

California Association for the Gifted A Position Paper

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field.

The position papers support the organization's belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child's potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.

Homeschooling the Gifted Learner

Homeschooling is a broad term that involves parent facilitated learning experiences for students outside of the traditional all-day, site-based classroom structure. It is an educational practice that offers an alternative to traditional schooling. Methods of achieving successful homeschooling experiences include:

- one-on-one work with a parent or other adult
- enrollment in a variety of courses offered through a home school charter, county office of education, private school or commercial vendor
- independent study
- mentorship or internship with professionals in the student's area of interest
- college course work, often through a community college
- on-line courses
- a co-op where parents collaborate to share their expertise with small groups of students
- field trips
- self-directed learning
- travel

Many homeschooling families tend to use a combination of these options.

While not appropriate for all gifted students, homeschooling can be a sound option for some gifted students. Well-managed homeschooling with documented accountability can be a beneficial choice for those gifted students who do not have access to an effective, differentiated gifted program that meets their needs. Such students might include highly or profoundly gifted students, students who are learning disabled and gifted, students who require a high degree of customization and flexibility, and those living in an area where no sufficient gifted program is available.

As in any program that successfully serves gifted learners, homeschooling should provide:

- a focus on the student's strengths and interests
- appropriate academic pacing with advanced content
- an opportunity to engage in long-term, high-level projects
- self-directed learning
- expanded time for service learning
- adequate attention and compensation for asynchronous development

- opportunities to interact with intellectual peers and mentors allowing positive socialization
- opportunities for addressing unique social and emotional needs

There are misconceptions regarding the outcomes of homeschooling. For example, while it is commonly believed that children who are homeschooled will be behind in academics and social adjustment, research shows this not to be true. It is also important for parents and educators to be aware that students are able to enroll in college without a traditional high school experience. The success of homeschooling depends on the motivation and commitment of the parents to the process of balancing the curriculum, researching the best available resources, and following through with the needs the child expresses. Parents who choose the challenge of homeschooling should be supported.

Opportunities for continuous educational and intellectual growth and development must be made available for all children. CAG believes that a wide variety of educational options make this requirement easier to meet. Among such options, homeschooling represents a credible and effective educational opportunity for some gifted students.

References

- McDowell, S. A., Ray, B. D. (2000). The home education movement in context, practice, and theory. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 75(1 & 2).
- Ray, B. D. (1997). *Strengths of their own: Home schoolers across America*, Salem, OR: NHERI.
- Rivero, L. (2004). *Gifted education comes home: A case for self-directed learning*. Manassas VA: Gifted Education Press.
- Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N.M., & Moon, S.M. (Eds). (2002). *The social and emotional development of gifted children*, (Publication of National Association for Gifted Children) Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Approved 11-21-04