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Introduction to the Special Issue

Jonathan A. Plucker¹ and Carolyn M. Callahan²

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Changing population demographics, debates over the purposes and funding of public education, the emergence of charter schools, emerging research in the physical and social sciences, and the emphasis on research-based pedagogy provide a major opportunity for the field to step back and reexamine its positions from the many perspectives that can be offered by the intellectual energy and fresh ideas of our younger scholars, the creativity of mid-career researchers, and the many outstanding contributions that continue to be made by the senior figures in the field.

It is against this dynamic backdrop that Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell's (2011) groundbreaking article, "Rethinking Giftedness and Gifted Education: A Proposed Direction Forward Based on Psychological Science," was published in the journal *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. Having the field represented in a top-tier journal published by the major psychological research organization is a significant accomplishment, bringing issues of gifted education into the mainstream discussion, particularly because the article provides an excellent summary of available research on giftedness and talent development often scattered across many fields and seldom examined from a unified perspective. The article is also notable in its success in bringing important research from other fields (e.g., research on stereotype threat deserves much greater consideration for use within gifted education) to bear on the issues of developing talent and potential. Many of the ideas regarding a future vision have been discussed sporadically within the field but until now have not been given the attention and focus they deserve. Finally, the article seeks to encourage discussion by being provocative; such enlivened debate is always good for a field.

The reaction to the article has been interesting to observe. In our conversations with colleagues, the reactions have ranged from "Well, of course" to "Absolutely not." Such a

broad, mixed reaction is usually a sign that the work in question is of high quality and appropriately thought provoking—the concept of "creative disruption" comes to mind. Should the field continue to move forward incrementally, or is it in need of a big creative challenge that leads to a big creative advance? It is questions such as these that the special issue was intended to invoke and address.

We sought to invite a diverse set of commentators to participate in the special issue, with representation of distinctive theoretical perspectives, diverse areas of specialization, different spots around the country and the globe, and various career stages. However, our bias was to extend invitations to scholars earlier in their careers, given that they would be most directly affected by a major change in the direction of the field.

We appreciate the support and encouragement of the National Association for Gifted Children Publications Committee, and we thank the authors of the original article for their willingness to engage in this public critique of their work. To keep this special issue relevant, a greatly condensed timeline was used, with all of the authors having little turn-around time at all stages of the process. We are especially appreciative of everyone's willingness and ability to produce high-quality work within this tight schedule.

The purpose of this special issue is to spur debate on some exciting, provocative ideas, and we hope the discussions and debates will continue.

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