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What should schools include in their high school curriculum for gifted students?

In the high school learning environment, the needs of gifted and talented students are often neglected. With the implementation and enforcement of more stringent government standards, schools have become increasingly concerned with improving the skills and test scores of struggling students. While concern with improving the scores and abilities of lower-achieving students remains important, remedial education takes funding and time away from the development of gifted education. To provide the best opportunities for gifted students, schools should allocate funding to programs targeting these students and develop minimum criteria to meet the needs of these students. These criteria, in order to best serve gifted students, should include the opportunity for independent study, accelerated learning classes, and Advanced Placement or dual-credit college courses.

An important and necessary component of high school gifted programs remains that of independent work and study. Through allowing students to complete independent study programs guided by school faculty members specific to the area of study, schools provide gifted students with the opportunity to explore personal interests which might not be realized in a standard classroom setting. Independent work opportunities for students should also include chances for students to pursue internship opportunities in their community. Internships and outside work allow students to learn more about potential occupations and also how to apply their specific interests and talents in the work force. Through allowing and supporting independent work and study among gifted students, high schools can create an environment in which students are able to pursue their specific needs and interests in a nontraditional setting.

Gifted students in high school should have the opportunity to work toward college credit through either Advanced Placement or dual-credit college courses. In both of these types of courses, students are expected to learn at a pace typical of college courses. This automatically creates a more challenging classroom experience. Further, these courses allow students to receive credit for lower level college courses in subjects at which they excel. Obtaining this credit would allow gifted students to graduate early or engage in further studies which pursuing their undergraduate degree in college. By allowing gifted students the opportunity to participate in Advanced Placement or collegiate courses, school provide a more challenging high school learning environment while simultaneously accelerating the collegiate studies of students upon their graduation from high school.

In high schools across America, programs for gifted students remain disturbingly vague and unfunded. Just as schools should work to improve the educational experience of struggling students, they should also provide materials and

programs targeting those students whose talents allow them to easily succeed in a standard learning environment. These programs may differ because of the gifted population and given funding in each high school, but all programs should include the standard criteria of independent study, accelerated courses, and Advanced Placement or dual-credit courses. Through providing exceptional students with these three program components, schools would create the most challenging educational experience possible for gifted students while also providing these students with experiences which will benefit post-graduation studies and employment opportunities in their futures.