



# Forewords from the National Association for Gifted Children and The Association for the Gifted

As educators, let's think big and reach for the stars! Finding and supporting academic talent is the goal of every educator, but it has been difficult to see talent in some of our nation's poor and/or rural schools. Often, we don't see the curiosity, the advanced thinking or the quick minds of our students because of their inability to read, their lack of class participation, or their poor performance on tests. Until recently, we did not know how to search out those gifted low-income and/or minority students, but now, thanks to grants from the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Program and the dedication of many teachers and researchers, we now have tools for talent identification in diverse populations of learners. One tool is *U-STARs~PLUS*, a supplemental science curriculum.

Science is intriguing to both children and adults, so what could be a better match than sending science home with your students? *U-STARs~PLUS* supports science learning and the identification of students who have an early talent for science at school, but it is also designed to engage parents or guardians as partners at home.

Any home can be a science laboratory, and with the support of *U-STARs~PLUS* materials, any parent or guardian can be a science coach. *The U-STARs~PLUS* approach capitalizes on the excitement of young children and adults sharing a science learning experience. *U-STARs~PLUS* offers educators a way to connect with the families of young children who are excited about science.

*U-STARs~PLUS* offers teachers a way to use popular children's literature selections to highlight scientific concepts being studied, along with ideas of in-school and at-home, experiments to extend and enrich student understanding. We're confident, based on the research in gifted and talented education, science education, and early child education, that *U-STARs~PLUS* will enhance outreach efforts to families, creating and sustaining an enthusiasm for learning science and encouraging a new appreciation of scientific thought and inquiry in classrooms and at home.



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*U-STARs~PLUS* offers educators an opportunity to recognize and support students with potential from underserved populations. Already implemented in over 30 school districts, this comprehensive program offers hands-on science curriculum with correlated activities, teacher observation tools for identifying talents, activities for developing family partnerships, and professional development.

All of these components work together in attaining the *U-STARs~PLUS* goals: (a) developing the talents of young children from diverse backgrounds using a hands-on/inquiry science curriculum, (b) strengthening teachers' observation skills so that more students "at-potential" will be identified for and served in gifted programs, (c) creating responsive environments that provide high-end learning opportunities for nurturing potential, (d) involving families so that their children will succeed in school, and (e) building an infrastructure to support systemic change. This comprehensive program addresses the four action areas outlined in The Association for the Gifted's (TAG) monograph, *Diversity and Developing Gifts and Talents: A National Call for Action* (see <http://www.cectag.org>). These areas include preparing school personnel, ensuring equitable curriculum and learning environments, finding giftedness, and including diversity in research.

The Association for the Gifted supports *U-STARs~PLUS* and believes that when these areas are addressed, educators will view students from diverse backgrounds differently and recognize that diversity and excellence are not incompatible.

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