

INTRODUCTION

If Delaware's gifted and talented students are to reach their potential, they must receive educational services appropriate to their individual abilities. This document, *Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware*, was designed to help educators develop, maintain, and improve programs for these students. The guidelines herein were developed cooperatively by members of the **Statewide Advisory Council on Programs for the Gifted and Talented**, educators who have responsibilities for gifted and talented programs throughout the state, and under the leadership of the Education Associate for Gifted and Talented Programs at the **Delaware Department of Education**. The following principles guided the group in their work:

- Gifted and talented students are special needs students.
- Public schools must provide for their needs as well as encourage and support gifted and talented students to reach their potential.
- Gifted and talented students require early identification and intervention, which should be provided by the public schools.
- Gifted and talented students should have appropriate curriculum adapted to meet the pace and depth of their learning needs.
- Public schools and agencies must provide viable curriculum modifications and services for gifted and talented students to meet both their cognitive and affective needs.
- Local school districts are best able to determine the needs of the gifted and talented students within the communities they serve and are best positioned to ensure that gifted and talented programs and services are coordinated and articulated in a continuum of services with the regular school program.

Given the above, local school districts should be responsible for providing appropriate programs and services for their gifted and talented students. Current and best research on programming dictates that local school district programs for the education of gifted and talented students should consist of the following elements, at minimum, that are addressed in the document:

- A clear statement of the programs offered that includes different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diversified needs of gifted and talented students.
- Selection/identification procedures, including modifications for identifying gifted and talented students from traditionally underserved populations.
- A system for delivering differentiated services to gifted and talented students reflecting a continuum of services, including, but not limited to, adaptations such as acceleration, grouping and enrichment as well as pull-out classes; cluster grouping in the subject areas of the pupils' strengths across grade and age levels; flexibly grouped classes for students who have been identified as gifted and talented; special schools, such as magnet schools; mentor-ships; acceleration programs; and seminars.
- A professional development program for all staff significantly involved in the education of gifted and talented students.
- A plan to involve the school community and parents in the ongoing implementation of the local plan, including a public information component.
- An evaluation process to monitor the success of programs.

This document is intended as a vehicle through which the local education agencies, the Delaware Department of Education, and the State Board of Education reaffirm their commitment to gifted and talented students – the young people who will assume significant roles in the leading us into the future.

FOREWORD

This document delineates both *requisite* and *exemplary* recommendations or EXPECTATIONS for gifted education programming and provides a range of *minimal*, or requisite, and *exemplary*, or visionary, levels of program development. These expectations may serve as any of the following: benchmarks for measuring programming effectiveness; criteria for program evaluation; guidelines for program development; and/or recommendations for minimal requirements for high-quality gifted education programming.

For the sake of clarity, the following definitions have been utilized throughout:

Gifted learners are “children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performance at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age.”(United States Department of Education, 1993, p. 3)

Gifted education programming is a coordinated and comprehensive structure of informal and formal services provided on a continuing basis intended to effectively nurture gifted learners.

Minimum expectations include requisite conditions for acceptable gifted education programming practice.

Exemplary expectations designate desirable and visionary conditions for excellence in gifted education programming practice.

The expectations listed herein represent professional consensus on best practice in gifted education and were synthesized by the National Association for Gifted Children in their 1999 document, ***Gifted Program Standards***. The recommendations or expectations are observable aspects of educational programming and are directly connected to the continuous growth and development of gifted learners. The *exemplary expectations* establish a level of performance to which all local school districts and agencies should aspire.

References

National Association for Gifted Children (1999). Pre-K - 12 *Gifted Program Standards*. Washington, D.C.

U. S. Department of Education. (1993). *National excellence: A case for developing America's talent*. Washington, D. C.

Worthen, B. R., Sanders, J. R., & Fitzpatrick, J. L. (1997). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines* (second edition). New York: Longman.

Texas Education Agency. (1996). *Texas state plan for the education of gifted/talented students*. Austin, TX.

Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Program Design

Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware

Rationale: The development of appropriate gifted education programming requires comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
1. Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services should exist for gifted learners.	1.0M Gifted programming services should be accessible to all gifted learners.	1.0E Levels of services will be matched to the needs of gifted learners through the provision of a full continuum of options.
2. Gifted education should be adequately funded.	2.0M Gifted education funding should be equitable compared to the funding of other local programming.	2.0E Gifted education programming will receive funding consistent with the program goals and sufficient to adequately meet them.
3. Gifted education programming should evolve from a comprehensive and sound base.	3.0M Gifted education programming should be submitted for outside review on a regular basis.	3.0E Gifted education programming will be planned as a result of consultation with informed experts.
	3.1M Gifted programming should be guided by a clearly articulated philosophy statement and accompanying goals and objectives.	3.1E The school or school district will have a mission/ philosophy statement that addresses the need for gifted education programming.
	3.2M A continuum of services should be provided across grades pre-K–12.	3.2E A comprehensive pre-K–12 program plan will include policies and procedures for identification, curriculum and instruction, service delivery, teacher preparation, formative and summative evaluation, support services, and parent involvement.
4. Gifted education programming services should be an integral part of the general education school day.	4.0M Gifted education programming should be articulated with the general education program.	4.0E Gifted services will be designed to supplement and build on the basic academic skills and knowledge learned in regular classrooms at all grade levels to ensure continuity as students progress through the program.
	4.1M Appropriate educational opportunities should be provided in the regular classroom, resource classroom, separate, or optional voluntary environments.	4.1E Local school districts will offer multiple service delivery options as no single service should stand alone.
5. Flexible groupings of students should be developed in order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.	5.0M The use of flexible grouping of gifted learners should be an integral part of gifted education programming.	5.0E Gifted learners will be included in flexible grouping arrangements in all content areas and grade levels that ensures that gifted students learn with and from intellectual peers.
6. Policies specific to adapting and adding to the nature and operations of the general education program are necessary for gifted education.	6.0M Existing and future school policies should include provisions for the needs of gifted learners.	6.0E Gifted education policies will exist for at least the following areas: early entrance, grade skipping, ability grouping, and dual enrollment.

*These recommendations have been adapted with permission from Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards, National Association for Gifted Children, 1999

Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Program Administration and Management

Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware

Rationale: Appropriate gifted education programming should include the establishment of a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing services.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
1. Appropriately qualified personnel should direct services for the education of gifted learners.	1.0M The designated coordinator of gifted education programming should have completed coursework or staff development in gifted education and display leadership ability to be deemed appropriately qualified	1.0E The designated gifted programming coordinator will have completed a certification program or advanced degree program in gifted education.
2. Gifted education programming should be integrated into the general education program.	2.0M The gifted education program should create linkages between general education and gifted education at all levels.	2.0E Responsibility for the education of gifted learners is a shared one requiring strong relationships between the gifted education program and general education school wide.
3. Gifted education programming should include positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as compliance agencies.	3.0M Gifted programming staff should establish on-going parent communication.	3.0E The gifted education programming staff will facilitate the dissemination of information regarding major policies and practices in gifted education (e.g., student referral and screening, appeals, informed consent, student progress, etc.) to colleagues, parents, community members, etc.
	3.1M Gifted programs should establish and use an advisory committee that reflects the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the school or school district's total student population, and includes parents, community members, students, and school staff members.	3.1E Parents of gifted learners will have regular opportunities to share input and make recommendations about program operations with the gifted programming coordinator.
	3.2M Gifted education programming staff should communicate with other on-site departments as well as other educational agencies vested in the education of gifted learners (e.g., other school districts, school board members, state departments of education, intermediate educational agencies, etc.).	3.2E The gifted education program will consider current issues and concerns from other educational fields and agencies regarding gifted programming decision making on a regular basis.
4. Requisite resources and materials should be provided to support the efforts of gifted education programming. Gifted staff should plan and problem solve collaboratively.	4.0M Resources should be provided to support program operations.	4.0E A diversity of resources (e.g., parent, community, vocational, etc.) will be available to support program operations.
	4.1M Technological support should be provided for gifted education programming services.	4.1E Gifted education programming will provide state-of-the-art technology to support appropriate services.
	4.2M The library selections should reflect a range of materials including those appropriate for gifted learners.	4.2E The acquisition plan for purchasing new materials for the school will reflect the needs of gifted learners.
	4.3M There are opportunities for staff to meet to plan and collaborate.	4.3E Staff should meet on a regularly scheduled basis (ideally, once a week) to plan and collaborate.

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Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Student Selection/Identification

Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware

Rationale: Gifted learners should be assessed to determine appropriate educational services.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
<p>1. A comprehensive and cohesive process for student nomination should be coordinated in order to determine eligibility for gifted education services.</p>	<p>1.0M Information regarding the characteristics of gifted students in areas served by the district should be annually disseminated to all appropriate staff members.</p> <p>1.1M All students should comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients of gifted education services.</p> <p>1.2M Nominations for services should be accepted from any source (e.g., teachers, parents, community members, peers, etc.).</p> <p>1.3M Parents should be provided information regarding an understanding of giftedness and student characteristics.</p>	<p>1.0E The school district will provide information annually, in a variety of languages, regarding the process for nominating students for gifted education programming services.</p> <p>1.1E The nomination process will be ongoing and screening of any student should occur at anytime.</p> <p>1.2E Nomination procedures and forms will be available in a variety of languages.</p> <p>1.3E Parents will be provided with special workshops or seminars to get a full meaning of giftedness.</p>
<p>2. Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility for gifted education services should measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs in order to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strengths.</p>	<p>2.0M Assessment instruments should measure the capabilities of students in the language in which the student is most fluent, when available.</p> <p>2.1M Assessments should be culturally fair.</p> <p>2.2M The purpose(s) of student assessments should be consistently articulated across all grade levels.</p> <p>2.3M Student assessments should be sensitive to the current stage of talent development.</p>	<p>2.0E Assessments will be provided in a language in which the student is most fluent, if available.</p> <p>2.1E Assessment will be responsive to students' economic conditions, gender, developmental differences, handicapping conditions, and other factors that will mitigate against fair assessment practices.</p> <p>2.2E Students identified in all designated areas of giftedness within a school district will be assessed consistently across grade levels.</p> <p>2.3E Student assessments will be sensitive to all stages of talent development.</p>
<p>3. A student assessment profile of individual strengths and needs should be developed to plan appropriate intervention.</p>	<p>3.0M An assessment profile should be developed for each child to evaluate eligibility for gifted education programming services.</p> <p>3.1M An assessment profile should reflect the unique learning characteristics and potential and performance levels.</p>	<p>3.0E Individual assessment plans will be developed for all gifted learners who need gifted education.</p> <p>3.1E An assessment profile will reflect the gifted learner's interests, learning style, and educational needs.</p>
<p>4. All student identification procedures and instruments should be based on current theory and research.</p>	<p>4.0M No single assessment instrument or its results should deny student eligibility for gifted programming services.</p> <p>4.1M All assessment instruments should provide evidence of reliability and validity for the intended purposes and target students.</p>	<p>4.0E Student assessment data will come from multiple sources and include multiple assessment methods.</p> <p>4.1E Student assessment data will represent an appropriate balance of reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative measures.</p>
<p>5. Written procedures for student identification should include at the very least provisions for informed consent, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures.</p>	<p>5.0M District gifted programming guidelines should contain specific procedures for student assessment at least once during the elementary, middle, and secondary levels.</p> <p>5.1M District guidelines should provide specific procedures for student retention and exiting, as well as guidelines for parent appeals.</p>	<p>5.0E Student placement data will be collected using an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative measures with adequate evidence of reliability and validity for the purposes of identification.</p> <p>5.1E District guidelines and procedures will be reviewed and revised when necessary.</p>

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Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Professional Development

Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware

Rationale: Gifted learners are entitled to be served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education, expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, involvement in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
<p>1. A comprehensive staff development program should be provided for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners.</p>	<p>1.0M All school staff should be made aware of the nature and needs of gifted students.</p> <p>1.1M Teachers of gifted students should attend at least one professional development activity a year designed specifically for teaching gifted learners.</p>	<p>1.0E All school staff will be provided ongoing staff development in the nature and needs of gifted learners, and appropriate instructional strategies.</p> <p>1.1E All teachers of gifted learners will continue to be actively engaged in the study of gifted education through staff development or graduate degree programs.</p>
<p>2. Only qualified personnel should be involved in the education of gifted learners.</p>	<p>2.0M All personnel working with gifted learners should be certified to teach in the area to which they are assigned, and should be aware of the unique learning differences and needs of gifted learners at the grade level at which they are teaching.</p> <p>2.1M All specialist teachers in gifted education should hold or be actively working toward a certification (or the equivalent) in gifted education in the state in which they teach.</p> <p>2.2M Any teacher whose primary responsibility for teaching includes gifted learners, should have extensive expertise in gifted education.</p>	<p>2.0E All personnel working with gifted learners will participate in regular staff development programs.</p> <p>2.1E All specialist teachers in gifted education will possess a certification/specialization or degree in gifted education.</p> <p>2.2E Only teachers with advanced expertise in gifted education will have primary responsibility for the education of gifted learners.</p>
<p>3. School personnel require support for their specific efforts related to the education of gifted learners.</p>	<p>3.0M School personnel should be released from their professional duties to participate in staff development efforts in gifted education.</p>	<p>3.0E Approved staff development activities in gifted education will be funded at least in part by school districts or educational agencies.</p>
<p>4 The educational staff should be provided with time and other support for the preparation and development of the differentiated education plans, materials, curriculum.</p>	<p>4.0M School personnel should be allotted planning time to prepare for the differentiated education of gifted learners.</p>	<p>4.0E Regularly scheduled planning time (e.g., release time, summer pay, etc.) will be allotted to teachers for the development of differentiated educational programs and related resources.</p>

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**Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Curriculum and Instruction
Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware**

Rationale: Gifted education services should include curricular and instructional opportunities directed to the unique needs of the gifted child.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
1. Differentiated curriculum for the gifted learner should span grades pre-K–12.	1.0M Differentiated curriculum (curricular and instructional adaptations that address the unique learning needs of gifted learners) for gifted learners should be integrated and articulated throughout the district.	1.0E A well-defined and implemented curriculum scope and sequence will be articulated for all grade levels and all subject areas.
2. Regular classroom curricula and instruction should be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.	2.0M Instruction, objectives, and strategies provided to gifted learners should be systematically differentiated from those in the regular classroom. 2.1M Teachers should differentiate, replace, supplement, or modify curricula to facilitate higher level learning goals. 2.2M Means for demonstrating proficiency in essential regular curriculum concepts and processes should be established to facilitate appropriate academic acceleration. 2.3M Gifted learners should be assessed for proficiency in basic skills and knowledge and provided with alternative challenging educational opportunities when proficiency is demonstrated	2.0E District curriculum plans will include objectives, content, and resources that challenge gifted learners in the regular classroom. 2.1E Teachers will be responsible for developing plans to differentiate the curriculum in every discipline for gifted learners. 2.2E Documentation of instruction for assessing level(s) of learning and accelerated rates of learning will demonstrate plans for gifted learners based on specific needs of individual learners. 2.3E Gifted learners will be assessed for proficiency in all standard courses of study and subsequently provided with more challenging educational opportunities.
3. Instructional pace should be flexible to allow for the accelerated learning of gifted learners as appropriate.	3.0M A program of instruction should consist of advanced content and appropriately differentiated teaching strategies to reflect the accelerative learning pace and advanced intellectual processes of gifted learners.	3.0E When warranted, continual opportunities for curricular acceleration will be provided in gifted learners’ areas of strength and interest while allowing sufficient ceiling for optimal learning.
4. Educational opportunities for subject and grade skipping should be provided to gifted learners.	4.0M Decisions to proceed or limit the acceleration of content and grade acceleration should only be considered after a thorough assessment.	4.0E Possibilities for partial or full acceleration of content and grade levels be available to any student presenting such needs.
5. Learning opportunities for gifted learners should consist of continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials.	5.0M Diverse and appropriate learning experiences should consist of a variety of curricular options, instructional strategies, and materials. 5.1M Flexible instructional arrangements (e.g., special classes, seminars, resource rooms, mentorships, independent study, and research projects) should be available.	5.0E Appropriate service options for each student to work at assessed level(s) and advanced rates of learning will be available. 5.1E Differentiated educational program curricula for students pre-K–12 will be modified to provide learning experiences matched to students’ interests, readiness, and learning style.

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Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling

Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware

Rationale: Gifted education programming should establish a plan to recognize and nurture the unique socio-emotional development of gifted learners.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
1. Gifted learners should be provided with differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique socio-emotional development.	1.0M Gifted learners, because of their unique socio-emotional development, should be provided with guidance and counseling services by a counselor who is familiar with the characteristics and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners.	1.0E Counseling services will be provided by a counselor familiar with specific training in the characteristics and socio-emotional needs (i.e., underachievement, multi-potentiality, etc.) of diverse gifted learners.
2. Gifted learners should be provided with career guidance services especially designed for their unique needs.	2.0M Gifted learners should be provided with career guidance consistent with their unique strengths.	2.0E Gifted learners will be provided with college and career guidance that is appropriately different and delivered earlier than typical programs.
3. Gifted at-risk students should be provided with guidance and counseling to help them reach their potential.	3.0M Gifted learners who are placed at-risk should have special attention, counseling, and support to help them realize their full potential.	3.0E Gifted learners who do not demonstrate satisfactory performance in regular and/or gifted education classes will be provided with specialized intervention services.
4. Gifted learners should be provided with affective curriculum in addition to differentiated guidance and counseling services.	4.0M Gifted learners should be provided with affective curriculum as part of differentiated curriculum and instructional services.	4.0E A well-defined and implemented affective curriculum scope and sequence containing personal/social awareness and adjustment, academic planning, and vocational and career awareness will be provided to gifted learners.
5. Underachieving gifted learners should be served rather than omitted from differentiated services.	5.0M Gifted students who are underachieving should not be exited from gifted programs because of related problems.	5.0E Underachieving gifted learners will be provided with specific guidance and counseling services that address the issues and problems related to underachievement.

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Guidelines for Gifted Programming in Delaware: Program Evaluation
Recommendations for Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education in Delaware
Rationale: Program evaluation is the systematic study of the value and impact of services provided.

Guiding Principles	Minimum EXPECTATIONS	Exemplary EXPECTATIONS
1. An evaluation should be purposeful.	1.0M Information collected should reflect the interests and needs of most of the constituency groups.	1.0E Information collected will address pertinent questions raised by all constituency groups, and will be responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.
2. An evaluation should be efficient and economic.	2.0M School districts should provide sufficient resources for program evaluation.	2.0E School districts will allocate adequate time, financial support, and personnel to conduct systematic program evaluation.
3. An evaluation should be conducted competently and ethically.	3.0M Persons conducting the evaluation should be competent trustworthy. 3.1M The program evaluation design should address whether or not services have reached intended goals. 3.2M Instruments and procedures used for data collection should be valid and reliable for their intended use. 3.3M Ongoing formative and summative evaluation strategies should be used for substantive program improvement and development. 3.4M Individual data should be held confidential.	3.0E Persons conducting the evaluation will possess an expertise in program evaluation in gifted education. 3.1E The evaluation design will report the strengths and weaknesses found in the program as well as critical issues that might influence program services. 3.2E Care will be taken to ensure that instruments with sufficient evidence of reliability and validity are used, and that they are appropriate for varying age, developmental levels, gender, and diversity of the target population. 3.3E Formative evaluations will be conducted regularly with summative evaluations occurring minimally every five years or more often as specified by state or local district policies. 3.4E All individuals who are involved in the evaluation process will be given the opportunity to verify information and the resulting interpretation.
4. The evaluation results should be made available through a written report.	4.0M Evaluation reports should present the evaluation results in a clear and cohesive format.	4.0E Evaluation reports will be designed to present results and encourage follow-through by stakeholders.

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