

# The Framework for Gifted Endorsement Guidelines

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**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
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## Definition of the Endorsement Certificate

Following approval by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), approved program providers may offer short programs (12 credits maximum) that lead to the Program Endorsement. The Program Endorsement documents knowledge in new and emerging areas where formal certification does not exist. The Program Endorsement is intended to improve a teacher's skills in dealing with complex classroom settings. These endorsements are added to existing Level I or Level II Certificates but are not required to perform service in these areas.

The undergraduate endorsement program must be offered by or in conjunction with a Bachelor of Science degree granting institution. Act 24 of 2011 does allow for providers other than colleges and universities the opportunity to offer a post-baccalaureate program. This does include intermediate units (IU).

## Introduction to Gifted Endorsement Guidelines

This document describes the professional knowledge, skills, and competencies that candidates will learn by completing a prescribed sequence of courses (including field experiences). In addition to specific requirements and competencies, these guidelines discuss the Gifted Endorsement program design, candidate competencies, field experiences, and any prerequisite certificates needed by the candidate.

## Prerequisite for the Gifted Endorsement Program

To be admitted into a Gifted Endorsement Program, candidates must hold a Level I or II certificate, including but not limited to regular and special education, school psychologist, principal, guidance counselor, speech and language clinician, occupational and physical therapist, reading specialist, and home and school visitor.

Consistent with Chapter 354, all endorsement programs must include some components of field experiences. (See 22 Pa. Code §354.25(d)). Field experiences are defined as a range of formal, required school and community activities participated in by candidates who are enrolled in educator preparation programs. These activities generally include supervision and mentorship of a teacher with expertise in the endorsement area. Effective field experiences provide candidates with increasing exposure to learning situations and school settings under the guidance of program faculty and trained mentors throughout the preparation program.

### **Program Providers must demonstrate:**

1. How they implement field experiences.
2. The duration of candidate field experiences.

3. How these experiences are closely integrated with coursework, assessment practices, and program goals.

## Overview of Gifted Education Endorsement

All learners deserve the highest quality of instruction possible. Such instruction only occurs when teachers are aware of and able to respond to the unique qualities and characteristics of students they instruct.

According to the National Association for Gifted Children, gifted learners are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented academic performance or achievement in the top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, mentally gifted learners demonstrate outstanding intellectual and creative ability which requires specially designed instructional programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program, and includes, but not limited to, those students who have an IQ of 130 or higher.

The Gifted Endorsement Guidelines were created in congruence with Title 22 of the Pennsylvania School Code, Chapter 49.62b and follow the General Standards required for all endorsements for State Approval of Professional Educator Programs. The guideline competencies are aligned with the Pennsylvania Academic and Alternative Standards, the guidelines of various professional organizations, including the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for Gifted Children, state assessments, and the specific language and conditions of the state's professional education community.

To provide appropriate learning experiences for gifted learners, educators will demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- A knowledge and valuing of the origins and nature of high levels of intelligence, including creative expressions of intelligence and how intelligence manifests itself in different domains and in diverse learners;
- A knowledge and understanding of the cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics, needs, and potential challenges experienced by gifted learners from diverse populations;
- A knowledge of and access to enhanced and advanced content and instructional strategies;
- An ability to develop differentiated curricula appropriate to meeting the unique academic strengths as well as consider the emotional needs and interests of gifted learners; and
- An ability to create an environment in which gifted learners can feel challenged and safe to explore, take risks, and express their uniqueness.

Educational experiences through teacher preparation should expect teachers to develop these skills. Teacher preparation provides information to teachers about individualized strategies, curriculum, and researched based practices so that gifted students will achieve social and learning success in the school setting. Academic achievement is the result of teachers, students, and families working together to provide a continuum of support for gifted learners. Gifted learners are entitled to services provided by professionals who have specialized methods, involvement in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits. This can be achieved through a gifted endorsement requirement.

Educators who hold the gifted endorsement will demonstrate responsibility for perpetuating high standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior. This conduct includes demonstrating competency in communication of essential information regarding the nature of giftedness and effective delivery of gifted services to both faculty and families.

Professionals who have obtained this endorsement will be able to advocate for gifted students and act as a resource to their fellow educators regarding this population, especially with regard to educational services. Individuals holding this endorsement are encouraged to continue pursuing professional development to remain informed regarding the reliability, validity, changes and refinements in the empirical literature supporting various gifted interventions and accommodations.

## **Gifted Endorsement Program Design**

The professional core courses, competencies and experiences for the Gifted Endorsement are designed to increase the level of knowledge, expertise and understanding of educators working with students who are gifted. The endorsement is intended to raise awareness of the unique characteristics, emotional/social needs, other challenges and issues associated with the students who are gifted. It is designed to foster an understanding of historical, state and national trends, policies and guidelines to ensure implementation of appropriate academic curriculum, differentiation strategies, current best practice, educational interventions and support for this diverse population.

The courses and field experiences must prepare educators who will be able to support students' growth in their area(s) of academic strength. All courses and field experiences must be grounded in theories of cognitive, social and emotional development and demonstrate research based practices which enable candidates to gain the knowledge and experience needed to work successfully with all stakeholders including families and the broader community.

Eligible candidates will demonstrate competency related to the following key domains:

### **I. Foundations of Gifted Education**

- II. Identification and Assessment**
- III. Service Delivery Options**
- IV. Curriculum Design and Strategies in the Classroom**

Effective educational services require professionals to acquire a wide range of instructional practices related to gifted students. It is imperative that candidates seeking a Gifted Endorsement have experience in interacting with and guiding instruction for gifted students. It is recommended that endorsement candidates have access to a full range of diversity within the gifted student population, including age and ability levels; and that emphasis is placed on depth of experience.

In order to assure the consistency of field experiences with course content and the 12-credit maximum requirement, field experiences may be integrated into course content. Field experiences will provide candidates with exposure to formulating and providing a range of individualized interventions and instruction for gifted students in both regular and specialized settings with opportunities to observe and participate in assessment processes. Field exposure may include experiences with gifted students by currently employed practicing teachers pursuing a gifted endorsement.

## **Gifted Endorsement Candidate Competencies**

The competencies of the Gifted Endorsement are derived from standards established through the evidence-based professional literature and are consistent with the professional guidelines such as:

- PA Department of Education Gifted Guidelines
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC K-12 Programming Standards)
- Council for Exceptional Children

Similar to the requirements in Chapter 354 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania School Code, this section outlines the competencies required for endorsement which ensure that candidates complete a well-planned sequence of courses and field experiences to develop an understanding of the structure, skill, core concepts, facts, methods of inquiry, and application of technology related to the endorsement area. (See 22 Pa. Code §354.25 (a) (3)).

### **I. Foundations of Gifted Education**

Candidates will demonstrate their ability to:

- A. Explain the relevant history of the changing definitions, interventions, and cultural attitudes regarding gifted learners and their relationship to educational services. The information will include:
  1. Underserved Populations (e.g. minorities, English language learners,

- twice exceptional students, socioeconomic disadvantaged).
2. Understand key philosophies, theories, models and research supporting Gifted Education.
- B. Explain the relevance, importance, and application of state and federal documents, regulations and reports, including PA Chapter 16 Regulations and related documents through direct interaction with a student who requires services (Gifted Written Report, Gifted Individualized Educational Plan, Notice of Recommended Assignment).
- C. Articulate the importance of collaboration and communication with all interested stakeholders (Gifted Support Teachers, families, student, teachers, administration, and community members).
- D. Provide information on and advocate for gifted individuals and services to professional staff, parents and the community.
- E. Identify and locate organizations and materials that will present current data, resources and pedagogy for gifted education.

## II. Identification and Assessment

Candidates will demonstrate their ability to:

- A. Recognize diverse characteristics and behaviors of gifted individuals.
1. Understand the similarities and differences between gifted students and the general student population.
  2. Know the similarities and differences among gifted students and the different facets of giftedness.
  3. Understand the concept of asynchronous development and the impact of asynchronies on identification of gifted learners.
  4. Recognize how identification as an English Language Learner, Twice Exceptional student, or an individual from a different culture or race (including potential gender bias) may mask gifted traits.
- B. Understand social and emotional needs of gifted individuals.  
Have the ability to recognize and develop strategies that address the challenges that result from asynchrony, depression, over-excitabilities and perfectionistic tendencies to support affective growth.
- C. Respect and understand the impact of cultural differences in gifted individuals.  
Understand how language, culture, economic status, family background, and/or area of disability can influence the learning of gifted students.
- D. Understand cognitive and affective differences of gifted individuals.



Know the cognitive characteristics of gifted students including, but not limited to, rates of acquisition, creativity and innovation, higher ordered thinking and reasoning.

- E. Recognize and understand the potential of creative thinking; the process stages of creative thinking; the core affective and intellectual skills of creative thinking; and the influence that instructional strategies for creative thinking have on creativity in content areas.
- F. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple and alternative assessments that can be used for identification purposes and how these assessments align to academic needs within the educational placement.

### III. Service Delivery Options

Candidates will demonstrate their ability to:

- A. Use instructional models and classroom services based on research and current literature on gifted education with a gifted child.
- B. Facilitate use of different organizational options for gifted services that provide enrichment, acceleration, or a combination of both in a school setting. Some examples include but are not limited to: curriculum compaction, acceleration by whole subject or grade, grade telescoping, mentorships, school-wide enrichment, independent study, etc.
- C. Understand the importance and use of measurable individualized plans based on the identified academic strengths of each gifted student for use in the regular classroom and in smaller group settings.
- D. Understand how to utilize on-going district data (benchmarks, formative, summative and diagnostic assessments) to determine alignment between student ability, standards and differentiated instruction through service models that include modification of the content, process, product and classroom environment.
- E. Understand how to utilize different student grouping options for gifted students, including options that are flexible and based on ability.
- F. Promote the intellectual leadership of students who are educationally, economically and culturally disenfranchised.
- G. Accept and respect different cultural backgrounds, different ways of communicating, and different values by exhibiting how culture affects manifestation of gifted abilities.

## IV. Curriculum Design and Strategies in the Classroom

Candidates will demonstrate their ability to:

- A. Select and use data from a variety of assessments (formative, summative, diagnostic and benchmark) to inform instructional decision-making to meet the needs of individual students through enrichment, acceleration or a combination of both and to document student progress.
- B. Design differentiated learning plans/curricula for gifted learners in a school setting that include but are not limited to tiered lessons/performance tasks, graphic organizers, curriculum compactions, learning contracts.
- C. Select appropriate curriculum resources, strategies, products and service options (acceleration, enrichment, both) that respond to cultural, cognitive, and affective differences among gifted and advanced learners.
- D. Integrate academic and career guidance experiences for gifted learners into curriculum and instruction in the school setting.
- E. Demonstrate knowledge of questioning techniques that facilitate higher-level learning and enhance critical and creative thinking.
- F. Understand and implement flexible grouping practices.
- G. Use best practice models in lesson development and instruction to increase depth/complexity for tasks, requiring gifted and advanced learners to engage in higher-levels of thinking.
- H. Design learning opportunities that foster the development of self-awareness, positive peer relationships, intercultural experiences, self-efficacy, lifelong learning, self-advocacy and leadership.

## Faculty

Endorsement certificate programs submitted for review to the Department of Education must include a review of qualifications of faculty assigned to teach each course within the endorsement program. Faculty who teach in the program must have demonstrated expertise in gifted education methods appropriate to engaging the minds of advanced learners. Evidence of qualification includes related advanced academic degrees in disciplines appropriate for Gifted Education; public school certification(s); experience with gifted learners and professional development pertaining to the competencies

assigned to a gifted education course (similar to 22 Pa. Code § 354.25 and 354.26). Faculty should be active in professional organizations related to gifted education. Additionally, program proposals will be expected to include evidence of collaboration with current practicing gifted program coordinators and program provider faculty.

## **Application Process**

The institution's certification officer will recommend the candidate for the endorsement after successful completion of the Gifted Education Endorsement Program. The candidate must complete the required PDE application for the endorsement through the [Teacher Information Management System \(TIMS\)](#) and pay the appropriate fee to add the endorsement to their instructional certificate.

## **References**

[National Association for Gifted Children](#)

[National Association for Gifted Children and Council for Exceptional Children Teacher Preparation Standards, 2013](#)

[National Association for Gifted Children K-12 Programming Standards for Gifted Education](#)

[Pennsylvania Chapter 16, Special Education for Gifted Students](#)