Table 4
State Policies Regarding Types of Giftedness Identified

Type of Giftedness	Number of States Using This Category
Exceptional Intelligence	48
Academic Ability	48
Exceptional Creativity	41
Exceptional Artistic Ability	35
Leadership Skills	30
Critical Thinking Ability	15
Exceptional Psychomotor Ability	12
Psychosocial	8
Understanding of One's Cultural Heritage	5

At the time of this study, the mid-1990s, 34 states had legislative mandates for the identification of giftedness, yet only 30 states mandated programs for gifted students. Funding that accompanied the mandates varied widely, and most states provided only partial funding, leaving individual school districts to financially support both the identification and the programming needs of the gifted. Further, while only 34 states mandated gifted education, 47 required that someone within each school district should be the coordinator or supervisor of education for gifted students.

Why Identify Giftedness?

Why should schools identify students with exceptional learning abilities and provide services for them? Gifted, talented, and

creative students have learning needs different from those of their age peers, just as do students who have difficulties learning. For students needing "special education," professionals in all strands of education search out curriculum that matches their learning needs and strive to implement the strategies that will enhance their learning skills, and to enhance the development of the whole child. Should it be different for advanced learners—for the abstract thinker, for the advanced creative thinker, for the art prodigy, for the musically talented, or for the gifted athlete?

Consider other reasons for identifying and serving gifted, talented, and creative students. Marland (1971) ended his definition with a profound statement regarding why we should recognize, assess, and serve giftedness: "in order to realize their contribution to self and society" (p. 38). The benefits that can accrue both to the gifted individual and to her/his society are well recognized. The accomplishments of the gifted are evident in the contributions of, for example, Rachel Carson, Jonas Salk, Thomas Jefferson, Mary Bethune, to name just a few. They all had a lasting impact on education, ethics, government, and life itself. Also reflect on the contributions made by Thomas Edison on our lives through his countless invention—the phonograph, electric lamp, mimeograph, electric locomotive, and countless other products that have made our modern lives comfortable and abundantly blessed.

Thus, educators should desire and be determined to identify such individuals. One eminent individual will devise a way to insure the longevity of social security benefits, discover a cure for cancer, or invent new ways to make future lives more comfortable.

When Should Giftedness be Identified?

There has been much discussion and debate about when we should assess students for giftedness. Piagetian theory

(Piaget, 1952) might lead some to believe that if the development of formal operations, abstract reasoning, and creative potential do not occur until the approximate age of 9 or 10, it isn't feasible to assess giftedness until that time. But most programs for gifted children, in fact, offer some form of enrichment for all children in grades K, 1, and 2. During that time, educators may document potential giftedness. These schools usually do not test children for giftedness, collect performance-based data, or offer any direct program services until children are in the 3rd or 4th grades (indeed, around age 9). Most educators and directors of programs for gifted children receive nominations or referrals from many sources, including teachers, parents, peers, and self beginning about grade 3. Thus, the crucial first question for the educator of the gifted becomes: When should I begin receiving nominations and collecting data for the identification and consequent placement of students into programs for the gifted?

When enrichment occurs in grades K-2, classroom teachers and the educator of the gifted may document which children seem to exhibit characteristics of giftedness (e.g., advanced vocabulary, problem-solving ability, creative thinking ability, early mastery of reading, leadership skills, etc.). Typically, the facilitator or teacher of gifted children will go into each classroom and provide a 30-minute enrichment activity on a weekly basis. The teacher of gifted children will deliver lessons that encourage and engage children in creative thinking and abstract reasoning. During the lesson, the classroom teacher may complete a checklist that contains characteristics indicative of giftedness. By observing and documenting potential, the educators do not make any decisions about placement until accumulated evidence exists regarding the potential giftedness of the child. The evidence is usually combined with intelligence and creativity testing by about grade 3. At that time, a decision is made about learning needs and placement of the child in a program for gifted children. This process allows the children to mature