

Rethinking gifted education policy -- a call to action

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Michael Jordan, Lady Gaga and Angelina Jolie. Most people can probably name some award-winning athletes, musicians, and actors. But, if you were asked to name the winners of last year's Nobel Prizes in Economics, Physics, or Literature, could you do it?

In the September issue of *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, a journal of the Association for [Psychological Science](#), a team of distinguished psychological scientists argue for a new framework for identifying and supporting giftedness in all domains in the United States.

In this country, athletic and other artistic performance talents are treated very differently from talents in more traditional academic areas. Children's performance and [athletic abilities](#) are identified, cultivated, actively nurtured, and often refined through intensive coaching and training. But this intense support is not always provided to children who display academic talents. According to the authors, Rena Subotnik of the [American Psychological Association](#), Paula Olszewski-Kubilius of Northwestern University and Frank Worrell at the University of California, Berkeley, the academic community needs to join their colleagues in the arts and athletics in applying the science of optimal performance to the academic disciplines. "For example, judgments made by music or athletic talent scouts are based on demonstrations of how well one does on tasks that closely mirror actual demands made in those fields. Academic areas however, rarely rely on demonstrated achievement, but rather on standardized tests because K-12 teachers' judgments tend not to be sufficiently trusted," assert the authors.

In reviewing the current scientific literature on giftedness, the authors conclude that:

- Giftedness isn't just about talent

Children need opportunities that expose them to advanced knowledge, skills and values in their field of interest and also need to be motivated to take advantage of these opportunities.

- Gifted students need psychological strength training

Academically talented young people need the same kind of mental skills training given to athletes and artistic performers to help talented students deal with the pressure that comes with both challenge and success.

- Eminence should be the goal of gifted education

Society would benefit from increasing the number of individuals who make path breaking, field-altering discoveries and creative contributions by their products, innovations, and gifted education should be organized to provide the supports for optimal performance and productivity.

At the moment, some fields are much better at identifying which students will perform or produce optimally and provide them with a road-map for achieving eminence. The authors argue that the US needs an educational system that supports talented children much better and with greater attention paid to research. "Our schools have cabinets and hallways with athletic and cheer-leading trophies that elicit school-wide pride. Academic abilities, viewed by some, as resulting from natural abilities and no effort, are rarely acknowledged for fear of reinforcing

the idea that the success of some students highlights the impossibility of success for other students," the authors say in conclusion.

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

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