



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education *DW*

DATE: April 1, 2019

SUBJECT: Gifted and Talented Education Guidance

Pursuant to the requirements of Public Act 17-82, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is pleased to issue the attached guidance document regarding the identification of students as gifted and talented and the provision of services for such identified students. Specifically, this guidance document:

- reviews the laws and regulations that pertain to gifted and talented education;
- explores effective practices for addressing the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of students who have been identified as gifted and talented in Connecticut public schools; and
- discusses strategies for educator training and professional development relating to students who have been identified as gifted and talented.

For questions about this guidance document, please contact Connecticut's Gifted and Talented Education liaison, Dori Papa Ed.D., at 860-713-6923 or Dori.Papa@ct.gov.

Thank you.

Attachment



Gifted and Talented Education: Guidance Regarding Identification and Service

March 2019

Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction.....	4
Laws and Regulations.....	4
Connecticut Law	4
Connecticut Regulations: Identification.....	5
Definition of Gifted and Talented	5
Mandatory Referral, Identification, and Evaluation Services	6
The Planning and Placement Team (PPT).....	6
Individual Evaluations vs Group Assessments.....	6
The Role of Local Context in Identification.....	8
Parental Rights to a Hearing.....	9
Connecticut Regulations: Provision of Services	9
Instruction and Professional Development.....	9
Differentiation in the Classroom.....	9
Intellectual and Creativity Needs of Gifted Students.....	10
Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Students.....	11
Educator Training and Professional Development.....	12
A Note Regarding Preschool-Aged Children.....	12
Summary.....	13
Appendix.....	15

Acknowledgments

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) thanks the following individuals for their recommendations and critical feedback:

Neag School of Education, Educational Psychology Department, University of Connecticut:

- Del Siegle, PhD - Associate Dean and Professor
- E Jean Gubbins, PhD – Professor
- Catherine Little, PhD - Professor

Canton Public Schools:

- Elizabeth Legere - District SRBI Coordinator

Greenwich Public Schools

- Bonnie O'Regan - Advanced Learning Program Facilitator

New Milford Public Schools

- Dr. Yvonne de St. Croix - Talented and Gifted K-8 Enrichment

Special thanks to Dr. Gilbert Andrada for his initial draft of this guidance.

CSDE Contact Information

Dori Papa, Ed.D.
Education Consultant
Bureau of Special Education
860-713-6923
Dori.Papa@ct.gov

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance document is to:

- review the laws and regulations that pertain to gifted and talented education;
- explore effective practices for addressing the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of students who have been identified as gifted and talented in Connecticut public schools; and
- discuss strategies for educator training and professional development relating to students who have been identified as gifted and talented.

This document fulfills the requirements of Public Act 17-82.

Laws and Regulations

The laws and regulations governing gifted and talented education are embedded within those that pertain to special education in Connecticut. It is important to note that gifted and talented education is not included in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which sets forth the federal requirements for special education. Only state laws and regulations apply to gifted and talented education, not the IDEA. Furthermore, some terms like “PPT” (Planning and Placement Team) and “identification” are shared between practices pertaining to students with disabilities as well as students who have been identified as gifted and talented; however, these terms have specific definitions that are unique to each.

Connecticut Law

According to subsection (5) of [section 10-76a](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes, one of the three possible criteria for identifying a student as requiring special education is one who has extraordinary learning ability or outstanding talent in the creative arts, the development of which requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular school programs. The two other criteria for a child requiring special education include students who meet the identification criteria for special education under IDEA or are ages three through five and exhibit developmental delays that require special education.

Subsection (8) of [section 10-76a](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes elaborates that “extraordinary learning ability” and “outstanding creative talent” shall be defined in regulation by the commissioner, subject to the approval of the State Board of Education. The regulations are reviewed in greater detail in the next section of this guidance.

Connecticut’s most recent legislation regarding gifted and talented education, [Public Act 17-82](#), required the commissioner to designate an employee of the CSDE to provide information and assistance to school districts and parents/guardians regarding identification and service provision for gifted and talented students. It also required the CSDE to issue this guidance document.

Connecticut Regulations: Identification

As with Connecticut law, the regulations for gifted and talented students are found in regulations pertaining to the broader special education section entitled, “Children Requiring Special Education” (Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies [RCSA] §§ 10-76a-1—10-76l-1) (Rev. 2015).

Definition of Gifted and Talented

[Section 10-76a-2](#) offers the following three important definitions that serve as the foundation for the identification of students as gifted and/or talented:

(1) “Extraordinary learning ability” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as gifted and talented on the basis of either performance on relevant standardized measuring instruments, or demonstrated or potential achievement or intellectual creativity, or both.

(2) “Gifted and talented” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as (A) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (B) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the general education program in order to realize the child’s intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. The term shall include children with extraordinary learning ability and children with outstanding talent in the creative arts.

(3) “Outstanding talent in the creative arts” means a child identified by the planning and placement team as gifted and talented on the basis of demonstrated or potential achievement in music, the visual arts or the performing arts.

These definitions can be synthesized into the following two broad descriptions of students who may be identified as gifted and/or talented:

- (i) those with *extraordinary learning ability* (commonly referred to as *gifted*); and/or
- (ii) those with *outstanding talent in the creative arts* (commonly referred to as *talented*).

Extraordinary learning ability pertains to academic achievement and intellectual creativity. Outstanding talent in the creative arts pertains to achievement in music, the visual, or performing arts. Students in these classifications are collectively referred to as gifted and talented.

Mandatory Referral, Identification, and Evaluation Services

Subsection (b) of [section 10-76d-1](#) states that “*Each board of education shall be required to provide referral, identification and evaluation services only for gifted and talented children enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, in a public school under the jurisdiction of such board of education.*” This regulation affirms that districts are mandated to have a process for the referral, identification, and evaluation of public school students enrolled in Grades K-12 as gifted and/or talented. The referral may come from any source including the teacher, administrator, parent, guardian, or child.

The Planning and Placement Team (PPT)

Subsection (1) of [section 10-76d-9c](#) of the RCSA requires “*Each board of education to evaluate and identify gifted and talented children using the planning and placement team (PPT).*” Evaluation and identification of gifted and talented students must be conducted by a PPT; however, the composition of the PPT for gifted and talented identification is different from the composition of the PPT for special education. Specifically, subsection (14) of [section 10-76a-1](#) states that “*For purposes of the evaluation, identification or determination of the specific educational needs of a child who may be gifted or talented, the PPT means a group of certified or licensed professionals who represent each of the teaching, administrative and pupil personnel staffs, and who participate equally in the decision making process.*” Note that the student’s parent or guardian is not a required member of the PPT.

Individual Evaluations vs Group Assessments

When identifying a student as gifted and talented, subsection (2) of [section 10-76d-9c](#) states the following:

A board of education may use individual evaluations or group assessment and evaluations to identify gifted and talented children, provided the board of education obtains parental consent in writing before a child is individually evaluated. A board of

education may conduct planning and placement team meetings on groups of children for whom evaluation and identification as gifted and talented are planned. The board of education shall provide parents with written notice that their child has been referred to the planning and placement team for consideration as a gifted and talented child. Written parental consent shall be secured before a child is individually evaluated for identification as gifted and talented. The results of the planning and placement team meeting concerning a determination of the child's identification as gifted or talented shall be provided to the parent in writing. If a parent disagrees with the results of the evaluation conducted by the board of education, the parent has a right to a hearing, pursuant to sections 10-76h-1 to 10-76h-16, inclusive, of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

All Connecticut districts are required to evaluate and identify gifted and talented students but there is flexibility in how this evaluation is conducted. Districts may choose to conduct individual evaluations or may use group assessments. Parent consent is not required for evaluation and identification based on group assessments; however, if the district receives a referral to individually evaluate a student, it should secure parent consent prior to that evaluation.

In the case of a group assessment, a district may choose to use an appropriate standardized test that is administered to all students in a particular grade. A district can use a locally normed cut-score to identify students for consideration by a PPT for the gifted and talented classification. In this approach, the district may convene a group PPT to review the cases of the students who meet or exceed the established cut score. The use of local norms over state/national norms has the advantage of potentially being more informative of a child's standing with respect to the general education program of a school. Objective measures such as these also allow for the possible identification of students as gifted and talented who are members of historically underrepresented populations.

When a child is individually referred for gifted and talented identification (e.g., by a teacher, administrator, parent, guardian, child), written consent from a parent or guardian is required before the evaluation and PPT can proceed. An individual referral has the advantage of allowing for the possible identification of students as gifted and talented in areas that are not typically addressed by large-scale standardized tests (e.g., social studies, a technical discipline, music, creative arts, performing arts).

After a determination has been made by either the PPT conducting an individual evaluation or the PPT conducting the group evaluation, a written notification to the parent or guardian is

required to convey the results of the PPT evaluations regarding the child's standing with respect to the gifted and talented classification.

The Role of Local Context in Identification

Subsection (2) of [section 10-76a-2](#) defines a gifted and talented student as one who not only possesses a demonstrated or potential extraordinary learning ability or outstanding talent, but also has been determined as *“needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the general education program...”* This requirement in the regulation provides an important added context for the identification of gifted and talented students.

After the PPT has determined from an individual/group assessment that a child has potential for or has demonstrated superior learning ability or creative talent, gifted and talented is a classification that is dependent upon the local context because a PPT must inventory and evaluate a child's needs relative to what is available from the general education program in the child's school. If a differentiated instruction need exists that exceeds the general education program, then the child has met the criteria for the gifted and talented classification.

Since there are differences between general education programs in different schools, a child could be gifted and talented in one school but not gifted and talented in another. Similarly, if the PPT determines that a child has demonstrated or has potential for superior ability/achievement in music, the visual arts or the performing arts and, relative to the general program, the child has unmet educational needs, then the child should be classified as having outstanding talent in the creative arts. Students can be found to have outstanding talent in the creative arts in a single or in multiple modes/expressions of musical, visual, or performing arts. In the case of either the high ability student or the student with outstanding talent in the creative arts, need is operationally defined as whatever is required in order for the student to realize her intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. Members of a PPT may wish to consider instructional elements of pacing, rigor, enrichment, or content access. Furthermore, a PPT may wish to ascertain and consider the extent to which interaction with intellectual or creative peers would facilitate a student's development toward their potential.

Subsection (1) of [section 10-76d-9c](#) of the RCSA states that *“A board of education may identify up to ten per cent of its total student population for the district as gifted and talented.”* This ten percent criterion is evaluated against the total student population of the district. A district that

closely approaches or exceeds the ten percent threshold for gifted and talented students may wish to consider the relevant elements of the general educational program that could be enhanced to meet more of the educational needs of the group of students who were classified as gifted and talented.

Parental Rights to a Hearing

Pursuant to subsection (2) of [section 10-76d-9c](#), if a parent or guardian disagrees with the results of the evaluation conducted by the PPT, they have a right to a hearing. To begin this process, a request for a hearing must be filed with the Due Process Unit in the Bureau of Special Education at the Connecticut State Department of Education (860-713-6928).

Connecticut Regulations: Provision of Services

Subsection (b) of Section 10-76d-1 states that *“The provision of all other special education and related services to gifted and talented children shall be at the discretion of each board of education, except if a child identified as gifted or talented is also identified as a child with a disability, then the child shall receive special education and related services.”*

While the gifted and talented identification and evaluation of students is mandatory, the provision of services for identified students is not required and is left to the discretion of the district. A student may be identified as gifted and talented and as a student with disability who is eligible for special education and related services. In that case, the student would be entitled to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) pursuant to state and federal law but is not entitled to receive gifted and talented services.

Instruction and Professional Development

Differentiation in the Classroom

Regardless of the results of the PPT evaluation with respect to a gifted and talented classification as specified in these regulations, an important product from the evaluation process is an inventory of a student’s actual or potential educational needs. It is recommended that this information be shared with the parent or guardian as well as the student’s teachers. Though districts are not required to provide educational services to address a student’s educational needs,

Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching (CCT) explicitly speaks to the benefits of differentiating instruction for all students, including gifted and talented students.

The CCT represents the foundational knowledge, skills, and qualities that Connecticut teachers need in order to prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21st century; it is an important consideration in Connecticut's educator evaluation framework. The following three indicators within Domain 3 (Planning for Active Learning) and Domain 4 (Instruction for Active Learning) of the CCT directly address differentiation; they expect that teachers will plan instruction to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and promote their curiosity about the world at large.

- Indicator 3.1 expects that teachers will plan for active learning by determining students' prior knowledge to ensure that content instruction is at an appropriate level of challenge and differentiated to meet their learning needs. Addressing student learning needs includes understanding typical and atypical growth and development of PK-12 students including characteristics and functioning of students with disabilities, gifted students, and English language learners.
- Indicator 3.7 expects that teachers will plan for active learning by designing or selecting academic and/or behavioral interventions through differentiated, supplemental, and specialized instruction for students who do not respond to primary instruction alone.
- Indicator 4.5 expects that teachers will instruct for active learning using differentiated instruction and supplemental interventions to support students with learning difficulties, disabilities and/or particular gifts and talents.

An inventory of the educational needs determined through the PPT process can be informative to educators who are implementing differentiated strategies for individual students or groups of students with similar needs.

Intellectual and Creativity Needs of Gifted Students

While the provision of services to meet the needs of students who are classified as gifted and talented is at the discretion of the district, there are school-wide strategies for enrichment programming that can differentiate instruction for high ability intellectual or creative students.

These strategies can be grouped under the general heading of curriculum compacting¹. They are also sometimes referred to as individualized learning, personalized learning, or simply “compacting.” Among these strategies are considerations for acceleration into a higher grade or a more advanced class for a particular subject. Additionally, educators may wish to employ:

- advanced curricular resources that incorporate differentiated levels of depth and complexity;
- grouping strategies that enable gifted and talented students to be grouped together for some portions of their educational program;
- opportunities for independent and small-group pursuits of advanced learning in relevant disciplines; and
- advanced-level readings, problems, and other stimuli that engage these learners at a higher level.

These strategies have strong support in the gifted education literature and constitute a good starting point for addressing the intellectual and creative needs of gifted students.

Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

While gifted and talented students share advanced learning and creative characteristics, each student remains an individual and engages with her learning/creative contexts uniquely. In addition to the assessment of educational needs, the social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students should also be considered by the PPT. Coping with and effectively dealing with stress, being different, and possibly being misunderstood are part of the challenge in any context. While some of these needs, as they uniquely pertain to gifted and talented students, might be anticipated, there is no single, definitive response to guiding high ability students through them. These issues should, however, be part of the consideration for educators and administrators. In addition to the required representation on a PPT, consultation with a school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker on this specific issue can yield invaluable insights in a school’s response to gifted and talented students and the educational strategies that are considered for them.

¹ See *Curriculum Compacting: A Research-based Differentiation Strategy for Culturally Diverse Talented Students* by Joseph S. Renzulli and Sally M. Reis at the University of Connecticut’s Neag School of Education.

Educator Training and Professional Development

Gifted education is a well developed area of professional and graduate study that is typically housed in university schools of education. In addition to certification and degree programs, a great deal of information is available from national and state organizations that serve the needs of gifted students. This information is disseminated as part of national conferences, professional journals, online courses, workshops, and publications. Several of these resources are included in the appendix.

Professional development in the following areas of study are typically included as part of training for the educators of gifted and talented students:

- identification of gifted and talented students;
- strategies for teaching the gifted and talented students;
- program development for gifted and talented students;
- individual differences; and
- social/emotional needs of gifted and talented students.

A Note Regarding Preschool-Aged Children

The regulations governing the identification of high ability learners begin in public schools at kindergarten (see [subsection \(b\) of section 10-76d-1](#)). Parents and advocates for preschool-aged children can familiarize themselves with the statute and regulations described here. The educational needs of young children prior to kindergarten are best met by providing high-quality learning environments that include high interest activities, discovery/inquiry, literary exposure, mathematics exposure, cross-age social interactions, and rich play experiences.

At the beginning of kindergarten, an inventory of kindergarten behaviors that broadly assess a child's readiness to engage in kindergarten work are observed and rated by their teachers on the Kindergarten Entrance Inventory (KEI). Children entering kindergarten are observed and rated along six dimensions:

1. **Language Skills** – the ability to participate in a conversation, re-tell information from a story, follow verbal directions, speak in sentences of 5 or more words, communicate feelings and needs, and listen to a speaker.

2. **Literacy Skills** – the ability to hold/use a book properly, explore books independently, recognize printed letters/familiar printed words, match letters and sounds, produce emergent writing products.
3. **Numeracy Skills** – the ability to count to 10, demonstrate a one-to-one correspondence while counting, measures objects using everyday items, identify shapes, identify patterns, sort/group objects, understand sequence of events.
4. **Physical/Motor Skills** – ability to run, jump, balance, kick, throw, dance, climb stairs, use writing instruments, and complete performance tasks (puzzles, cutting with scissors, string beads).
5. **Creative/Aesthetic Skills** – the ability to draw, paint, sculpt, build, participate in pretend play, and enjoy/participate in musical experiences.
6. **Personal/Social Skills** – the ability to engage in self-selected activities, interact with peers in cooperative work or play, use words to express feelings/identify conflicts, seek peer/adult help to resolve conflict, and follow classroom routines.

The KEI is a useful screening instrument. It was designed to be an indicator of essential entry skills in six broad areas, but it falls short of being an indicator of high ability learning. Students who consistently demonstrate skills in the observed domains are rated as “independent” with respect to their kindergarten readiness and are considered to be among students who are most ready to engage in kindergarten. At some time after kindergarten enrollment, should any evidence of extraordinary learning ability or outstanding creative talent exist, a student may be referred to the school administration to begin formal identification as gifted and talented.

Summary

The following is a brief summary of the essential points from this guidance:

- It is mandatory for districts to have processes for identifying gifted and talented students.
- Districts may use group testing or individual testing as part of their process for identification. Identification using group testing can occur without parent consent. Parent consent, however, is required prior to any individual evaluations.
- All districts must use a PPT to identify students as gifted and talented. This PPT is different from a PPT to identify students with disabilities.

- The results of a PPT for gifted and talented evaluation must be communicated to parents in writing.
- The frequency for re-evaluation is not defined. The PPT for gifted and talented education is encouraged to consider new evidence.
- Group tests have the advantage of objectivity and the potential for identifying gifted students from among members of historically under-represented groups of students.
- Personal referrals can indicate for gifted and talented students in non-tested areas.
- Service is provided at the discretion of the district, but differentiated instruction is an expectation in the Common Core of Teaching.
- The PPT process can supply parents and educators with an inventory of specific educational needs that can be used to effectively differentiate instruction regardless of classification as gifted and talented.
- Educators should be aware that gifted and talented students have unique social and emotional needs.
- Educators and administrators tasked with the responsibility of identifying and serving gifted and talented students should seek professional development to improve procedures and services.

Appendix

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

- Standards for G/T Education: for teaching students, for teacher prep, for faculty
<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/national-standards-gifted-and-talented-education>

State of the States in Gifted Education 2014-2015

- <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-state/2014-2015-state-states-gifted-education>

Parent Resources

- <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>

Advocacy

- <https://www.ctgifted.org/website/publish/home/homeList.php>
- <https://www.nagc.org/get-involved/advocate-gifted-children>

Awards

- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/harry-passow-classroom-teacher-scholarship>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about-nagc/nagc-awards-scholarships/javits-frasier-scholars-program>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/administrator-award>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/community-service-award>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/david-w-belin-advocacy-award>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/gifted-coordinator-award-0>
- <https://www.nagc.org/about/awards-recognition/masters-and-specialist-award>

Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG)

- Programming for Students
<http://www.ctgifted.org/website/publish/newsroom/index.php?Minds-in-Motion-38>
- What is Giftedness:
<http://www.ctgifted.org/website/publish/gifted/index.php?What-is-Giftedness-7>

Connecticut PTA

- <https://www.ctpta.org/>

Schools/Programs for the gifted

- Davidson Academy <http://www.davidsongifted.org/>
- Northwestern University <https://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/gifted-programs>
- College of William & Mary <http://education.wm.edu/centers/cfge/precollegiate/index.php>
- Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth <https://cty.jhu.edu/>
- Purdue University Gifted Education Resource Institute
<https://www.education.purdue.edu/geri/youth-programs/>

- Institute for Educational Advancement <http://educationaladvancement.org/programs/>
- IEA Yunasa Camps <http://educationaladvancement.org/programs/yunasa/>

Acceleration information and resources

- A Nation Empowered http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/
- State by state policies on acceleration
http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/Policy/By_State/Default.aspx
- Teacher resources for STEM acceleration
<http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/IDEAL.aspx>

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page

- Resources for parents <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/parents.htm>
- Resources for educators <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/educators.htm>
- Online community http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/on-line_support.htm
- High School <http://educationaladvancement.org/caroline-d-bradley-scholarship/>

Research on Gifted Education

- National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (1990-2013)
<https://nrcgt.uconn.edu/>
- National Center for Research on Gifted Education (2014-present)
<https://ncrge.uconn.edu/>
- Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development
Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) https://gifted.uconn.edu/schoolwide-enrichment-model/about_sem/
- Graduate Programs <https://gifted.education.uconn.edu/>
- Confratute (summer professional development conference) <https://confratute.uconn.edu/>

Identifying Students Who are Gifted and Talented and Also Have Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) or SLD/Dyslexia

- <http://ctserc.org/component/k2/item/363-18-58-091>

Curriculum Compacting

- <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/curriculum-compacting>

Social Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

- <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/social-emotional-issues>

Professional Development

- <https://www.nagc.org/professional-learning>
- http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Gifted-by-State/Coursework%20and%20Degree%20Programs%20FINAL%20DOCUMENT_0.pdf
- https://www.ctgifted.org/website/publish/professional_development/index.php?2