

# Fundamental Tenets and Belief Statements

## The LoS Approach to Talent Development

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## Bringing Out the Best in Every Student: Fundamental Tenets and Belief Statements

We define *talent* as potential for significant contributions or productivity (in original or creative ways) in any domain of inquiry, expression, or action, over an extended period of time. Talent emerges from aptitudes *and/or* from sustained involvement in areas of strong interest or passion. It is not simply a natural endowment or a “gift.” Talent arises from the interaction among four important sources or components: *characteristics* of the person, the *context* in which the person functions, the *content* domain or area of expertise in which the person acts, and the *operations*, or processes, tools, and strategies the person employs in efforts to be expressive and productive. The “Levels of Service” approach to talent development builds upon 22 fundamental tenets and belief statements. These are:

1. All students have worthwhile potentials and interests. Appropriate and challenging instruction can lead to significant achievement and satisfaction in at least one (or often more) talent areas for many students. Talents exist and may be expressed and developed in many important and worthwhile domains.

2. Some students show advanced levels of talent and accomplishment very early in their lives. With sustained effort, encouragement, and support, many students will continue to pursue the development and expression of their strengths and talents and thus may eventually attain a very high level of excellence and accomplishment.

3. Talent development is lifelong and fundamental to personal growth and healthy development. As children mature, previously unrecognized strengths and talents (“hidden potentials”) often emerge and talents may also become more specific, focused, and sustained.

4. New opportunities enable talents and interests to change, grow, or emerge over time. We can affirm talent when we see it, but we should not declare that it does not exist if, at any single instance, we do not see it. (“Lack of evidence *now* is not necessarily evidence of lack *forever*.”)

5. Creative productivity, which occurs through both individual and group efforts, is commonly manifest by quality products that are shared with appropriate audiences.

6. Moving toward creative productivity in any domain involves a constant struggle for balance between *playfulness* (openness to experience, a sense of curiosity, and exploration, risk-taking, and “toying” with possibilities) and *rigor* (disciplined inquiry, hard work, and extended effort).

7. A person's learning style provides powerful information about how her or his strengths and talents can best be expressed and used and also provides a basis for "appropriate and challenging" instruction.

8. Nurturing talent potential is far more important for educators than simply *categorizing, labeling, or sorting*.

9. Talent development occurs in an "ecosystem of development." Appropriate and challenging programming occurs in settings or through agencies outside the school and requires the commitment and support of the home and community as well as the school.

10. Home, school, and community all contribute to deliberate efforts to recognize students' emerging strengths, talents, and sustained interests. We must be talent spotters in order to become talent developers.

11. Participation in activities or experiences in which various talents can be expressed and used can be effective starting points for talent recognition and development.

12. Talent development requires significant personal ownership and investment, sustained effort, discipline, commitment, and work ethic on the part of the individual as well as resources, support, and encouragement from others.

13. Effective programming for talent development involves many and varied resources and levels of service. These support, extend, expand, or enhance, rather than supplant, the daily school program.

14. Appropriate and challenging educational experiences are fundamental responsibilities of the school, not "privileges" or special activities.

15. Programming activities in six areas (individualized basics, appropriate enrichment, effective acceleration, independence and self-direction, personal growth and social development, and career preparation with a futuristic outlook); appropriate and challenging services in any of these areas often cross traditional subject or grade level designations.

16. Talent development in the school setting requires the commitment and support of a broad cross-section of staff, adequate professional time for deliberate and explicit planning, and recognition of the need for and importance of gradual implementation over several years.

17. Recognizing and documenting all students' strengths, talents, and sustained interests is a flexible, on-going, and inclusive process, not a "one time event."

18. Placing our concern for appropriate and challenging programming in the forefront of our work (e.g., Treffinger, 1998) leads us to move away from the traditional questions associated with "identification" (is the student gifted or not? what criteria qualify the student for designation or selection?), and opens the door for a more powerful and dynamic process of identifying ways to respond to students' strengths, talents, and interests more effectively.

19. Talent spotting emphasizes searching for and documenting students' unique characteristics and their related instructional needs, enabling us to focus on bringing out the best in all students.

20. Profiling is a useful process for clarifying and describing all students' strengths and talents in relation to *action planning for talent development*. It uses formal and informal sources (e.g., test data, rating scales, observations and performance tasks, portfolios, and self-report data) to guide planning for talent development.

21. Helping students to recognize and understand their own emerging talents and then to use their self-knowledge in personal goal setting and career planning are also important outcomes of profiling and action planning.

22. Commitments to continuous improvement and innovation require ongoing professional development for all staff members, consistent with principles of adult learning and effective leadership.

We welcome inquiries from individuals or organizations who share our interest in bringing out the best in every student. The Center for Creative Learning offers a variety of resources, programs, and services to support planning, implementation, and evaluation of talent development programming, creative learning, and Creative Problem Solving. Contact Dr. Don Treffinger at the Center for Creative Learning, 4921 Ringwood Meadow, Sarasota, FL 34235 (USA), or 941.342.9928, or fax 941.342.0064, or by e-mail at don@creativelearning.com. You will find more information about books, programs, and services available from the Center at our website, [www.creativelearning.com](http://www.creativelearning.com).

**Key Resources Available from the Center for Creative Learning:**

Treffinger, D., Young, G., Nassab, C., & Wittig, C. (2004). *Enhancing and expanding gifted programs: The Levels of Service approach*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Treffinger, D., Young, G., Nassab, C., Selby, E., & Wittig, C. (2008). *The talent development planning handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.