

### Why is gifted education important at the high school level?

"The transition from adolescent to adult can be traumatic for any adolescent. Gifted adolescents face the additional pressure of 'realizing their potential'" (Genshaft, 1991).

A common assumption among both the general population and many educators, particularly at the secondary level, is that gifted young people will be able to "make their own way" the older they get, if they are "truly gifted." The fact is, some may indeed "make it" on their own. But most, if they are to develop from being highly able children to being highly creative/productive adults, will need appropriate challenge, assistance from school and home, and wise counsel *much more* during their middle and high school years than ever before.

Unfortunately for many gifted young people, the adolescent years are when high potential tends to stagnate and in some cases disappear, whether by choice, inappropriate or insufficient educational support, social/emotional pressures, lack of opportunity, poor decisions, and, sometimes, chance. In fact, gifted adolescents are more at risk of failing to fully flourish in their development than most of their age and grade peers.

So why is gifted education at the high school level so important? Most importantly, it can:

- Support students' transition from "gifted child" to "gifted young adult" (i.e., the development of high potential).
- Assure educational opportunities for appropriate intellectual and talent-area challenge through such approaches as:
  - Advanced/accelerated learning opportunities across all curricular areas
  - Honors /Advanced Placement /International Baccalaureate programs and options
  - Concurrent enrollment in college and high school programs;
  - Specialized and/or talent-focused small group and independent study programs
  - Master classes, studio classes, individualized instruction, mentoring
  - Community-based and/or career-oriented mentorships and internships
  - Individualized and non-traditional high school programs, especially for autonomous learners
  - Extracurricular and outside-of-school talent development options.
- Provide specialized, proactive counseling for gifted and/or highly talented students, especially focused on college and

career directions, personal choice making, talent development awareness and decision-making, and social-emotional development.

- Help professional teaching and counseling staff become increasingly aware of and knowledgeable about gifted adolescents and their special needs through high-impact professional development programs (e.g., professional study teams, workshops on gifted education, instructional differentiation strategies keyed to specific content areas).



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#### Resources:

Bireley, M., and Genshaft, J., Eds. (1991). *Understanding the gifted adolescent: Educational, developmental, and multicultural issues*. New York: Teachers College Press.