



# School Funding Interim Commission

## 64th Montana Legislature

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TO: School Funding Interim Commission  
FROM: Pad McCracken, Research Analyst  
RE: Funding for Gifted and Talented programs  
DATE: April 30, 2016

You requested possible options for revised/increased funding options for programming for gifted and talented (G&T) students, also referred to as high ability/high potential students. At the April meeting you were provided with constitutional, statutory, and rule references related to gifted and talented programming. The final page of those references is an excerpt from House Bill No. 2 (2015) showing that \$250,000 was appropriated for Gifted and Talented in each year of the 2017 biennium. Michael Hall from OPI provided information about how that appropriation is distributed to school districts as matching grants to support G&T programming.

While there would be many different ways of providing increased funding for G&T programming, the following two possibilities would align well with Montana's current funding formula.

1. The simplest revision would be to increase the amount appropriated for the grants in HB 2. The current grant structure requires a local match, ensuring "skin in the game," and because these grants are deposited in the Miscellaneous Programs Fund, accountability for expenditures is straightforward. One consideration with this revision is that you heard testimony that many districts do not currently apply for the grants because the awards are small. Increasing the appropriation would help, but as more districts are attracted to apply, the award amounts would decrease. Basically, the pie grows, but more people would likely want a slice, resulting in smaller slices.
2. A second possibility would be scrapping the grant program and creating a new ANB-driven district general fund component for G&T programming similar to the Indian Education for All (IEFA) or Data for Achievement (D4A). While \$10 per ANB may seem like a small amount, with roughly 150,000 ANB statewide, this would equate to about \$1.5 million a year, or six times the current grant appropriation. Considerations include: (1) if the component was 100% state funded like IEFA and D4A, there would not necessarily be a local match; and (2) accountability within the district general fund may be less straightforward than the Miscellaneous Programs Fund which is were most earmarked revenue is channeled.