



**KENTUCKY'S FUTURE: MINING UNTAPPED TREASURE,  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF THE COMMONWEALTH  
WHO ARE GIFTED AND TALENTED.**

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Dear Editor:

By contacting legislators now about the 2008 budget, we have the chance to do something for Kentucky – invest in the future. We must develop the potential of our young people who are identified as gifted and talented; by funding gifted education, students get educational opportunities promised them. On-going professional development, comprehensive identification, and appropriate delivery of services are essential.

Nationally Kentucky ranks 47th in the number of scientists and engineers produced – 42nd in adaptation to New Economy (2002). If we don't reverse this trend, how can we expect industries seeking qualified talent pools and optimistic economic outlooks to invest in our Commonwealth?

Kentucky's commitment to funding gifted education hasn't changed since 1987 (\$22,400/unit) while Teachers' Rank II salaries have rightfully almost doubled (\$23,350 to \$43,203). Most educators have little professional development in meeting and identifying unique learning needs of gifted students.

Kentucky's gifted children differ significantly from other students because their needs arise from their strengths, not deficiencies. As we contribute to them now, they will contribute to a Kentucky that can rise in the state rank.

See [www.wku.edu/kage](http://www.wku.edu/kage) for information on *Kentucky's Future: Mining Untapped Treasure – Children and Youth of the Commonwealth Who Are Gifted and Talented*.

Sincerely,

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### TAPPING INTO OUR FUTURE

With the advent of next year's Kentucky General Assembly convening in January, we have the chance to do something for Kentucky – invest in the future by committing to our young people who are identified as gifted and talented. National educator Joseph Renzulli noted that “you don't prepare a young man or woman to become a world class athlete by keeping him or her in regular gym classes and by not allowing him or her to compete against other youngsters who can provide appropriate levels of challenge.” Likewise, we cannot continue doing the same thing academically with our brightest students as we do with all students since they learn at a significantly faster pace and hunger for advanced, complex curriculum. We must commit to developing their potential by funding gifted education so that our students get the educational opportunities promised them. On-going professional development for teachers, comprehensive identification of gifted students, and appropriate delivery of services for our gifted students are essential.

Innovation and economic growth are critical attributes to educate our children to their fullest potential. Nationally Kentucky ranks 47th in the number of scientists and engineers produced, 45th in the number of patents received, and 42nd in the adaptation to the New Economy (2002). If we do not reverse this trend, how can we expect industries who seek a qualified talent pool and an optimistic economic outlook to invest in our Commonwealth? Kentucky's future depends on our developing this valuable resource.

Kentucky's commitment to spending in gifted education has remained stagnant since 1987. At that time we committed \$22,400/unit for funding gifted education – and that's what it remains today. Teacher's Rank II salaries, however, have increased from \$23,350 to \$43,203. Most of our classroom teachers and administrators have had little or no professional development in meeting and identifying the unique learning needs of gifted students. Training in modifying the curriculum to make it more challenging, in identifying minorities and other underserved populations, and in educating all of our teachers to help meet the needs of all students must become high priorities.

Kentucky's gifted and talented children differ significantly from our other students because their needs arise from their strengths, not their deficiencies. As we contribute to them in the learning process now, they will contribute to a Kentucky that can rise in the ranks of states rather than falling behind.

For more information on the white paper *Kentucky's Future: Mining Untapped Treasure Children And Youth Of The Commonwealth Who Are Gifted And Talented*, see [www.wku.edu/kage](http://www.wku.edu/kage).