2015.
2016	Senate Bill 638 modifies provisions related to gifted education. Beginning in 2017-2018, districts incur a reduction in funding if they experience a decrease in gifted program enrollment by 20% or more from the previous year.
2017	Students in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes are no longer included in gifted student count.  Changes in gifted certification requirements become effective August 1, 2017.

## APPENDIX F

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON GIFTED EDUCATION

#### What is Gifted Education?

Gifted education is the system by which school districts recognize and serve students with exceptional abilities and potential for high levels of achievement. The term covers identification procedures, the specific services and programs offered, as well as the teacher training necessary to provide the academic guidance gifted students need in order to thrive.

The federal definition of gifted students was originally developed in the 1972 Marland Report to Congress, and has been modified several times since then. The current definition, which is located in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is: “Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities” (nagc.org).

A similar definition of giftedness is offered by the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC): “Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains.”

Students with outstanding aptitude and/or superior performance tend to display a number of characteristics. Those characteristics include (Renzulli, 2002):

- Superior reasoning power and marked ability to handle complex ideas
- Persistent intellectual curiosity; wide range of interests, often in considerable depth
- Learns rapidly and sees connections among diverse ideas and concepts
- Superior quantity and quality of written and/or spoken vocabulary
- Ability to sustain concentration for long periods of time

There are also affective characteristics that are prevalent in gifted individuals, and which impact student learning and social interactions. Those characteristics include (Clark, 2008):

- Heightened self-awareness, accompanied by feelings of being different
- Unusual sensitivity to the expectations and feelings of others
- High expectations of self and others, often leading to high levels of frustration with self, others, and situations
- Strong need for consistency between abstract values and personal actions
- Unusual emotional depth and intensity
- Earlier development of an inner locus of control and satisfaction
- Advanced cognitive and affective capacity for conceptualizing and solving society’s problems

Creative capacities are also distinguishing characteristics of many gifted individuals. Those characteristics include (Colangelo & Davis, 2003):

- Imaginative, resourceful, challenges assumptions, bored by the obvious
- Tolerant of ambiguity, disorder, incongruity
- Receptive to new ideas, other viewpoints, new experiences, and growth

- Individualistic; non-conforming; willing to cope with hostility, failure
- Risk-taker; adventurous and speculative
- Generates a large number of ideas or solutions to problems
- Sees humor in situations that may not appear to be humorous to others

Since every individual has his or her own unique set of characteristics, and no one individual has all characteristics at an exceptional level, the approach used to identify gifted students needs to be carefully designed and implemented. Generally, identification procedures focus on screening to establish a pool of candidates, individual evaluation of candidates based on multiple tools and criteria, and final decisions by trained professionals about the need for gifted services.

Ideally, programs and services for gifted students are multi-faceted and include many options for student learning and interaction with academic and social/emotional peers. Advanced curriculum, faster pacing, and real world problem-solving opportunities are recommended components of gifted education programs, as are opportunities for students to develop and pursue individual interests and talent areas (Clark, 2008). Providing gifted learners with responsive, engaging learning environments should begin as early as possible in their schooling (nagc.org).

#### Why is Gifted Education Important?

Education has a unique mission in American life. It offers all children, regardless of economic circumstances, ability, religion or heritage, the opportunity to explore and develop their skills, aptitudes and aspirations. Done properly, this effort enables young people to discover not only what their strengths are, but also what is needed to reach the level of excellence required for success in today's complex and competitive world.

The education of gifted students is a particularly heavy responsibility because these students have so much potential. They learn basic information at a rapid rate and need both more advanced and more abstract material to stimulate their interest and facilitate academic growth. Full realization of their ability requires years of increasingly challenging learning experiences and talented mentors as well as the ongoing encouragement and support of classroom teachers and parents alike.

What is the payoff of recognizing special gifts and supporting their realization? On one hand, helping individuals achieve personal and career fulfillment is payoff of its own. Individuals who are using their talents and aptitudes at high levels have a greater likelihood of finding satisfaction in their work and leading fulfilling personal lives. On the other hand, supporting superior skills and competencies in gifted students can result in a better future for all, a future where unique talents and training are used to solve society's complex problems and develop new ideas that make life better and more fulfilling for everyone.

It is the Council's contention that identifying and supporting gifted students in Missouri is both an extraordinary opportunity and a wise investment that will pay dividends long into the future. These students' journey toward excellence, if supported throughout the educational system, will propel our state and country forward in new and unexpected ways, releasing the individual creativity, innovation, and drive needed for tackling our world's complex challenges. As noted by Barbara Clark (2008), a leader in gifted education:

*“The consequences of ignoring the needs of the brightest and most promising among us can be devastating. If society is to move forward, find solutions to the overwhelming problems it faces throughout the world, realize its goals for peaceful coexistence of all humankind, and ensure the very continuation of its existence on this planet, we need the ideas our brightest minds can produce, and we will continue to need them far into the future. Such minds do not come fully formed at birth; giftedness must be nurtured.”*

### Myths about Gifted Students

The concept of giftedness, and gifted education in general, is subject to a broad range of misunderstandings that can harm efforts to address these students’ special needs. These misunderstandings range from the notion that gifted students will do fine on their own to the idea that gifted programs are ‘elitist’ and undemocratic. All too often, those ideas create an inherent bias against gifted students and gifted programs in general.

Gifted children have unique characteristics that set them apart from their school-age peers, much the way children at the other end of the learning continuum have unique characteristics that set them apart from their school-age peers. Both groups of students need curriculum and instruction tailored to their learning capacity so they are challenged and supported at a level that promotes their cognitive and affective growth. The more extreme the giftedness or learning difference, the more extensive the response needs to be. When such interventions are not implemented, student motivation decreases, performance suffers and negative behaviors oftentimes result (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004; Cross, 2011).

Common ‘myths’ about gifted students is provided below. Each myth is countered with research and statements of ‘reality’. This listing is compiled by NAGC from a variety of relevant sources and is presented in somewhat abbreviated form.

*Myth: Gifted Students Don’t Need Help; They’ll Do Fine On Their Own*

Truth: Would you send a star athlete to train for the Olympics without a coach? Gifted students need guidance from well-trained teachers who challenge and support them in order to fully develop their abilities. Many gifted students may be so far ahead of their same-age peers that they know more than half of the grade-level curriculum before the school year begins. Their resulting boredom and frustration can lead to low achievement, despondency, or unhealthy work habits. The role of the teacher is crucial for spotting and nurturing talents in school.

*Myth: Teachers Challenge All The Students, So Gifted Kids Will Be Fine In The Regular Classroom*

Truth: Although teachers try to challenge all students they are frequently unfamiliar with the needs of gifted children and do not know how to best serve them in the classroom. A national study conducted by the Fordham Institute found that 58% of teachers have received no professional development focused on teaching academically advanced students in the past few years and 73% of teachers agreed that “Too often, the brightest students are bored and under- challenged in school – we’re not giving them a sufficient chance to thrive. This report confirms what many families have known: not all teachers are able to recognize and support gifted learners.

*Myth: Gifted Students Make Everyone Else In The Class Smarter By Providing A Role Model Or A Challenge*

Truth: Average or below-average students do not look to the gifted students in the class as role models. Watching or relying on someone who is expected to succeed does little to increase a struggling student's sense of self-confidence.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, gifted students benefit from classroom interactions with peers at similar performance levels and become bored, frustrated, and unmotivated when placed in classrooms with low or average-ability students.

*Myth: All Children Are Gifted*

Truth: All children have strengths and positive attributes, but not all children are gifted in the educational sense of the word. The label "gifted" in a school setting means that when compared to others his or her age or grade, a child has an advanced capacity to learn and apply what is learned in one or more subject areas, or in the performing or fine arts. This advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum to ensure these children are challenged and learn new material. Gifted does not connote good or better; it is a term that allows students to be identified for services that meet their unique learning needs.

*Myth: Acceleration Placement Options Are Socially Harmful For Gifted Students*

Truth: Academically gifted students often feel bored or out of place with their age peers and naturally gravitate towards older students who are more similar as "intellectual peers." Studies have shown that many students are happier with older students who share their interest than they are with children the same age. Therefore, acceleration placement options such as early entrance to Kindergarten, grade skipping, or early exit should be considered for these students.

*Myth: Gifted Education Programs Are Elitist*

Truth: Gifted education programs are meant to help all high-ability students. Gifted learners are found in all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. However, many of these students are denied the opportunity to maximize their potential because of the way in which programs and services are funded, and/or flawed identification practices. For example, reliance on a single test score for gifted education services may exclude selection of students with different cultural experiences and opportunities. Additionally, with no federal money and few states providing an adequate funding stream, most gifted education programs and services are dependent solely on local funds and parent demand. This means that in spite of the need, often only higher-income school districts are able to provide services, giving the appearance of elitism.

*Myth: That Student Can't Be Gifted, He Is Receiving Poor Grades*

Truth: Underachievement describes a discrepancy between a student's performance and his actual ability. The roots of this problem differ, based on each child's experiences. Gifted students may become bored or frustrated in an unchallenging classroom situation causing them to lose interest, learn bad study habits, or distrust the school environment. Other students may mask their abilities to try to fit in socially with their same-age peers and still others may have a learning disability that masks their giftedness. No matter the cause, it is imperative that a caring and perceptive adult help gifted learners break the cycle of underachievement in order to achieve their full potential.

*Myth: Gifted Students Are Happy, Popular, And Well Adjusted In School*

Truth: Many gifted students flourish in their community and school environment. However, some gifted children differ in terms of their emotional and moral intensity, sensitivity to expectations and feelings, perfectionism, and deep concerns about societal problems. Others do not share interests

with their classmates, resulting in isolation or being labeled unfavorably as a “nerd.” Because of these difficulties, the school experience is one to be endured rather than celebrated.

*Myth: This Child Can't Be Gifted, He Has A Disability*

Truth: Some gifted students also have learning or other disabilities. These “twice-exceptional” students often go undetected in regular classrooms because their disability and gifts mask each other, making them appear “average.” Other twice-exceptional students are identified as having a learning disability and as a result, are not considered for gifted services. In both cases, it is important to focus on the students’ abilities and allow them to have challenging curricula in addition to receiving help for their learning disability

*Myth: Our District Has A Gifted And Talented Program: We Have AP Courses*

Truth: While AP classes offer rigorous, advanced coursework, they are not a gifted education program. The AP program is designed as college-level classes taught by high school teachers for students willing to work hard. The program is limited in its service to gifted and talented students in two major areas: First AP is limited by the subjects offered, which in most districts is only a small handful. Second it is limited in that, typically, it is offered only in high school and is generally available only for 11th and 12th grade students. The College Board acknowledges that AP courses are for any student who is academically prepared and motivated to take a college- level course.

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*“Failure to help the gifted child is a societal tragedy, the extent of which is difficult to measure but which is surely great. How can we measure the sonata unwritten, the curative drug undiscovered, the absence of political insight? They are the difference between what we are and what we could be as a society.”*

James J. Gallagher