

Every Student Has the Right to Learn Something New Every Day

What would it mean for our schools to adopt the philosophy that every student has the right to learn something new every day?

The Friday Forum group of metro-area gifted education professionals who meet periodically to share expertise and problem-solve, have been considering the question: *Is gifted education as we know it outdated?* The group, coordinated through the Grants and Research Office of Intermediate District 287 and Northeast Metro 916, has discussed how in past years gifted education was considered the research and development arm of education. In recent years, however, gifted education practices do not appear to be keeping up. As Friday Forum has addressed this apparent reality, it also has been suggested that the question might be the wrong one. One member has observed, “We don’t ask ‘are the Olympics outdated’ because they’ve been around for a long time in virtually the same format; we recognize their value to identify high performers who remind us of our potential.”

The group has agreed that in the same way the Olympics show how high the bar can be set, gifted education stretches schools and society to do more than only concentrate on proficiency. Without gifted education, they have stated, the standards movement is reduced to assuring what is the most attainable level of common performance.

With the new understanding that perhaps gifted education is no longer cutting edge but it also is not outdated, the group has considered how gifted education doesn’t need to always be producing the new shiny thing. Rather, gifted education has value upholding the important foundational ideas that help build capacity for all learners. They have agreed that these ideas include:

1. Gifted education promotes all educators having an active positive mindset that every student has the right to learn something new every day.
2. Gifted education is part of a collection of services and supports along a continuum that assure that the student needs are met;
3. Gifted education helps recognize individual needs and respond to those needs;
4. Gifted students are able to ask high-level questions and need an outlet to do so;
5. Gifted education helps provide a culture of possibilities – everybody gets better; and,
6. Gifted education is a lens through which we see the world of education differently.

Barbara Clark, in her widely-used textbook *Growing Up Gifted* (2002), asserted, “Society gains from the advancement of all abilities and highest development of the talents of all of its members.” The group has affirmed that ongoing advocacy for gifted learners creates opportunities for all and that widely sharing the clear message about all students having the right to learn something new every day might have greater impact on schools than diffusing energies to be cutting edge. “We need to appreciate the strength of the enduring foundation,” said one member, “and not get caught up admiring the newest addition.”