



GiftedNYS

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GiftedNYS Calls for Reform, Not Elimination, of New York City’s Kindergarten Gifted & Talented Programs

NEW YORK, NY – October 13, 2025 – In response to recent comments by New York State Assemblymember and current New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani calling for the elimination of the City’s kindergarten gifted and talented (G&T) programs, GiftedNYS released the following statement urging reform and equitable expansion.

“Equity and excellence are not opposing goals; they depend on one another,” said Kathryn Cohen, President of GiftedNYS. “Eliminating kindergarten gifted programs in New York City public schools would not create fairness; it would remove opportunity. We should be expanding access through fair identification, comprehensive teacher training, and accountability, not closing doors to children who need advanced instruction to thrive.”

Equity and Access Require Expansion, Not Elimination

GiftedNYS acknowledges long-standing inequities in access to gifted education, particularly the underrepresentation of students of color, multilingual learners, and twice-exceptional (2e) students, and cautions that removing programs for kindergarteners would deepen existing disparities rather than address them.

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, only 1.3% of New York State students are identified as gifted, compared to 6.1% nationally. Within New York State, representation among that small group remains strikingly uneven: just 0.8% of Black students, 0.7% of Hispanic students, and 1.1% of Native American students are identified as gifted. The number of gifted students with disabilities, known as twice-exceptional (2e), is not even collected. Eliminating early entry points would make access even more inequitable and further obscure underrepresented talent.

Grounded in Law and Research

GiftedNYS notes that the proposed elimination contradicts New York State Education Law §4452, which defines gifted pupils as those requiring programs “beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential.”

Research consistently shows that early, strength-based identification, when implemented inclusively, supports positive academic and social-emotional outcomes for advanced learners. Conversely, removing early opportunities for advanced learning risks overlooking and under-supporting students' potential, especially among underrepresented populations.



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“Effective educational policy is grounded in lived experience, guided by research, and sustained by collaboration,” said Cohen. “Any proposal to change how we serve advanced learners must be informed by those who work with students every day, including teachers, parents, and specialists who understand what equity in action looks like.”

GiftedNYS’s Recommendations for Responsible Reform

GiftedNYS urges New York City leaders to pursue thoughtful reform rooted in equity, evidence, and research, not elimination. The organization recommends:

- **Universal, ongoing, and inclusive identification** beginning in kindergarten.
- **Professional development** for educators and administrators to recognize and support giftedness among diverse learners.
- **A continuum of strength-based programs, accelerative opportunities, and enrichment services** to meet the needs of advanced learners at all stages of their development.
- **Social-emotional supports** for gifted and twice-exceptional (2e) students.
- **Two-way accountability** between NYSED and local districts to ensure consistent, high-quality programming statewide.

(A detailed list of GiftedNYS’s statewide policy recommendations can be found in our 2020 position paper, ["Improve & Transform New York’s Gifted Education."](#))

A Call to Action: New York City Leaders

Eliminating gifted programs for kindergarteners would not solve inequity, it would institutionalize it. By delaying access until later grades, the system risks reinforcing early learning gaps and ensuring that children who already have enrichment opportunities remain the most likely to qualify later on.

As New York City often sets the tone for education policy statewide, weakening its commitment to advanced learners risks sending a message that excellence and equity cannot coexist, and could set a precedent that impacts students across New York State.

“New York’s gifted learners, including those with disabilities, exist in every demographic group, every neighborhood, and every classroom,” said Cohen. “You can’t lead from the top and expect to solve problems effectively. Real solutions start by bringing the right people to the table, asking questions, and listening. That’s how you figure out what will truly serve students. We urge leaders to collaborate in building a system that identifies, supports, and challenges all students, because when we invest in our students’ potential, we invest in the future of New York State.”

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ABOUT GIFTEDNYS

Gifted New York State, Inc. (GiftedNYS) is a statewide nonprofit organization of parents, educators, and professionals who have come together to support the needs of New York’s gifted and twice-exceptional (2e) student population and their families.