

After the Marland Report: Four Decades of Progress?

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Abstract

The release of the Marland Report in 1972 is often described as a watershed moment in the field of gifted education and remains a touchstone for the field today. The report presented the federal government's formal definition of giftedness and outlined the unique learning needs of gifted students and the challenges faced by these students in U.S. schools. This article presents an examination of the goals and outcomes set forth in the Marland Report, the context within which the report evolved, and lessons learned, which can lead to an improved understanding of this legislation and the state of the field today.

Keywords

policy/law, research, historical, archival, qualitative, Gifted Education

Conformity is precisely the cross upon which special education for the gifted hangs supine.

—Marland (1972, p. 139)

The release of the Marland Report in 1972 is often described as a watershed moment in the field of gifted education and remains a touchstone for the field today. The report presented the federal government's formal definition of giftedness and outlined the unique learning needs of gifted students and the challenges faced by these students in U.S. schools. Replete with a review of research literature and examples of model programs, the report was meant as a catalyst for promoting gifted education. Although attentiveness to gifted students and their educational needs transitorily spiked, it eventually contracted to a recession of interest, which imitated the level of historical appeal gifted education had long garnered with educational decision makers and the general public.

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The intervening 44 years since the release of the Marland Report have witnessed additional reports and subsequent legislation, including *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research, 1993), and the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act of 1988. These measures reawakened the rally cries for the allocation of resources, programming, and personnel for gifted education and reiterated the neglect given to the nation's most able students, providing both research and practitioner-oriented suggestions for improving gifted students' educational environment. However, during the past four decades, Congress has failed to set "a national floor of responsibility" regarding gifted children so as to avoid the fickle predilections of budgetary primacies, public disinterest, and superseding priorities (Weintraub & Ballard, 1982, p. 3).

An examination of the goals and outcomes set forth in the Marland Report, the context within which the report evolved, and the lessons learned can lead to an improved understanding of this legislation and resulting support for gifted education and the state of the field today.

Federal Legislation and Gifted Education

The federal role in gifted education can be traced back to 1931 with the inception of a Section on Exceptional Children and Youth (see Table 1 for a chronology of federal gifted education policy). This division lacked any legislative mandate or financial provisions, foreshadowing the federal government's long-term investment in gifted education—or lack thereof (Russo, 2001; Zirkel & Stevens, 1987). Interest in the field remained dormant until after World War II. Immediately following the war, Americans felt the country should focus on scientific research and training to maintain its newly established leadership position in the global hierarchy (DeLeon & VandenBos, 1985).

National Science Foundation (NSF)

In direct response to the focus on science research and training, the National Science Foundation Act of 1950 was passed with support from President Truman. This act not only provided resources for the development and research in the sciences but also focused on strengthening math and science curricula in high schools and promoting careers in these fields to the most able students (Robins, 2010). In a statement made when he signed the bill, Truman shared the history behind the act:

The establishment of the National Science Foundation [NSF] is a major landmark in the history of science in the United States. Its establishment climaxes 5 years of effort on the part of the executive branch, the Congress, and leading private citizens. Three months after I assumed the Presidency in 1945, I received a report . . . [that] recommended the creation of an agency, such as the National Science Foundation, to promote the development of new scientific knowledge and new scientific talent. It was assumed at

Table 1. Chronological History of Federal Gifted Education Policy.

Year	Federal role	Brief description	Key implications for gifted education
1931	Section on Exceptional Children and Youth	First federal program addressing needs of students with special educational needs.	First federal program to acknowledge the learning needs of gifted children.
1950	National Science Foundation Act	Provided resources for the development and research in sciences; focused on strengthening math and science curricula and promoting careers to those most able students.	Advanced learners and gifted students become recipients of this funding in terms of challenging course work in both math and science and career advice leading to university.
1957	National Defense Education Act	Comprehensive federal funding to increase research and learning of science, languages, and technology across all levels of schooling.	Improved math and science curriculum and programming for bright learners.
1965	Elementary and Secondary Education Act	Federal government expands its role in state education policy by providing monies to improve the education for all students.	Several of the Titles under the ESEA allow for spending on gifted students. However, few state entities took advantage of this fiscal incentive.
1972	Marland Report	A robust report detailing the state of gifted education. Also included exemplar case studies and suggestions for future programming.	Establishes the first federal definition of gifted education.
1978	Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act	Grant monies made available for demonstration projects, training of teachers, and improving education of gifted and talented.	Strengthened the network of stated gifted and talented program through the N/S-LTI-G/T.
1981	Elementary and Secondary Education Consolidation Act	Federal funding to schools changed from categorical to block grants.	With no funding specifically earmarked for gifted students, states became responsible for distributing funds for gifted education.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Year	Federal role	Brief description	Key implications for gifted education
1987	Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Children and Youth Education Act	Grant monies to fund research into best practices and underwrite The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.	The grants were earmarked for gifted low-income and minority students.
2001	No Child Left Behind	All students were to reach mastery in numeracy and literacy.	Shift to proficiency meant that teachers focused less on the needs of gifted and talented students.

that time that the world was close to an enduring peace. The Foundation was to be an instrument in promoting reconstruction, and in maintaining our wartime momentum in scientific progress.

The fact that the world has not found postwar security in no way lessens the need for the National Science Foundation. On the contrary, it underscores this need. . . .

The Nation's strength is being tested today on many fronts. The National Science Foundation faces a great challenge to advance basic scientific research and to develop a national research policy. Its work should have the complete support of the American people. (Truman, 1950, para. 3–4, 8)

The NSF Act had six purposes: (a) to initiate and support scientific research and programs at all levels, (b) to award scholarships to students in the sciences, (c) to cultivate the exchange of ideas among scientists in the United States and their colleagues around the world, (d) to promote the development of various scientific methods and technologies for both research and education, (e) to identify the needs in the various branches of science, and (f) to establish a national clearinghouse of scientists (Zettel, 1982).

The NSF anticipated meeting the demands for both scientists and engineers (Wolfe, 1959). Given the manpower shortage in these areas, there was a need to educate the brightest students in every science field, as this progress would enable the United States to grow and prosper while maintaining its leadership status in the world (“Truman Signs Bill for Science Study,” 1950).

National Defense Education Act (NDEA)

After the Soviet launch of Sputnik I in 1957, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA, 1958), which was a landmark piece of federal legislation in

that it supported unprecedented funding to improve educational provisions for the United States' most able students and intended to supply a steady stream of innovators and knowledge workers in mathematics and science (Jolly, 2009). NDEA responded to the "national emergency" that resulted from the Sputnik launch and focused federal attention on the nation's gifted and talented (Zettel, 1982). The act included a student loan program to colleges and universities that would increase the flow of talent into careers in science, mathematics, and foreign languages; a National Defense Fellowship for graduate study that would lead to a career in higher education; and various programs that focused on teacher training and public understanding of science and technology (Flattau et al., 2005).

Soon after its enactment, Flemming (1960) noted,

The National Defense Education Act recognizes that education is a national unifying force, and it regards an educated citizenry as the country's most precious resource. Its ten Titles are designed to motivate the discovery of intelligent and talented young men and women and stimulate them to devote themselves to the sciences, foreign languages, technology, and in general to those intellectual pursuits that will enrich personal life, strengthen resistance to totalitarianism, and enhance the quality of American leadership on the international scene. (p. 132)

The act allocated US\$1 billion to be spent over 4 years and remains the largest single funding source for the highly able. This level of funding for gifted students has yet to be matched since (Jolly, 2009). In a 1998 interview, A. Harry Passow was asked to recall the act and what happened as a result of its passage:

The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was passed in 1958 and it provided the impetus for curriculum reform in science, math, and foreign languages, later expanded to other subjects, that lasted into the '60s. The NDEA (1958) was originally designed to improve the math and science curriculum for bright students, as well as the teaching of math and science in general. The programs that emerged were available to all levels of students, but were most appropriate for the brighter students. It was acknowledged that bright students needed a differentiated curriculum in the content areas in order to maximize their educational development. Consequently, there was more recognition of the specific curricular needs of the gifted and talented than there is today [at the end of the 20th century]. (Kirschenbaum, 1998, pp. 194–195)

Unfortunately, less than a decade later, the momentum and gains created from the NDEA were eclipsed by another set of national priorities. These included the Civil Rights movement and the educational needs of disadvantaged and special needs children. This left the fate of gifted children and highly able youth in the hands of another national crisis or federal ally to take up their needs and advocate on their behalf.

The Gifted and Talented Children's Education Assistance Act

For gifted education and gifted children, 1969 marked a new episode devoted to their educational needs. The Gifted and Talented Children's Education Assistance Act

(1969) (P.L. 91-320, Section 806, Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA]) provided the instructions and funding for the Marland Report, which originated with Representative John Erlenborn (R-IL) in the House of Representatives and Senator Jacob Javits (D-NY) in the Senate. In the Senate on January 28, 1969, Javits described his rationale for such legislation:

Today, a decade since the passage of NDEA, the Federal effort toward meeting the needs of the gifted and talented has diminished to the point that there is not one single Federal law or program devoting significant resources toward the education of gifted and talented youth, nor does the U.S. Office of Education employ anyone with responsibility in this area. (Gifted and Talented Children Educational Assistance Act, 1969a)

P.L. 91-320 evidenced the beginning of Javits' long-term investment and advocacy on behalf of gifted children. On July 15, 1969, Representative Erlenborn testified in the House that because the priorities are given to

educationally and culturally disadvantaged children . . . we are forgetting this other group of gifted and talented. I think what we are really going to do, if we continue down this road, is more toward mediocrity. We will be raising those from the lower level and bypassing those on the upper level and come out with mediocrity. I don't think this should be our goal. I think we should have a goal of giving the greatest opportunity to all. Let us raise those who have the greatest disadvantage and the greatest learning disabilities but let us also reach the greatest potential for the gifted and talented at the same time. (Gifted and Talented Children Educational Assistance Act, 1969b)

This testimony highlighted an interest by some Congressional members and a recognition that more needed to be done on behalf of gifted children. However, sentiment and funding are not always tantamount to the same thing.

Congress passed the ESEA Amendments of 1969 (P.L. 91-320), Section 806, "Provisions related to gifted and talented children." The bill did not provide any additional funding or future funding for gifted and talented students. Instead, the bill included language that inserted gifted and talented students into Titles III and V of ESEA, so funds could be used for this particular group of students. Title III, "Supplementary Educational Centers and Service," of ESEA fostered the belief that local education agencies (LEAs) could best determine what types of program and services would serve their respective student bodies. The funds could be used to help subsidize "model or exemplary school programs" that were indicated as best practices (Zettel, 1982, p. 57), and the addition of "special programs for the gifted and talented" intended that this population of students who required qualitatively different learning experiences as evidenced by research would be beneficiaries of Title III funds.

Title V of ESEA provided grants to support state departments of education, as the federal government recognized that education was primarily a local issue. Javits noted, "Congress has long realized that education is a state responsibility" (Gifted and Talented Children Educational Assistance Act, 1969a). The addition of gifted and talented language sought to strengthen the presence of personnel at the state level to

administer and manage gifted programs. It was noted that “9 out of 10 gifted and talented children” were from states with full-time personnel (Zettel, 1982, p. 57). Congress envisioned these amendments as incentives and encouragement to expand gifted programming, services, and support. In 1969, an additional provision was made to the Education Professions Development Act (EDPA) of 1967, and extended Title V, Part C, and Section 521 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to include the gifted and talented. The hope was that this legislation would enlarge the numbers of teachers trained to work with gifted and talented children while also increasing the number of universities that prepared teachers to work with this particular group of students (Marland, 1972).

Collectively, these provisions included instructional materials, educational innovation, and educational reform efforts between state and local educational systems. The legislation did not create any new legislative authorizations or additional funds. The inclusion of the language “gifted and talented” was intended to elevate these students of high ability to a genuine point of interest under ESEA. However, it did not require that states serve the gifted and talented—it only increased their ability to do so. The dubious nature of unfunded legislative language was debated in the House of Representatives over the addition of the gifted and talented to ESEA without the allocation of additional funding.

Some members of the House felt that the US\$116 million allocated for Title III projects was just enough to continue ongoing projects and questioned who would diverge from or divest of these projects to support gifted children. On July 15, 1969, Representative John Ashbrook (R-OH) remarked that

In my State there is not going to be money available and if there is the money squeeze they claim, I can't see very much coming to pass as a result of this . . . Where there is not money involved, we both know as a practical matter, that there is not going to be a whole lot done. (Gifted and Talented Children Educational Assistance Act, 1969b)

Section 806 of ESEA also charged the Commissioner of Education with initiating a study to assess the current state of gifted education while evaluating what innovations were necessary. Congressional leaders indicated an interest in the programs and services that were already in place for gifted learners and wanted to determine the actual level of responsiveness by states and LEAs (Marland, 1972). The legislation was approved in 1970 and the study was begun under then-Commissioner James Allen. Sidney Marland would become Commissioner of Education later that year and complete the study that was to become known the Marland Report (Jolly & Matthews, 2014).

The Marland Report

In 1968, there were approximately 51.6 million schoolchildren and an estimated 1.5 to 2.5 million gifted and talented children (Marland, 1972). At the time of the report, the United States Office of Education (USOE) provided no direct monies for gifted and

talented students, nor was any USOE staff responsible for gifted education or learners (Marland, 1972).

Marland (1972) noted, "For many years, interested educators, responsible legislators, and concerned parents have puzzled over the problem of educating the most gifted of our students in a public education program geared primarily to a philosophy of egalitarianism" (p. 1). It is impossible to isolate the cause for the disinterest in gifted children. Perhaps it was a mix of forces such as the focus on children from disadvantaged backgrounds combined with an incontrovertible case of apathy toward high-ability students, thus keeping Congressional members from making gifted children a national priority or a vital concern.

The importance and impact of this report necessitated drawing from the immense resources of the USOE, including its regional offices, technical support, and in-house experts. Practitioners and researchers in gifted education from around the United States were also consulted. Panel experts included Virgil Ward, Joseph Renzulli, William Vassar, Joseph French, Irving Sato, Ruth Martinson, Catherine Burch, Louis Fliegler, Marvin Gold, David Jackson, and Paul Plowman (Marland, 1972). Surveys were given to identified gifted advocates and school staff from across the United States. A survey was also administered to state department of education personnel and additional data gathered from Project TALENT, a longitudinal study of approximately 450,000 secondary students throughout the country. Other advisors included A. Harry Passow, Abe Tannenbaum, Jacob Getzels, James Gallagher, The Association for the Gifted (TAG) of the Council for Exceptional Children, the American Association for the Gifted, the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted, and the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina (Marland, 1972).

Section 806 of ESEA tasked the Commissioner of Education with four main objectives: (a) to determine the extent to which already existing special education programs were being used to meet the needs of gifted and talented students, (b) to ascertain what federal programs were being used to meet the needs of the gifted, (c) to evaluate how current programming could be more effective, and (d) to recommend new programs (Marland, 1972).

Volumes 1 and 2

In this report to Congress, Volume 1 described the population of gifted and talented students, set forth the argument for special programming, highlighted model programming, reported the results from the survey of states, and defined the USOE's role and response. Volume 2 consisted of appendices that included background papers and the supporting documents that were used to produce the first volume of the Marland Report. The appendices included a review of the existing research literature on the gifted and talented, an analysis of the Advocate Survey sent to experts in the field to gather recommendations concerning provisions for the gifted, an analysis of hearings held by regional commissioners of education, state laws for the gifted, selective results from Project TALENT, four case studies of states with programs for the gifted

(California, Connecticut, Georgia, and Illinois), and a current assessment of the USOE's efforts on behalf of gifted children.

It could be argued that the enduring impact of the Marland Report remains the establishment of the federal definition of gifted and talented to be used in federal education programs, which remains largely intact more than 40 years following its inception (with the exception of psychomotor ability, which was removed in 1978). The definition established by the advisory panel noted,

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program to realize their contribution to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

1. general intellectual ability
2. specific academic aptitude
3. creative or productive thinking
4. leadership ability
5. visual and performing arts
6. psychomotor ability. (Marland, 1972, p. 10)

The report continued its definition by indicating:

It can be assumed that utilization of these criteria for identification of the gifted and talented will encompass a minimum of 3 to 5 percent of the school population.

Evidence of gifted and talented abilities may be determined by a multiplicity of ways. These procedures should include objective measures and professional evaluation measures, which are essential components of identification. (Marland, 1972, p. 11)

Beyond developing the federal definition for gifted and talented, the Marland Report collected survey data to meet its objectives as directed by Section 806 of ESEA. Findings included a lack of existing services for gifted children, with the majority of existing programs and services extended only to a narrow segment of the gifted population that habitually excluded underserved populations. Despite half of all states having some type of legislation regarding the education of gifted children, this legislation provided intent only, with no fiduciary responsibility between states and LEAs to meet the needs of gifted children. The report also acknowledged the immense loss to both the nation and the gifted individuals themselves if the abilities and talents of these students were not developed. States reported the lack of priority given to gifted and talented students in their own states mirrored what they were witnessing at the federal level. If the USOE did not identify these students as a federal priority, why should states consider them one? Gifted programming and the needs of gifted children were

perceived as a very low priority, not only at the federal level but also across all levels of government—even after language was inserted into ESEA allowing for funds to be used for supplementary programs and service for the gifted and the strengthening of state department of education’s gifted services. However, “unspecified federal aid” typically ended up being subsumed by other programs based on the discretion of the administrator (Marland, 1972).

The Marland Report recommended that the procedures for identifying gifted students needed to be refined. In addition, it suggested that the fictitious beliefs of policy makers and the general public regarding gifted children and their learning needs—particularly that gifted students did not require any special educational interventions—needed to change. The absence of gifted or advanced learners from significant and game-changing federal policy initiatives such as ESEA provided consent for states to ignore the needs of these learners (Marland, 1972).

The Marland Report also illustrated that the majority of identified gifted students came from states that had full-time personnel at the state departments of education. It noted that a dedicated office in the USOE to oversee the needs of the gifted and talented students might increase the number of identified gifted students across the United States. Marland eventually assigned the Gifted and Talented Program Group to the Deputy Commissioner for School Systems, which in due course became the Office of Gifted and Talented Education.

The Status of the States

As part of the charge to the U.S. Commissioner of Education, an inventory of services currently provided was requested. The first findings of this type were published in the Marland Report. In examining what extent of programming and support already existed, the USOE surveyed each state. This information was used as an indicator of priority given to these students.

The Marland Report noted the importance of states in the provision of programs for gifted students. The Office of Education developed a questionnaire surveying state departments of education. The survey asked about several areas pertaining to gifted education, including state-level staff for the gifted, legislation, statewide planning groups, available training, and use of federal funds for gifted education (Marland, 1972).

The first question was, “What available personnel and legislative resources are currently available at the State level?” The survey found that states typically followed a model in which one individual (if any) was responsible for gifted education at the state level, with no support staff or resources (Marland, 1972). Interestingly, states seemed to have a commitment to in-service or college-level training for gifted educators, with more than 60% indicating one or a combination of both types of preparation for teachers (Marland, 1972).

In response to the question, “What are the specific forces that the States see holding back a more extensive operation?” there were many perceived barriers to states providing services to the gifted, including insufficient financial support, other pressing

priorities, inadequately trained personnel, insufficient personnel, inadequate curriculum development, inadequate referral and diagnostic techniques, lack of public interest, inadequate legal base, and physical space (Marland, 1972). The most frequently cited deterrent was lack of financial support to establish and carry out programs for the gifted. Respondents throughout the country focused on similar issues, and many noted that the limited amount of resources was typically used to address “children with specific education problems” (Marland, 1972, p. 49).

Another important question included in the survey was “To what extent are States using the additional resources provided by Federal aid to apply to the problems of educating the gifted and talented?” Unfortunately, few states were using federal funds for the gifted. Six percent of the states reported using none of the available funds, and only 24% used ESEA funds for gifted and talented students—and in those cases, it was limited (Marland, 1972).

The Marland Report underscored that,

Most of the states have recognized that the education of the gifted is an area of substantial educational need and have tried, in a variety of ways, to put some available resources to work in this area. It is also clear that these efforts have been overwhelmed by the more crisis-oriented issues of the deprived child, the disruptive child, the child who cannot learn, etc. The limited resources available are absorbed by these problem areas before such long range educational issues as the gifted are considered. (Marland, 1972, p. 168)

Subsequent Legislation

The 1960s witnessed a flurry of activity regarding how the federal government would reimagine its role in the education of U.S. schoolchildren, specifically targeting low-income and children from poverty through President Johnson’s Great Society initiatives. These groups have remained a priority in the subsequent reauthorizations of ESEA. The most recent example of this trend was the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), which “provided the de facto permission to ignore the needs of gifted students in order to concentrate on those who have to meet minimal proficiency in math or reading” (Jolly & Makel, 2010, p. 36). Currently, the federal climate for gifted children remains pallid.

During the past four decades, federal interest and funding—which are synonymous—have peaked and diminished with no discernable pattern despite the advocacy efforts of legislators, professional organizations, and stakeholders (see Figure 1). From 1973 to 2010, an erratic stream of funding came forth from the federal government, with Senator Jacob Javits remaining a major champion for gifted children. He and Representative Dominick Daniels proposed what would eventually become P.L. 93-380, which included a provision for “Special Projects,” and gifted and talented children were included as a category. Congress originally assigned US\$12.25 million, but President Ford’s administration soon reduced this to US\$2.56 million annually from FY 1976 to 1978. It was from this appropriation that the Office of Gifted and Talented was funded as a separate entity (Harrington, Harrington, & Karns, 1991; Zettel, 1982).

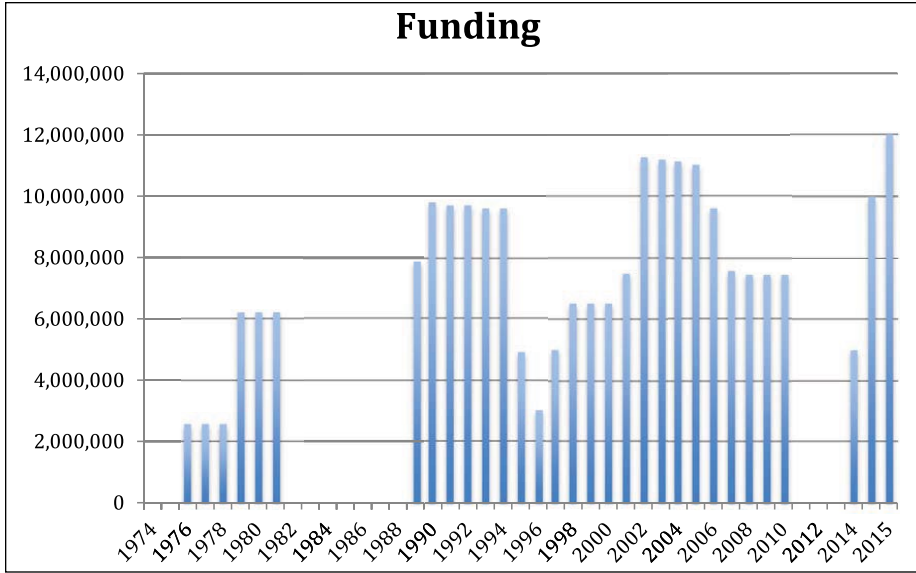


Figure 1. Federal funding for gifted education (1972–2016).

The funding acquired under P.L. 93-380 proved to be underwhelming and showed that greater federal participation and funding was required. In 1978, Representative Carl Purcell and Senator Jacob Javits each introduced what ultimately became P.L. 95-561, Gifted and Talented Children’s Education Act. Under this legislation, state education agencies could apply for grant monies to aid in improving the education of gifted and talented students. This included efforts toward research, demonstration programs, statewide planning, and training of teachers of the gifted. Funding equaled US\$6.2 million per year and between 1978 and 1981 totaled US\$18.3 million (Harrington et al., 1991; Zettel, 1982).

In 1979, during the Carter administration, the Office of Education became a Cabinet-level position. However, this elevated position that the Secretary of Education now enjoyed was quickly threatened with the election of President Ronald Reagan. The troubled economy in conjunction with the fiscal conservative policies of the new administration ended any sustained forward momentum that gifted and talented education had managed to build. In 1981, the Elementary and Secondary Education Consolidation Act proposed consolidating categorical programs into block grants, and states would then be responsible for distributing funds to LEAs (Cawelti, n.d.). Ironically, Representative Erlenborn, one of the same Congressmen responsible for the legislation that made the Marland Report possible, proposed this act. Reagan also wanted to eliminate the Department of Education but was unsuccessful with Congress and instead started dismantling it from within; one of the first casualties included the Office of Gifted and Talented (Conlan, 1984).

A more hospitable environment for gifted legislation came toward the end of the Reagan administration. The shortcomings of the United States’ workforce and student performance had come under scrutiny and a call to reform U.S. schools was underway,

which included support for gifted students. In 1987, Senator Bradley and Representative Biaggio introduced the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Children and Youth Education Act. The Javits Act, or P.L. 100-297, was funded at US\$7.9 million per year from FY 1988 to 1993 (Harrington et al., 1991).

The Javits Act continued to be funded over the next 30 years at varying levels. Much like during the Reagan administration and other fiscally susceptible periods, gifted education could not survive the bold and severe budget cuts during the Great Recession. From 2011 to 2013, the federal government zeroed out the solitary funding source, the Javits Act, which identified evidence-based practices in gifted education and funded The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRCGT). The funding was reinstated in January 2014 at US\$5 million, leaving a 3-year gap where no monies at the federal level were explicitly assigned to gifted education. Unexpectedly, for FY 2015 and 2016 funding levels increased to US\$10 million and \$12 million respectively. However, the way in which legislation is currently funded leaves it vulnerable to future reductions and cutbacks and dependent on the fiscal health of the federal government and/or the sociopolitical landscape of the time (National Association for Gifted Children & Council for Exceptional Children, 2014). An examination of funding, programs, and services at the state level can provide an alternate to the macro-level view attached to federal government policies and funding.

The Present State of the States

Despite a landscape that appears to be rather uneven and disparate—gifted education at the state level can range from fully funded programs with guaranteed services protected under the special education umbrella (e.g., Louisiana and Kentucky) to no recognition of gifted education at all in state education plans (e.g., North Dakota)—incremental progress has been made. At the time the Marland Report was published, the patchwork network of what constituted gifted education at the state level was far less robust and mature. Many current gifted programs and services at the state level have some foundations in the National State Leadership Training Institute on Gifted and Talented (N/S-LTI-G/T), which emerged from work done as a result of the Marland Report (Jolly, 2014a).

According to the 2012–2013 State of the States report (National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC] & Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted [CSDGP], 2013), the United States as a whole has failed to address—in a comprehensive manner—the needs of its top learners, although there has been some progress in a number of states. It is clear that although

our country's need for scientists, mathematicians, and other highly skilled professionals in every field continues to grow, . . . high-ability and high-achieving learners are expected to fend for themselves and succeed in spite of the lack of attention and understanding of their learning needs. (NAGC & CSDGP, 2013, p. 9)

Similar to the 1972 Marland Report to Congress, the State of the States looks at various areas related to gifted education that highlight the degree to which states are addressing gifted learners' education. Published biannually, it is the only report that compiles information from the states to provide a national perspective on the field of gifted education.

The State of the States is organized into 10 key areas that include state education agencies, funding for gifted and talented education, mandates to identify and serve gifted students, accountability, definition of giftedness, identification of gifted and talented students, programs and services for gifted students, staffing and personnel preparation, related policies and practices, and new developments, concerns, and directions for the future (NAGC & CSDGP, 2015).

Decentralized Decision Making and Accountability

Because there is no federal mandate for gifted education, states are responsible for making their own programming decisions. In 2014–2015, 32 (of 42 that responded) states had a mandate for gifted education related to identification, services, or both, although eight states with a mandate provided no funding. Eight states did not have mandates. Thirty-seven states defined giftedness within their state statutes or regulations. Given the lack of federal mandate, there is quite a disparity in what programs and services states provide for gifted students.

Like the Marland Report (1972), the most recent State of the States (NAGC & CSDGP, 2015) found that there are a limited number of personnel dedicated to gifted education at the state level and those that do have dedicated personnel who often have shared responsibilities beyond gifted education (24 states; NAGC & CSDGP, 2015).

Service Options

Gifted education services vary from state to state. Seventeen states required some type of programming for their gifted students, and these states provided services in intellectual, specific academic areas, general academic, visual or performing arts, creativity, and leadership (NAGC & CSDGP, 2015). Nine states noted that no programs or services were required. However, most states provide gifted services in the regular classroom, with that model being ranked first for pre-K and kindergarten, second for Grades 1 to 3, fourth for Grades 4 to 6, and second for middle school. (High schools typically served gifted students through Advanced Placement [AP], dual enrollment, advanced course work, and International Baccalaureate [IB].) This is a change from the previous report (NAGC & CSDGP, 2013), in which states ranked providing gifted services in the regular classroom at second overall. In 2014–2015, cluster classrooms ranked first for service models at the elementary level.

Professional Development

As previously noted, many states provided services to gifted students within the regular classroom, which means that general education teachers are often responsible for addressing the needs of these students. Unfortunately, general education teachers receive little to no training about or in working with gifted students (NAGC & CSDGP, 2013, 2015). Despite this, in 2014–2015, only one state (Nevada) required all its teachers to receive preservice training in a separate course on gifted and talented education,

and only five states required their general education teachers to receive professional development training. On a more positive note, 19 states required that teachers who work in specialized gifted education programs have a certificate or endorsement in gifted education. Professional development in gifted education is an important area of need, and the majority of respondents recognized this.

Federal Education Policy

The fact that there is no federal education mandate for gifted education is of concern to many states. According to the 2014–2015 State of the States report, “Most states saw the lack of recognition of gifted students in federal education law as very negative to slightly negative (28) or neutral (7) at best, according importance to federal support to bolster state endeavors” (NAGC & CSDGP, 2015, p. 16). The consensus of the states that responded to the questionnaire seemed to be that gifted students could benefit if a federal policy were in place, with 31 (out of 34 responding) states indicating it would help increase accountability for student learning. In addition, 27 states felt it would help teachers differentiate curriculum, 24 noted it would impact research on best practices, and 19 responded that family engagement would increase (NAGC & CSDGP, 2015).

Funding Issues

Given the lack of federal funding for gifted education and the difficult economic times in recent years, states differ in the amount of funding allocated to gifted and talented students. Twenty-seven (of 39 responding) states provide funding to local LEAs for gifted services, although 12 noted they do not provide any funding. Two states noted that they spent more than US\$50 million on gifted education, and two spent less than US\$1 million.

Despite the passage of more than four decades, the present state of gifted education echoes many of the same sentiments expressed in the Marland Report. Inconsistent and insufficient funding and unsustained support have contributed to a lack of recognized progress.

A Population in Crisis

At Congressional hearings in the summer of 1969, Dr. James Gallagher, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation, testified to the plight of gifted learners in schools:

One of the interesting characteristics of the gifted is that they really aren't a crisis population. They don't require immediate attention. The school system is not going to become unhinged if their needs are not taken care of. These are long-term needs in terms of what you do or what you don't do for talented youngsters. They extend far into the future. (Gifted and Talented Children Educational Assistance Act, 1969b)

That future to which Gallagher referred has arrived, and the unmet learning needs of gifted children remain. The Marland Report presented an opportunity to change the course of gifted education. Debate and discourse occurred, testimony was given, data were collected, reports were written, and surveys were undertaken—all reaching the same conclusion: Gifted children and their learning needs were neglected and steps needed to be taken to transform their educational trajectory. In addition, a federal definition of giftedness was established.

In the more than 40 years since the issuance of the Marland Report in 1972, federal policy and legislation for gifted education has remained at the margins of educational funding when compared with other funding priorities. For example, in Fiscal Year 2015, gifted education received US\$10 million dollars in comparison with special education, which was funded at US\$11 billion, or Early Learning, which will receive US\$75 billion over 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Still, the largest portion of educational funding, approximately 90%, is allocated for disadvantaged students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, minority students, those with disabilities, and English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Gallagher (2002) described public policy as a “reflection of fundamental values of American society” (p. 3), also mirroring the contextual environment of the time. Since Sputnik began orbiting the Earth in 1957, the field of gifted education has attracted funding due to a reactionary concern to meet the perceived needs of society. This in itself is an issue for gifted students, as a value was only placed upon this population in response to an outside source rather than in response to a genuine student need. Again, opportunities to promote the needs of gifted children materialized (e.g., *A Nation at Risk*), but they were reactionary in nature (e.g., foreign students outperforming U.S. students on standardized assessments) and did not garner the same level of awareness that resulted from the launch of Sputnik or mobilize any sustained substantive federal funding.

Although Javits funding has spanned nearly three decades, the level of funding has been inconsistent and not commensurate with other student populations (e.g., special education) with similar numbers. The federal Javits grant funding provides research opportunities for the field and funds the National Center for Research on Gifted Education. However, there remains no federal mandate for gifted education and no monies that are universally and directly available for educating gifted children throughout the United States. This responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of individual states and, in some cases, singular districts.

Due to the limited and restricted federal funding, gifted education could reconceptualize the education policy it pursues and return the focus to state and local needs. One of the strengths of the EPDA and Marland Report was the establishment of the N/S-LTI-G/T, which allowed for the coordinated building of resources, teachers, and advocates at regional and state levels. The work of the N/S-LTI-G/T in the 1970s helped to build a state network of gifted programs and infrastructure. Evidence of these grassroots efforts remain in the sizable number of legislative measures regarding gifted education at the state level (Gallagher, 2002; Jolly, 2014a). This carefully

constructed network raised the level of awareness and amplified the number of students in gifted and talented programs (Jackson, 1979; Jolly, 2014b).

So what does this mean for gifted education? It could be argued that “all gifted is local” (Clarenbach, 2007, para. 1). If this is an accurate description, perhaps the field’s energies should be refocused on state, regional, and local efforts to have the learning needs of gifted children met. Friends of gifted education, such as Senators Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), have been great allies of gifted education. However, their recent retirements from public service contribute to the capricious environment that the federal government provides and only underscores the unpredictability of unmandated policy.

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