

Report shows widespread lack of support for high-ability, low-income students in U.S.

April 5 2018, by Katy Bowman

Low-income students with advanced academic abilities are far less likely than their wealthier peers to have access to resources that would help them succeed, according to a new report co-authored by researchers from Johns Hopkins University.

The study's authors reviewed state policies, participation in advanced learning programs, and outcomes regarding high-ability students and gave each state a letter grade based on its efforts to support excellence. The report shows that every U.S. state has room for improvement when it comes to supporting high-ability students—especially those from low- and moderate-income backgrounds.

For this second edition of the report, originally released in 2015, the researchers also graded each state's efforts to close excellence gaps—disparities in the percent of lower-income versus higher-income students who reach advanced levels of academic performance.

"I'm glad we included excellence gaps in this study, and I wish these grades were higher, but they're not," said Jonathan Plucker, a co-author of the report and a Johns Hopkins professor who holds a joint appointment at the Center for Talented Youth and the School of Education.

Fourteen states including Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia received a grade of B- or better for their work supporting excellence. No state received an A. Most notably, every state in the

country received a grade of C or lower for efforts to close excellence gaps. Maryland received a D in this category, while New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia received a D-. Alaska was the only state to receive an F.

Plucker said he hopes the report, which includes guidance for [states](#) that want to implement [policy](#) change, will put the academic needs of low-income children on the minds of more state policymakers. Policies requiring teacher training, universal screening for giftedness, state funding to give advanced [high school students](#) access to college-level coursework, and funding to help them pay for [college entrance exams](#) and AP tests would cost more but would go a long way in helping these students thrive, he said.

"Some of these policies we're suggesting are more expensive than others. Some are free," he said, citing early entrance to kindergarten and implementation of state acceleration policies as examples of low-cost ways to support high-ability students.

"Our goal with the [report](#) is to hold up a magnifying glass to state policies and priorities," added Plucker, president-elect of the National Association for Gifted Children. "At least 50 to 60 percent of our students are on the bottom end of these excellence gaps, and our country has got to do a better job of educating these students. Research tells us there are specific things that will probably help. This is not magic or rocket science. We can start to chip away at this. This is a solvable problem."

More information: Equal Talents, Unequal Opportunities:
outreach.jkcf.org/report-cards/

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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