



*Gifted Policy
Analysis Study
for the
Ohio Department of
Education*

*Final Report
October 21, 2003*

*conducted by
The College of William and Mary
Center for Gifted Education*

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Executive Summary and Overview of Report

Introduction

The Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary was contracted to conduct a policy review study across five states to determine the nature, extent, and relative success of policies governing programs for the gifted. The contract for this review was in effect from March to July, 2003.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth review, interpretation, and comparative analysis of state policies that pertain to or impact gifted education. The proposal poses several key research questions, organized under the following overarching questions:

- In a selected set of states, what are Department of Education policies that represent effective practices for gifted education?
- What are policy strengths and limitations?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the design and implementation of this study and provided further support for the overarching questions:

- 1) What policies exist regarding identification and definitions of giftedness, personnel preparation, funding, program/curriculum/service provisions, and program management?
- 2) What is the nature, extent, and intent of these policies?
- 3) How effective have the policies been in moving gifted education forward in the state?
- 4) How does gifted education policy interact with other state policies that impact gifted students?
- 5) In what ways are the policies aligned with the state's reform initiative?
- 6) What are the strengths and weaknesses of current gifted education policies?

Methodology

The methodology employed in conducting the study included four data sources. The most extensive was a document review of each state's (a) regulations governing programs and services for the gifted, (b) guidelines for practitioners in administering programs at the local level, and (c) supplemental state policies that impact on gifted students. A second data source was interviews with State Department of Education personnel to probe important aspects of policy development and implementation. These interviews were conducted onsite at the Department of Education in each state, with current gifted program administrators and a decision maker at the level of the Superintendent's cabinet. A third data source was a focus group with each state's advisory group overseeing the state gifted program. These groups ranged in size from 8-14. Protocols for both

interviews and focus groups may be found in Appendix A. The final data source was an analysis of each state's policies against the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) program standards. All data sources were employed in the writing of this report. Focus group and interview data have been incorporated into the within-state and cross-state analyses where appropriate.

Predominantly qualitative techniques were used in the data analysis. Content analysis was used to capture qualitative findings for each research question within each state. Comparative content analysis was used to analyze data across states.

Overview of Sections of the Report

Section I describes the criteria and definition used to make state comparisons across relevant factors. The Center for Gifted Education at The College of William & Mary in collaboration with key personnel at the Ohio Department of Education agreed upon the defined set of criteria. Center staff compiled the numerical and other data for the state criteria matrix from a variety of sources (see references). Following the completion of the matrix, a phone conference was held to determine the final selection of states to be included in the study. The agreed upon criteria for final selection was, (a) existence of a full-time state director, (b) gifted education legislation and/or mandate, (c) comparability of funding, (d) access to state level personnel and documents, (e) perceived by experts in the field as a "best practice" state, and (f) comparability across states in terms of local control. The selected states were the following: **Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.**

Section II contains the narrative descriptions from the document review process. This section explains each state's organization structure and policies governing educating gifted students. Additionally, this section describes other documents, that may or may not explicitly target gifted students but which have direct or indirect implications for their educational well-being. These documents are designed to strengthen the original legislation governing gifted programs and are typically found as supplemental documents, reports, or best practice guideline manuals. Concluding each state's document review is an overall assessment of documental evidence.

Section III illustrates the relationship between the states policies when compared against the guiding principles of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards. This source of analysis allowed for a common frame of reference to make comparative judgments. The charts within this section represent each program area delineated in the NAGC standards and whether or not the state policy met, did not meet, or met to some degree the criteria stated in each area's guiding principle. Following each chart is an overall summation.

Section IV reports the results of a series of interviews and focus group sessions held in each state in the context of document analysis. This within-state analysis section contains comments by the focus group and interview participants as sources to determine perceptions of stakeholders relative to the actual implementation of the state's policy documents and supplementary documents. The comments are organized around the major sections of (a) definition and identification, (b) service delivery and programs, (c) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (d) teacher preparation and staff development, (e) district program administration and management, (f) aspects of the role of state government, (g) supplemental policies, (h) funding, and (i) assessment of strengths, limitations, and

priorities for improvement, with reference to specific aspects of each state’s document review. At the conclusion of each state analysis, is a chart highlighting the relative strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement as perceived by stakeholder respondents.

Section V describes the findings from the cross-state analysis review. Comparisons are made among three categories of oversight: (a) if the element is present (or not) in the written policy, (b) if it is addressed through regulation or, (c) if it is addressed through guidance/advice. The categories forming the basis of comparison are pulled from both the document review categories as well as collapsing some of the NAGC’s program standard areas. Following each comparative chart is a narrative discussion of the salient issues. At the conclusion of this section is a summary of cross state analyses.

Section VI culminates the report as implications for policy research based on a triangulation of all data sources and the relevant findings from within- and cross-state analyses. The implications are divided into the six categories of (a) identification, (b) program/curriculum/service provisions, (c) personnel preparation, (d) program management, (e) supplemental/related policies, and (f) funding.

Findings

Summary of Document Review Findings

A total of 59 documents or document sections were reviewed and analyzed across five states. All of the states examined had written documents regarding the education of gifted students. In all states, except Indiana, gifted education was mandated and each state had regulations or standards with which local school districts were required to comply. In Indiana, the policy is more permissive allowing local school corporations (e.g. districts) to determine whether or not to identify and serve gifted students with incentive funding available to encourage them to do so. A synthesis of document findings highlighted below is organized in the categories predominantly found in state policy documents.

All states had documents or document sections that addressed the definition of the gifted population and provided standards for the identification and placement of gifted students in programs. Identification was the one area that all states reflected in their mandate or regulations. Four out of the five states studied require that all districts both identify and serve the gifted student population. The fifth state, Indiana, requires identification, but only as a way to encourage school corporations (districts) to apply for funding. The other states had fairly comprehensive parameters in place regarding the identification of gifted students. The central issues that distinguish state programs in regard to identification appear to be the breadth of the definition and whether or not the definition of the population is centrally or locally controlled. Four out of five states require in the state regulatory framework accommodations in assessing special populations of gifted students (e.g. low-income, ESL, disabled, culturally diverse). The language around accommodations for special populations for North Carolina was found in state guidelines (recommended practice only) not in the state regulations.

All of the examined states had sections in their policy documents that addressed the provision of programs and services to identified gifted students. In all states, except Indiana, these service or

program standards were extensions of the mandate or regulations. Additionally, all states spoke to the need to integrate gifted education services with general educational services in some capacity. Linked to service delivery across all states, was language documenting the impact of each state's standards-based reform initiative. All states addressed the issue of core standards and the importance of curriculum differentiation, but this was usually found in guidelines or best practice manuals rather than regulations. Lastly, all five states had documents shaping best practice with regard to service delivery and gifted programming.

Teacher preparation and staff development was a particularly complex area to discern because the regulatory base regarding teacher licensure and advanced certification is often addressed in different sections of the statutes. All states, however, had language in their documents recommending on-going staff development in gifted education, some cases mandatory; others, as a guideline. All states recognized that teachers of the gifted need specialized training and experience but only one state, South Carolina, mandates the completion of a specific number of post-graduate training hours.

Program management refers to relevant aspects of program planning, evaluation, information dissemination, and monitoring that are spelled out through documentary evidence. Four of the states required local districts to produce gifted education plans with varying levels of the role of the state to review, monitor, or approve. These states also specified that the local school boards sanction the gifted program plan. Pennsylvania, which is constructed within the framework of a special education model, requires individualized education plans for all identified gifted students, but districts do not have to develop or submit program plans to the state for review and approval. The connection to student growth and accountability was less pronounced. North Carolina was the only state that made targeted use of the state's assessment as an indicator of program effectiveness.

Supplemental policies are those policies that support the needs of the gifted student but are not typically found in the gifted education regulatory framework or, in some cases, have application to a broader consistency. South Carolina and Indiana had formal policies on Advanced Placement (AP). All states recognized dual enrollment but were inconsistent in their policy approach. South Carolina required uniform weighted grading policies across local districts. North Carolina is the only state to have a state policy that prescribes early admission to kindergarten. Pennsylvania, however, permits this at a local level. Lastly, two states have regulations exempting gifted students from instructional time in lieu of testing out options.

All of the states studied had separate state appropriations specifically for identified gifted students except Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, local districts receive state funding for children with exceptionalities, but gifted students were not delineated as a separate category. Beyond the categorical funding, all of the states provided additional funding to support Governor's Schools or State Academies for gifted students. Two states, Indiana and South Carolina, ensured that districts with small numbers of gifted students would still receive minimum allocations. Virginia was the only state to weight its funding formula with a school wealth factor.

Summary of States Policies to NAGC Program Standards Findings

The National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) in 1998 published a set of PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards. These standards represent a national attempt at unifying the national rhetoric around minimum and exemplary standards to serve as benchmarks across the seven areas of (a) curriculum and instruction, (b) program administration and management, (c) program design, (d) program evaluation, (e) socio-emotional guidance and counseling, (f) professional development, and (g) student identification. Each denoted NAGC area contains a set guiding principles and an accompanying minimum and exemplary standard. While the states studied in this report did not explicitly create documents illustrating the relationship of their gifted education policies to the NAGC standards, it is useful to consider the alignment of the five states' policies within the context of the NAGC guiding principles.

All of the states, except Indiana, met most of the criteria stated in the identification principle. The strongest alignment was within the categories of screening procedures and instruments used for student assessment for identification purposes. The weakest area of alignment was student assessment profiles of strengths and needs to plan intervention for each student. The exemption to this was Pennsylvania.

All of the states met most of the criteria for professional development with North Carolina's policy as the most prescriptive. Only South Carolina addressed in some fashion each of the specific guiding principles. The weakest alignment was the category related to support services for school personnel and educational staff.

Most of the states require local district gifted plans that contain a counseling and guidance component but do not align well with the NAGC guiding principles in the socio-emotional guidance and counseling area. Indiana is the only state that partially aligns with the principle regarding career guidance through a best practice manual.

Program evaluation was overall a weak area of alignment in reviewing state policies. While most states require local plans, the quality of program evaluation is not prescribed or specified. Virginia and North Carolina were the only states that indicated a clear purpose for the evaluation components of the local districts plans.

Strengths in program design were seen with the alignment of state policies in articulating a continuum of services and mandating programming for gifted students as well as establishing a strong rationale for the structure of the gifted program. Weaker alignments were seen between state policy and categories that addressed integration of gifted education within the general educational program.

Areas in state policies aligning with NAGC's guiding principles for Administration and Management emphasized capacity-building through the establishment of state and local advocacy committees or groups. Additionally, all states required fiscal appropriations and subsequently, resources and materials are provided to support the efforts of gifted education programming.

In the area of curriculum and instruction, all states articulated differentiated curriculum across the preK-12 grade span and the modification of regular classroom curricula and instruction, although modifications vary between the states from prescriptive to permissive with regard to a differentiated educational program for gifted students. The weakest area of alignment dealt with flexible instructional pacing. All states omit pre-K in their programming and South Carolina omits Kindergarten.

Summary of Within-State Analysis Findings

Responses from qualitative sources were used as perceptual data in the context of document analysis. Themes that emerged across within-state analyses were the following, (a) state leadership, (b) state-testing emphasis, (c) teacher preparation, (d) monitoring local plan implementation, and (e) shoring up alignment between identification and services.

All sources cited the need for strong state leadership in order for collaborative efforts to occur between state initiatives and local practice. Additionally, participants felt that a state leader allowed for communication and advocacy to occur on behalf of gifted education. Lastly, sources cited that a state leader was necessary if gifted is to “be at the table” influencing state curricular, professional development and even assessment decisions. State department leadership was seen as crucial in policy development and local leadership was needed for coherence of policy implementation.

Sources across all states expressed varying degrees of concern over state assessment driving classroom instruction and the implications for educating gifted learners. Sources felt that state testing creates tensions for teachers and administrators around meeting the needs of gifted students. In addition, stakeholders perceived that some of the unintended consequences of a given state’s emphasis on testing were the impacts it was having on professional development efforts, funding, and student course taking.

Promoting teacher preparation and professional development opportunities were perceived by all sources as a strength that was occurring across all states, albeit inconsistently, through encouraging teachers to attend conferences, workshops, enroll in endorsement courses or graduate programs, and be more responsive to gifted students in their classrooms. Some concern was expressed about the absence at the state level for enforcing a minimum level of training for teachers that work with gifted learners. South Carolina was the exception due to its regulation requiring teachers to obtain six hours of graduate coursework. But, sources in South Carolina felt that while the requirement was a positive, it was just a minimum and more work was needed in this area.

Most of the states require (or encourage) local districts to develop written plans for local gifted programs. While sources cited this as a strength, the monitoring, compliance, or evaluation of local program implementation was perceived as a limitation across all states. Gifted program plan implementation depends largely on local context, and the teachers and administrators charged with overseeing implementation efforts. Comments focused around the need for local flexibility in concert with state accountability.

Linking identification procedures to appropriate program and service provisions was cited as a concern by all sources. While all states focused a great deal of attention towards identification

efforts and employing a wide array of testing protocol, less attention was paid to issues aligning program emphases with identification practices. Most of the states articulated major dimensions of program delivery, but unevenness was evident across states. Issues of grouping, at-risk learners, curriculum acceleration and articulation needed to be more explicitly addressed in program standards.

Summary of Cross-State Analysis Findings

These cross-state findings are drawn from the document reviews of the five states, the NAGC standards, interviews, and focus group sessions of the five states selected for the study. Although it is inappropriate to make generalizations beyond the sample, some synthesis across states has been done to help shape other states' policy development work. The following summary areas are offered for consideration:

- 1) The different states studied reflected different models for the distribution of power between state and local governance. Four of the five states in the sample required that all districts both identify and serve the gifted student population. However, the definition of the population, the specification of parameters for identification, and the nature of the approach (special education or general education orientation or combination of both) varied. These distinctions often reflected at what level the control of the relevant decision was vested. It would seem imperative that the politics of this issue be addressed up-front and that a rationale be included that justifies the approach that is taken in the context of the larger educational policy landscape of the state. In other words, it would be useful to make this decision explicit rather than implicit in the policy development process. Two states in the analysis successfully employed cutoff score control on specific instrumentation types while others provided guidelines for identification. States that were more stringent in their identification mechanism appeared also to exert greater pressure on other policy levers to control quality.
- 2) Attention to identification issues received the greatest emphasis in all state regulations, due in part to the process link to funding and in part to continuing emphasis in the field of gifted education. With the exception of Indiana, identification parameters across states were fairly tight. The attention that has been focused on identification since the release of the Marland Report (1972) and the *National Excellence Report* (1993) has clearly helped the field to narrow the definition of gifted, yet acknowledge and try to respond to concerns regarding diversity and under-representation of key groups. However, states do not uniformly track or report the numbers of gifted students identified and served by demographics. Virginia and South Carolina were examples of states that were able to do this.
- 3) Less prominent in state regulation, however, was an emphasis on appropriate programs and services to gifted students. Standards regarding service provision shared many of the same foci but were not addressed in the same manner or even the same sequence across states. Although many important dimensions of service delivery were addressed, no clear template emerged to guide the articulation of a model service delivery policy. Also, the decision as to what belonged in regulation versus guideline/best practice seemed particularly haphazard. It is hoped that some of the elements identified in this analysis will underscore the need for

more comprehensive and conceptually clearer program/service policy. Issues of grouping, contact time, content-based instruction, specialized programming for highly gifted and at-risk learners, and comprehensive articulation of services all need to be explicitly addressed in program standards.

- 4) The parameters outlined in policy documents on teacher preparation and staff development seemed underdeveloped and lacking in connectivity to issues of service delivery. Teacher preparation in the form of endorsement or certification was present in the language of all five states, but lacked specificity in respect to standards of preparation in line with NCATE and involvement with a state's higher education community as players in this area of policy development and implementation. Preservice regulations cited in Virginia and Indiana currently suffer from lack of enforcement. Moreover, there was no policy language that linked staff development to improved teacher performance (although it is possible that Pennsylvania's strategy did address this issue in some way). Neither was there much recognition that regular classroom teachers need far more sophistication in differentiating curriculum for high ability learners in light of the relatively new curriculum standards. This may be indicative of a dilemma that the field of gifted education is facing. Should we continue to expect regular teachers to differentiate effectively; and if so, what are the implications for staff development policy? Or conversely, should we recognize that effective service delivery for this group of students requires different organizational models staffed by trained experts? If so, why are we perpetuating the myth that differentiation in the general education classroom is a viable option?
- 5) The technical assistance and monitoring role of state governments in gifted education needs more attention. The state personnel are the only individuals whose perspective, by necessity, looks across the sweep of programs, so they are well positioned to suggest policy and program improvements. While most state governments accorded responsibility for the review of program plans, the on-site monitoring expectations were not in evidence. Annual accountability for gifted student learning was not addressed either. This seems to be a crucial link in providing visionary leadership. Even if the model recommended is one that supports district self-governance, there still needs to be increased accountability for program quality as well as quantity through the mechanism of annual local plan review internally by an LEA advisory committee and Board of Education. Similarly, in order for the state to deliver technical assistance, resources need to be accorded to support such efforts. It was interesting that the state with the largest technical assistance role and budget was also the state with virtually "no teeth" in its monitoring capacity.
- 6) Consideration should be given to systematically identifying supplemental policies that complement the interests of the gifted education community. States should incorporate references to these prescribed policies in the gifted education mandate or regulatory base where they exist. Where they do not exist, educators of the gifted should create a political platform that addresses the void. Even if states have delegated the responsibilities for such policy development to local districts, there needs to be a repository of information on what local decisions are made, as these choices significantly impact program development within the field. Specific policies regarding acceleration, weighted grades, Advanced Placement, testing out of standards, and dual enrollment are all areas highly relevant to gifted

education. State policies are needed in each of these areas to complement existing gifted education policy so as to maximize benefits to gifted students. Creating linkages through the leadership role assignments in the state department may also facilitate this.

- 7) In the sample, the absence of state legislation that mandates identification and services across all districts (Indiana) corresponded to a limited investment of state revenues in this population of learners. Correspondingly, the states with a tighter focus on the intellectually and academically gifted student appeared to have greater state revenues targeted to the need. This, however, was not a linear relationship. Unfortunately, the state with the narrowest definition of the population identified was not able to show the amount of money that was specifically invested in gifted education. Nevertheless, in an era of educational accountability, the link between resources and results should be strengthened rather than loosened. Several funding structures seemed to be progressive. All five states allocated special monies for Governor's Schools or state-wide academies, summer and academic year lighthouses for servicing gifted students and showcasing best practices. Four out of five states tied program funding to identified students, a mechanism that safeguards the optimal match of service to identification mechanisms. Two states invested targeted monies in state leadership activities, an essential aspect of ensuring policy implementation. Only one state funded teacher preparation overtly, another wise expenditure in keeping this policy thrust dynamic. It was unclear how small and poor districts were treated in the allocation of funding. Two states set minimum levels for district funding and one state used a weighted formula for poor districts. Ohio may want to consider the implications of small allocations that may be insufficient to launch viable programs and how fiscal policy creates this untenable situation.
- 8) The opportunity for integrating systemic educational reform ideas and gifted education has not yet been fully realized. Only one state, North Carolina, presented data that tracked the performance of identified gifted students on state assessment measures over time. Although state assessment testing practices are still struggling with the measurement of complex learning behaviors and there is unevenness across states in terms of the level of challenge embedded in curriculum standards, North Carolina's attention to the value of monitoring these data is quite exemplary. South Carolina's efforts to evaluate its identification policy also employs an analysis of state assessment data over a two year period. As a field, we need to take more assertive steps in documenting and studying the relationships among standards, assessments, and the instructional pathways affecting such learning for gifted students. Such data may ultimately be valuable in supporting arguments for increased revenues.
- 9) One of the most revealing aspects of the analysis was the dearth of documented evidence of the evaluation of policy effectiveness. Only two states appeared to have any documentation that spoke to this issue at all. In the case of South Carolina, a recent change in its identification system is being formally evaluated to determine what its impact has been on the types of students selected and the nature of services provided. This report was not available for review but is expected to be completed soon. In the case of North Carolina, a report that examined the involvement of minorities and low-income students in advanced learning opportunities was shared. One of the findings in this report addressed the changes

in gifted program composition in response to concerns for greater equity. However, it was not clear how these policies were going to continue to be monitored in light of these concerns. States that undertake major policy change should be responsible for examining the impact of such change on the field.

- 10) The issue of state leadership mechanisms is an important one that emerges from the data across these five states. Not only is state department leadership crucial in policy development and implementation, so too is local leadership in the form of a cohesive gifted program coordinator's group and a state advisory council, capable of supporting change. Only in South Carolina were all "three legs of the stool" working as complementary levers for the dynamics of policy enactment to be visible and viable. There has been deep involvement of the professional gifted education community in South Carolina, including local districts and university personnel in the development of the regulations and the Best Practices Manual, so there is much buy-in for the system used. The phase-in of different aspects of the regulations and the collaborative leadership provided by the state department of education and a cadre of gifted program coordinators have facilitated local district accomplishment of the fairly rigid requirements of the regulations. Many of the typical problems associated with a centralized initiative and an agenda of significant program change have been avoided, and many of the perceived difficulties with the new regulations have been resolved. Program development in states will remain stagnant unless attention to sufficient leadership resources is forthcoming. A program of this complexity requires full-time personnel for optimal management at all levels – state, regional, and local. Where size of district limits this reality, then rural cooperatives should be formed to address common program development needs.
- 11) The cross-state analyses also revealed scant attention to consistency in state program regulations for addressing major standards in the field of gifted education as articulated in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards document that was also analyzed for this study. While curriculum and instructional differentiation applications were specifically addressed in three out of the five states with accompanying "best practices" manuals, no explicit language in this area was provided in the other two states. A scope and sequence of curriculum offerings was required in only one state, although "comprehensive articulation of program" language was found in all five. Without scope and sequence of curriculum, such articulation lacks meaning. Academic planning and counseling appeared in only one state regulation, even though it is a prominent set of NAGC standards. Grouping and acceleration suffered a similar fate, being articulated in only one state regulation, even though each is a central facet of gifted program design as articulated in the NAGC standards. To be fair, these standards are relatively recent, having been adopted in 1999 by the organization. However, state policies need to be reflective of research-based emphases in a field, and to date, none of the states reviewed had plans for changing their policies in the next year.

Implications for Policy Research

Based on a triangulation of the data sources used in this study and the relevant findings from within- and cross-state analyses, the following implications are proffered as important for Ohio (and other states) to consider in reviewing their current state policy in gifted education and subsequently, creating a set of recommendations and course of action. The implications are divided into six categories: identification, program/curriculum/service provisions, personnel preparation, program management, supplemental/related policies, and funding.

Identification

Identification remains to be the category where the states in this study exert more state control through the degree to which they define and prescribe criteria attached to gifted students. The primary impetus behind stronger state control, is in large part, due to the funding mechanisms that are tied to personnel unit based on identified students. Yet, the control is uneven in its rigor and intended purposes. While many states have clear quantitative cutoffs for advanced cognitive and academic areas, both creativity and the visual and performing arts are typically less stringent in respect to student threshold of functioning and the technical adequacy of the tools approved for use. For these identification areas, states deferred to local control over the qualifications and screening devices employed. Moreover, the degree to which a match was made between area(s) identified and services or programs provided was unclear and typically not articulated. Thus, the implications for policy research for identification involves (a) providing equal stringency in identification for all categories, (b) clearly specifying that identification may occur in all categories, (c) prioritizing cognitive and academic areas, and (d) linking identification procedures to appropriate program/curriculum/service provisions.

Program/Curriculum/Service Provisions

Because most states' current regulations focus on identification tied to personnel unit funding, actual delivery of appropriate services to students receives less attention. While a written educational plan for each student provides a process for constructing an appropriate intervention, the plan itself does not guarantee it in the language of the regulation. Programs for the gifted must provide an optimal match to the identification mechanisms used to identify students. Thus a careful delineation of program components must be included in state regulation.

The implication in this area is for states to consider crafting specific regulations for what constitutes an appropriate program for the gifted, with special attention to counseling and guidance services as well as differentiated curriculum. The following components would need to be addressed in regulations:

- (a) The grouping arrangements would be conducive to administering gifted programs, including cluster, resource room, pull-out, or self-contained.
- (b) The contact time for programs would constitute no less than 150 minutes per week.
- (c) The curriculum would be differentiated in each relevant subject area for identified students according to the need for acceleration, complexity, depth, challenge, and creativity. Such

curriculum differentiation would also require the use of alternative materials designed for gifted students.

- (d) The instruction employed in classrooms for the gifted would be appropriate in respect to its diversity of technique and its emphasis on the higher level skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and research skills.
- (e) The assessment employed for gifted programs would be matched to the demands of the specific curriculum objectives and employ performance-based tasks and portfolio approaches that adequately capture appropriate level achievement for these students.
- (f) The program would be modified and extended (i.e. value-added) as needed for accommodating at-risk and highly gifted populations identified.
- (g) Academic guidance and career counseling would be available provisions at Grades 6-12, emphasizing the need for advanced course-taking early and the use of assessment data to counsel students on career alternatives.
- (h) A local advisory council would provide oversight to the local service delivery plan, which should receive local Board of Education approval.

Personnel Preparation

The need for well-qualified personnel is spelled out in most states regulations where the language strongly suggests (but not necessarily requires) endorsement or certification of teachers to teach gifted students. Additionally, all states studied had put into place extensive staff development opportunities vis a vis summer institutes, in-service days, underwriting conferences, and through providing technical assistance. This thrust of providing multiple venues and opportunities for staff development implies a tacit recognition on the states' part of the need in this area for personnel preparation. The implications for personnel preparation would be for states to have a provision, in regulation, which addresses this issue in relationship to appropriate program delivery of services. The personnel preparation initiative should contain these components:

- (a) A minimum of 12 hours of coursework linked to university-based programs is an essential connection, with a state-wide university network collaborative working on implementation. The 12-hour course requirements should be linked to current NCATE standards for gifted education programs, initiated by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) under special education provisions.
- (b) It is also important to include annual staff development opportunities for targeted staff and to acknowledge the criticality of all teachers' receiving some education in working with gifted students in this section of regulation.
- (c) The inclusion already of an emphasis on program leadership requirements is admirable and appropriate.

Program Management

The implications for program management emerge from concerns about ensuring that appropriate program delivery mechanisms are in place. State leadership must exert quality control over programs at the local level. This may be accomplished through a three-pronged approach:

- (a) An annual department review of Local Education Agency (LEA) plans may be instituted, mobilizing local coordinators to carry out the task at a specially designated 2-3 day session. An outline of major state plan components should be specified by regulation, including (1) program provisions employed at each level K-12, (2) goals, student outcomes, and student assessment process for each specified program model, (3) contact time for each model, (4) pupil-teacher ratios for each, (5) a professional development plan, (6) counseling and guidance plan, and (7) a program evaluation design.
- (b) A State Education Agency (SEA) monitoring plan may be developed to ensure local compliance with program implementation. On-site visits to local school divisions should be undertaken annually, with all districts visited within five years.
- (c) A system of SEA review of LEA evaluation of programs may be developed, requiring annual assessment and evaluation as a part of the documented plan submitted each year, tied to funding.

Supplemental/Related Policies

Since all states now have relatively new standards of learning in place for all students, there is a need to ensure that the differentiation features of curriculum, instruction, and assessment are appropriately connected to these quality standards of learning for all. Specific implications in this regard are as follows:

- (a) States need to consider the alignment of gifted education curriculum to state standards of learning so that districts can see how gifted education extends yet goes through the standards. Moreover, the alignment process needs to acknowledge the option for the accelerated rate of gifted learners' testing out of the standards early.
- (b) The state department needs to review annually state-wide proficiency data to ensure that gifted students are reaching proficiency levels desired (i.e., proficient or advanced) in each academic area relevant to their identification.
- (c) The state department needs to monitor participation of gifted students in the hallmark secondary programs of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment, ensuring that all gifted students in the state are participating in at least one of these options. Where state policies already exist to promote these programs, gifted regulations should be linked to them; where state policy does not address these programs, gifted regulation should.
- (d) The state department needs to craft an acceleration policy that allows for flexibility in gifted student learning, such that:
 - Students may enter kindergarten early, based on meeting the identification guidelines for general intellectual ability.
 - Students may advance more than one grade based on the same criteria.
 - Students may be advanced in one subject area and accommodated flexibly by advanced curricular placement.
 - Students may enter middle school, high school, or college early as determined by overall performance and demonstrated readiness.

Funding

Based on a review of funding structures in the states in this study, it seems that great variance exists in how programs are funded. Since the critical unit of analysis is the teacher in current regulation, tying evidence of appropriate program delivery to the allocation of funds for personnel would appear prudent. Funding allocations for professional development and certification along with identification allocations should clearly stay in place. Some consideration should be given to a weighting formula, however, for small and poor districts.

Evaluation of Policies

Based on a careful review of all states, an evaluation of any new regulation policies enacted after three years of implementation is warranted. The most successful state studied in respect to interrelated policies was South Carolina, where such evaluation has been somewhat institutionalized. A study of how well the mechanisms of identification, program, personnel preparation, program management, supplemental policies, and funding structure are working together to benefit a given state's gifted children would be important to undertake. This process would allow for a feedback loop of how well the intent of a given state's policies and regulations are being operationalized and the degree to which current practices reflect policy goals and directives.

Section I: Selection of Sample Sites

Specific criteria for states to be included in the study were determined based upon a conference call with the grantor and grantee, with consideration of those state factors that fundamentally provide support structures for effective policy implementation.

The following brief descriptions identify the criteria used for comparison among states (see Table I). Ohio is listed in the matrix only as a basis for selection comparison.

Integrated Database

An integrated database refers to accessible information on state web sites including student scores on standardized tests, free and reduced lunch percentages, information on AP/IB programs and dual enrollment, information on gifted programs, and limited information on funding (e.g., PA, IL). The database enables the researcher to access some of the outcome impact data on students for comparison.

Full-Time State Director

This criterion refers to whether or not the selected state has an individual designated as the state director for gifted education and who devotes a substantial amount of his/her time to gifted education.

Gifted Mandate

A mandate requires the identification of or services for gifted students in a given state. Partial or permissive means only one part of gifted education is mandated (identification or services).

Identification Mandate

The state requires identification of gifted students.

State Funding

This criterion refers to the funds earmarked for gifted education. Categories include formula only (usually state or federal [IDEA] money), formula plus other funding (usually state or local funding), funding with no formula, and no funding from state or federal monies (e.g., PA). For purposes of this analysis, a threshold of \$5 million dollars was used in determination of selection.

Governance Structure

This criterion refers to the primary governance structure (local, state, or federal) for decision-making around gifted education. Categories include federal/state control if under IDEA; state control if the local plan for gifted education needs approval or consent or is monitored by state;

local control if the local gifted plan for gifted education is not monitored or does not need approval of state.

Type of teacher preparation credential

Teachers are required by state law to have a license if teaching gifted students. An endorsement is suggested but not required by state law. In most cases, an endorsement is an add-on to an individual's teaching license.

ADA

Total daily attendance of students (total student population) enrolled in K-12 schools in the state.

% Free and Reduced Lunch

Formula used by the federal government in order to provide additional monies to designated school districts. Percent in the matrix reflects the total percent of students (from the ADA) enrolled in free and/or reduced lunch program.

Peer States

This criterion refers to those states who would be viewed as peer states to Ohio, based on geography and demographic profiles.

***Based on these criteria, the states selected for the study were as follows:
Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.***

Table I: Criteria Used for Selection of States

Criteria/ State	Peer States	Integrated database	Full-time State Director	Gifted Ed Mandate	ID Mandate	State Funding (in millions) flat rate or by formula	Governance Structure	Type of teacher preparation credential	ADA	% Free and Reduced Lunch
Ohio		Yes	Yes	Partial	Yes	\$48	local	endorsement	1.8m	27%
Florida	No	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	Formula	Federal/state (IDEA)	endorsement	2.4m	44.3%
Illinois	Yes	Yes	No	Full	Yes	\$19.6	local	No	1.9m	42.7%
** Indiana	Yes	Yes	Yes	Permissive	Permissive	\$4.8	local	endorsement	1m	28.8%
Michigan	Yes	Yes	No	None	Permissive	\$5 (Formula)	local	endorsement	1.7m	28.9%
** North Carolina	No	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	\$49 (Formula)	local	endorsement	1.3m	36.4%
** Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	None	local	No	1.8m	28.1%
**South Carolina	No	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	\$28.7 (Formula)	local	endorsement	700,000	47.3%
Texas	No	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	\$62.5 (Formula)	Federal/state (IDEA)	endorsement	4m	44.9%
** Virginia	No	Yes	Yes	Full	Yes	\$34 (Formula)	Local /state consent	endorsement	1.1m	28%

* Legislation allowing dual enrollment and paying AP fees for low SES students but no direct GT legislation

** Five preferred states for analysis based upon criteria

Section II: Document Review

Indiana Document Review

Introduction

Over 12 documents, or document sections, were examined for the document review for the state of Indiana. These documents were selected in consultation with Cheryl Boyer-Schrock, the state program manager, two regional gifted consultants from the state's education service centers, Jan Sherwood-Flores and Valerie Buchanan, and Judy Miller of the Indiana Professional Standards Board.

The legislative framework for gifted education in Indiana is permissive rather than mandatory. In 1999 a bill was introduced to provide a mandate for services but was defeated in the Senate by 8 votes. A bill prepared in 2000 was never introduced. Currently 286 of the 294 districts in the state have applied and been approved for gifted funding. The state also supports nine regional technical assistance centers and three lending libraries that have full-time staff assigned to gifted education.

In the 2001-2002 school year, districts reported serving 91,380 gifted students. Although this represented 10% of the statewide school population, the ranges of the percentages served varied from 1-100% at the district level. The per pupil allocation was about \$64.00. Only 56 of these districts reported program services in both language arts and math (K-12). The state also has an Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities, but this is not funded through the Department of Education (DOE).

The Indiana Code (IC) contains the laws governing education in that state. IC 20-10.1-5.1 is the section of the Code entitled **Educational Programs for High Ability Students**. The regulations for interpreting this rule on gifted education are found in the Indiana Administrative Code (IAC), and the specific citation is Title 511 IAC 6-9-1 through 9-3. Licensing regulations are found in Title 515 of the IAC. Both the rules and the regulations carry the force of law.

Public Law 221, passed in 1999, is the educational reform platform for the state. It is often referred to ASAP which stands for Accountability System for Academic Progress. The reform initiative has components dealing with academic standards, accountability and assessment, accreditation, professional development, data, and school improvement. The Princeton Review ranked the Indiana accountability system as 27th in the nation; the state has been approved for the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* funding.

Indiana uses the term "corporation" rather than district.

I. Organizational Structure

Responsibility for administration of the state's incentive program for serving gifted students was recently moved into the Division for Exceptional Learners, but the legislation is structured around providing a template for local program plans, rather than Individual Education Plans for students.

The state does have a full-time program manager and an education consultant and administrative assistant whose duties are split between gifted and special education.

II. IC 20-10.1-5.1 **Educational Programs for High Ability Students**

This 1.5 page document is the actual statute governing the gifted education program in the state of Indiana. It was last revised in 1999. The rule has four sections; sections 1 and 2 address the parameters of the population. Section 2 defines the “high ability student” as one who “(1) performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment and (2) is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.” Section 1 explains the acceptable domains to which this definition can apply. The six domains are general intellectual, general creative, specific academic, technical and practical arts, visual and performing arts, and interpersonal. Section 3 is the heart of the policy and is written to clarify the role of the state. It requires that the Department of Education “establish a state resources program using *existing state resources* that supports school corporations in the development of programs, enables educational opportunities” that maximize development, and “provides state integrated services that include information and materials centers, professional development plan and programs, research and development services, and technical assistance” on student and program assessment and program development and implementation. (This is carried out by a network of education service centers, materials/resource centers, and institutions of higher learning.) Section 4 of the rule speaks to what the corporations may do under the approval of a governing body. Their first role, should they choose to participate, is to develop and periodically update a local plan for high ability students. Parameters for this plan include establishing a broad-based planning committee that meets periodically and reviews the plan. The plan must also include the following components: student assessment, professional development, program development and implementation, and evaluation. Their second role is “to provide a local program for high ability students” in accordance with the plan developed by the state.

III. 511 IAC 6-9.1-1 through 1-3 **Regulations for High Ability Students**

The regulations are divided into 3 sections and are 3.5 pages in length. Section 1 of the regulations provides definitions for the following terms: Broad-based planning committee, differentiated, domain, general creative, general intellectual, governing body, high ability student, interpersonal, multi-faceted assessment, program, level of services program, specific academic, technical and practical arts, and visual and performing arts. The definitions for domain and high ability student repeat the exact language of the rule itself. Section 2 of the regulations delineates the criteria with which corporations must comply in order to qualify as a program for high ability learners. It restates elements already in the rule and adds some additional clarification. Such clarifications include that the student assessment plan must be multifaceted with performance-based, potential-based, and alternative assessment dimensions; and that specific plans for curriculum and instructional strategies, counseling and guidance, program assessment, and professional development must be included in the corporation’s plan. Additional expectations indicate that (a) services outside the school day may supplement, but not supplant the levels of services provided; (b) the planning committee established by the governing body should be charged with the design and monitoring of the “continuous development and implementation of the levels of service”; (c)

the governing body must approve the program; and (d) the plan must be available for public inspection and filed with the DOE. The third section of the regulations deals with waivers. These include (a) permission to exempt gifted and talented students from instructional time in lieu of performance assessments; (b) to allow corporations reimbursement for certain costs of instruction in summer school programs; and (c) to allow corporations to use non-certified adults to deliver non-standard programs such as mentorships, internships, or clinical experiences.

IV. Licensing Documents

Title 515.1 of the Indiana Administrative Code addresses the current licensing requirements for teachers and is administered by the Professional Standards Board of state government. Indiana does not have a requirement that addresses coursework in gifted education for initial teacher licensure, but there is an expectation regarding knowledge/understanding of exceptionalities. The state Professional Standards Board representative, Judy Miller, reported that most teacher preparation programs are addressing this requirement in their undergraduate practicum experiences. At the post-graduate level, the administrator for the tuition reimbursement funding reported that most university programs required completion of 15-16 credit hours for a standard instructional license and 18 credit hours for a professional license. However, the state is replacing its old “add-on endorsement” with a new license in gifted and talented. This change was passed in 2001, but implementation is being phased in through 2006. In fact, the new regulations (Title 515.8) are just now being promulgated, and full compliance is not expected until 2006. The new licensure is tied to the national standards set by the Council for Exceptional Children and is performance-based.

Under the old system, the coursework requirements involved the psychology and education of the gifted child; identification and selection strategies; program and curriculum development, management, and evaluation; instructional materials, methods, and processes; and the practicum. Funding was and is provided to an education service center to support tuition reimbursement to teachers who take endorsement coursework. Support at \$150 per course is available, and teachers who achieve endorsement in gifted are given a \$300 dollar pay-off at the end of the process. Twenty thousand dollars a year has been allocated to fund this initiative, and all teachers who have sought financial assistance have received it. Sometimes monies from other sources that are not spent are used to supplement this pot of \$20,000.

The new approach being phased in uses performance-based standards. The state recognizes and adopts the standards that have been promulgated by national professional organizations; in the case of gifted education, the relevant organization is the Council for Exceptional Children. The 10 standards for gifted education include Foundations, Development and Characteristics of Learners, Individual Learning Differences, Instructional Strategies, Learning Environments, Language, Instructional Planning, Assessment, Professional and Ethical Practice, and Collaboration. Each of these standards is broken down by knowledge and skill areas. The intent is to move toward a competency-based model in keeping with the educational reform agenda.

V. **Senate Enrolled Act 292 High Ability Students and Student Tracking** (Recent Legislation)

This legislation, signed into law effective March, 2002, had three elements related to gifted education. The first was to add high ability education representation to the Education Roundtable. The Education Roundtable is a formalized advisory body composed of a bipartisan group of legislators, educators, and business people, co-chaired by the Governor and the State Superintendent. A major focus of the Roundtable has been policy development in relation to the implementation of the state's reform agenda. This amendment to the legislation will ensure representation from the high-ability learner education field. The second section had language allowing for the provision of grants for the high ability population, and the third section required that a corporation's strategic plan address the needs of exceptional learners and that it review its plan to investigate the potential for systemic bias on the basis of race, color, creed, etc.

VI. **Correlation between NAGC Program Standards and Indiana Administrative Rule 511**

This short document, available on the internet through the DOE website, takes each generic NAGC program standard and cites the sections of the regulations and the pages of the 2001-2002 grant application that correspond to it. An easy example to describe what has been done uses the standard on Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling. The generic NAGC standard reads: Gifted Education programming must establish a plan to recognize and nurture the unique socio-emotional development of gifted learners. Two parts of the regulations are cited: (a) the definition of "interpersonal" and (b) the part that call for differentiated programming including "a counseling and guidance plan." Neither the specific guiding principles under each NAGC standard nor the benchmarks for compliance appear to be systematically addressed. However, this document shows that Indiana is concerned with alignment with national standards in the field.

VII. **Making Connections** (Article in *Images* by Susan Brady and Cheryl Boyer-Schrock)

This two-page article, also on the DOE website, addresses the issue of school accountability that is the focus of the school reform legislation in Indiana, Public Law 221. It presents a chart that cites the major components of Public Law 221 and showcases the elements that are appropriate for gifted learners. It shows how the reform legislation can positively impact the gifted and talented child when a systemic approach to school reform is undertaken. It illuminates for gifted educators the value of supporting the larger school reform.

VIII. **Funding**

An annual state appropriation is made to the Indiana Department of Education and then distributed to support the state unit itself, grants to the Integrated Services Team (including the regional education service centers, materials/resource centers, Indiana Association for the Gifted, and institutions of higher learning), and, through an application process, local corporation programs. Indiana's current appropriation to support gifted education is \$5.8 million, representing a 15% cut from the previous fiscal year. Of this amount \$4.8 million goes to corporations based on a funding formula. The formula ensures a floor of \$10,000 to each corporation. The formula for calculating what a corporation will receive above the first \$10,000 is based on dividing the residual portion of

the appropriation (\$4.8 million) by the number of approved school corporations, then apportioning it by corporation size (the total corporation population). Grants have typically ranged from \$14,300 to \$87,500, but more recently were reduced in size due to funding cuts. This has also reduced the per pupil average from \$64.00 to \$53.00.

IX. Taking the Lid Off: Providing Educational Opportunities for High Ability Students in Indiana (A Report of the IAG submitted to the Indiana General Assembly Legislative Study Committee on High Ability Education on Sept. 5, 2000)

This 40+ page report was prepared by the Indiana Association for the Gifted and presented through testimony to the Legislative Study Committee on Education Issues. The report advocates strengthening the legislation for gifted and talented learners in the state. Problems that are cited with the current Indiana mandate include the failure of the code to (a) state which domains of giftedness must be addressed; (b) address continuity and articulation issues; (c) specify early intervention, and (d) require differentiation in the core curriculum. Also cited is the concern with the absence of an accountability system to monitor program compliance. Pages 35-36 of the report also cite what Indiana is doing to support gifted education. Among the accolades noted are (a) strengthening curriculum standards, (b) providing support for AP and paying for students to take AP and PSAT exams, (c) offering the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities, and (d) and providing a state appropriation for important state and local services in gifted education.

X. Supplemental Policy Documents

At this time, no formal supplemental policy documents have been examined. The program manager is checking to see if she can find some policies on AP and dual enrollment. However, one of the written goals of the gifted program for the 2001-2003 biennium was to increase the number of students passing the Advanced Placement course exams, and the state has solicited federal funding to improve AP access to students in rural and low-income areas. This evidence does show a concern with increasing access to and quality of performance in regard to Advanced Placement options for students. The state does not have an early admissions policy.

XI. Documents under Development but not ready for review

One of the regional education service centers has contracted with Dr. Don Treffinger of the Center for Creative Learning to work directly with nine pilot sites in developing their levels of service program plans and creating a handbook of relevant readings for educators of the gifted, including six major topics:

1. History, Philosophy, and Definitions
2. Programming, Curriculum, and Instructional Strategies
3. Counseling, Guidance, and Interpersonal Relations
4. Multi-faceted Student Assessment
5. Systematic Program Assessment
6. Professional and Community Development

Two other regional education service centers have been charged with developing materials on program evaluation to help local corporations throughout the state. Additional documents being created by other members of the Integrated Services Team are a guide for identification of high ability students and an Advanced Placement manual.

Dr. Cheryl Adams from the Center for Gifted Studies & Talent Development at Ball State University has chaired the High Ability Identification Project through a grant from the Indiana DOE to establish a standard, operational definition of giftedness to use throughout the state. The committee has broad representation, including officers from the Indiana Association for the Gifted, Coordinators from Shared Information Services – Purdue Center, ISTAR (Indiana Standardized Tool for Alternate Reporting), local school corporations, education service centers, and the Division of Exceptional Learners. The committee will produce an easy-to-use “flip chart” for coordinators establishing and reviewing their identification procedures. It is currently in the editing and review stage of development.

Mary Tryon, coordinator of Shared Information Services – Purdue Center has created a manual for high school students and guidance counselors entitled *The Advanced Placement Program and Indiana Institutions of Higher Learning*. The purpose of the manual is to provide high school students with information about the College Board Advanced Placement courses and the policies of each Indiana college and university regarding the award of course credit. It is currently in the final editing stage with an expected publication date of July, 2003.

XII. Systemic Educational Reform: Accountability System for Academic Progress

Public Law 221, passed in 1999, is the law governing educational accountability in Indiana and is called the Accountability System for Academic Progress (ASAP). This reform initiative has components dealing with academic standards, accountability and assessment, accreditation, professional development, data, and school improvement. During the 2002 session, the Indiana General Assembly passed Senate Enrolled Act 292, which specifically addressed the learning needs of gifted and talented students. A specific provision of this law requires that school improvement plans, required under Public Law 221, must address the learning needs of all students, including programs and services for exceptional learners. This amendment to P.L. 221 ensured that the special needs of high ability students were included under the provisions of the state’s reform platform.

Overall Assessment of Documentary Evidence

Of the five states examined, Indiana’s policy on gifted and talented education is the only permissive policy and as such gives the most local control to school corporations. The state provides an annual appropriation to encourage school corporations to identify and serve this class of exceptional learner. As a result, 97% of corporations in the state offer some level of programming. The role of the state is to support the development of local services by providing information/materials, technical assistance, research and development activities, and professional development. The state also has the authority to establish the requirements that local plans must meet if funding is to be awarded. These requirements tend to be process-oriented or descriptive and are not intended to step on the toes of the local corporation governing boards. The focus has clearly

been on helpfulness, not on monitoring, although the recent emphasis on accountability may be shifting the tide in the state.

In addition to the leadership provided at the state office, a regional infrastructure supports local program development. These regional centers and lending libraries have additional full-time staff devoted to gifted education. Indiana also has a residential academic-year Academy for Science, Mathematics, & Humanities that serves 300 11th and 12th grade students annually, but it is funded through a line item in the Ball State University budget and does not come through the DOE appropriation.

Gifted education is housed in the DOE's Division of Exceptional Learners, but the mandate itself is built around a program model approach rather than an individual learner model, which is the more typical special education model used across the country. In other words, local corporations are not required to do IEPs for students, but must submit a program plan to the DOE to secure state funding for services.

In addition to the permissive nature of the mandate itself, the type of gifted learner served is also left to the corporation's discretion. There is no current priority on the intellectually or academically gifted student, nor is there a limit on the numbers of gifted students who may be identified at the corporation level. As a result, one corporation claims that 100% of its students are gifted, and fewer than 20% of corporations appear to offer services in both language arts and mathematics. The breadth of the definitional sweep across the six acceptable domains of general intellectual, general creative, specific academic, technical and practical arts, visual and performing arts, and interpersonal permits tremendous latitude in the design of services and programs and may well dilute the impact of the dollars.

Not much evidence of deep programming for gifted students at the local level was reported. Data collected by the state showed that few corporations (< 20%) offered programs in both content areas of math and language arts; the annual reports that describe the range and nature of programs offered vary in specificity. Local corporation plans must include specific plans for curriculum and instructional strategies, counseling and guidance, program assessment, and professional development, but the quality of these plans is not clearly documented at this time. Program effectiveness is not monitored at the state level.

The state's approach to strengthening the licensing of teachers of the gifted appears to be the most current of all the states reviewed. It represents a performance-based approach to licensure based on nationally recognized professional standards (CEC), and colleges and universities are responsible for awarding the educational certification. However, local corporations are allowed to establish the staff qualifications necessary to teach in the local gifted education program.

The state's supplemental policies appear to be minimal. No evidence of a state policy for weighted grading could be found. The Advanced Placement program appears to have some support statewide but is not handled out of the Division that manages gifted education, so policies were not presented for review, nor secured via the website. Local corporations establish their own policies for early admission to Kindergarten. Many have a specific procedure for children born in the month of July.

Children must be 5 years old on or before June 30th to meet the state date for allowing entrance to Kindergarten.

The state is one of only two states examined that has incorporated specific language into its systemic educational reform legislation that addresses the gifted learner. This recently-enacted amendment to the reform statute requires “appropriate educational experiences for high ability and gifted students in the four core curriculum areas on a K-12 basis.” The DOE has as a major goal for the 2004-2006 biennium to develop the criteria and time-table to assure district-level compliance with the legislation. The amendment also brought representation from the gifted education community to the official reform policy planning group.

The state’s funding for gifted education in terms of per pupil allocations is very limited in comparison with other states like North and South Carolina. Also, the formula does not appear to include any weighting for school wealth or for actual numbers of gifted students served. The state does allow for state-level initiatives (handled cooperatively with the regional centers and universities) to be funded out of the state allocation, similar to the model used in South Carolina.

North Carolina Document Review

Fifteen documents (or document sections) were examined in order to describe and assess written documentation posited for the state of North Carolina. These documents were selected in consultation with Valorie Hargett, the state's consultant for Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Education. Ms. Hargett provided hard-copy versions of all the documents reviewed below; in addition, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website was used to secure additional materials that expounded on the history or development of relevant policy documents.

North Carolina, a state with 117 administrative school units, significantly modified its approach to gifted education in the mid-nineties and has been operating under its new mandate and guidelines for the last seven years. The mandate grew out of a special education orientation but was revised to permit more flexibility at the local level, particularly in regard to the identification of the population. The mandate requires that the class of student defined as Academically or Intellectually Gifted must be both identified and served, and state resources are appropriated annually to address implementation.

The primary statutory basis for gifted education in North Carolina is Article 9B. During the 2001-2002 school year, the state served almost 140,000 AIG students, amounting to about 11% of its total student population. The state appropriation for that fiscal year was about 45 million dollars, or about \$325 per gifted student actually served. Because the state caps its formula for local district funding at 4% of the school population, the General Assembly was allocating over \$880 per gifted student.

The state also provides funding for the Governor's School for the gifted, a statewide summer residential program serving 800+ students per year. This is the oldest program of its kind in the country, begun in 1963, and the current appropriation, in the amount of one million dollars, has been relatively stable for a number of years.

The state's statutory reform agenda is called the ABC's School-Based Management and Accountability Model and represents a comprehensive plan to organize schools around three goals. These goals are (a) strong accountability, (b) an emphasis on higher educational standards within the basics, and (c) providing schools and school districts with as much local control as possible. First passed by the General Assembly in 1996 and having evolved over time, the cornerstone of the plan is improved student performance, analyzed at the building, rather than the system, level. The plan holds schools accountable for the educational growth of the same students over time. The most current iteration of the plan is called *The ABC's Plus: North Carolina's Strategic Plan for Excellent Schools*. The state's accountability program was ranked 4th in the country by the Princeton Review in its most recent report, and North Carolina has been approved for federal funding under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

I. Organizational Structure

Gifted education is housed in the Exceptional Children Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Within the Exceptional Children Division, four sections address policy,

support services, special programs, and areas of exceptionality. There is one full-time consultant in the Areas of Exceptionality section that is assigned to oversee Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) in the state. Although this division maintains responsibility for program supervision, the most recent statute removed gifted education from the law that governs children with special needs.

II. **Article 9B Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students** (passed in 1996)

In 1996 Article 9B was passed to amend Chapter 115C of the General Statutes of North Carolina and serves as the current mandate for gifted education. The focus of this major revision in the legislation was to create a separate article on gifted students and to revise the identification process to promote the inclusion of students “from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.” The revision was prompted by a Task Force study commissioned at the direction of the General Assembly. The recommendations from the Task Force report were piloted in nine model sites before being translated into law.

The article is relatively compact with four sections. The first section deals with the definition of the class; the second mandates the responsibilities of the State Board of Education; and the third outlines the responsibilities of the local boards of education. The fourth section explains the process for review of disagreements between local schools and parents or guardians of gifted students.

Academically or intellectually gifted students are defined as those who “perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.” They “exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both.” They “require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program,” and they are “present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.”

The responsibilities of the State Board of Education are twofold. The first is to develop and disseminate guidelines for developing the local gifted plans, including identification procedures, differentiated curriculum, integrated services, staff development, program evaluation methods, and any other information considered appropriate by the State Board. The second is to “provide ongoing technical assistance to the local school administrative units in the development, implementation and evaluation of their local plans.”

The responsibilities of the local boards of education are fourfold. The first is to develop a plan that includes the input of parents, the school community, representatives of the community, and relevant others. The second is to ensure that the plan has the following components:

- (a) Screening, identification and placement procedures that allow for specific educational needs and assignment to appropriate services;
- (b) Clear statement of the program to be offered;
- (c) Measurable objectives that align with core curriculum, evaluation method, and a focus on improved student performance;

- (d) Professional development matched to the goals/objectives of the plan, staff needs, services offered, and curricular modifications;
- (e) Plan for parent and community involvement in plan implementation, monitoring, and integration of AIG services into the total school program, including a public information component;
- (f) Name and role description of person responsible for the implementation of the plan;
- (g) Procedure to resolve disagreements between parents/guardians and school staff when child is not identified as AIG or services are not considered appropriate;
- (h) Other information that the local board deems necessary or appropriate.

The third responsibility is to submit the plan to the State Board for its review and comment and to consider the feedback before it implements the plan. The fourth responsibility indicates that the plan shall remain in effect for no more than three years but may be changed as often as necessary as long as changes are submitted to the State Board for review, comment, and the consideration of further feedback. The State has now undergone two cycles of implementation of this timeline.

The last section of this article describes what is to happen when a disagreement fails to be resolved under item 7 above. Petitions for a contested case hearing under Article 4 of Chapter 150B are permitted, and the disposition of the administrative law judge is final. The scope of such reviews is limited to improper identification failures or inappropriate implementation of the local plan with regard to the child.

The legislation allows the NC DPI to establish deadlines for the implementation of the local plans and requires that the department report back to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee at subsequent junctures.

III. Guidelines Governing Local Plans for Gifted Education

This ten-page, plus appendices, companion document provides guidelines to supplement the district's understanding and application of the statute. Specific language from the statute is cited in bold print in order to distinguish it from the guidelines themselves, which serve as suggestions for best practice. Areas in which the guidelines significantly expand the regulatory framework are (a) planning, (b) identification, (c) program service options, (d) evaluation, (e) professional development, (f) role descriptions, (g) community involvement, and (h) the procedure to resolve disagreements. A section on pertinent additional information is also useful. The appendices include a form for the student identification/placement record; sample forms for student plan service options at different grade level clusters and for yearly performance review; and a sample parent letter regarding high school AP and Honors options.

In regard to the section on local planning, there are five areas of amplification. The first deals with the size (12 – 16 members), composition, and role of the planning team. The second area describes a program self-assessment process as a precursor to plan development. The third area, plan development, focuses on the need for a vision and philosophy statement and system-wide program goals in addition to the analysis of the needs assessment data and the description of services. The fourth area re-states that the plan must be approved by the local school board. The fifth area clarifies that the review conducted by the State Board will both ensure that all required elements

have been submitted to the DPI for review, and that the plan cannot be implemented until the DPI's feedback has been received by the district.

The second section of the guidelines document deals with screening and identification/placement. The screening procedure must provide for equal opportunity/access for all students, including "minority students, students with disabilities, and students who are economically disadvantaged." It must occur at least once within these grade clusters: K-3, 4-5, and 6-8, and it must include opportunities for peer, teacher, self, and parent nomination. No single score or measure can be used in making the decision regarding eligibility. Specific requirements of the screening are that it use multiple criteria, avoid assessments that are narrow in their conception of giftedness, use reliable instruments, use appropriate instruments for under-served populations, and include data that undergird instructional decision-making rather than labeling.

One of the critical interpretations in the section on identification/placement is that differentiated education beyond the Standard Course of Study should be provided in grades K-12 *at least in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics*. The matching of students with services should be based on needs and abilities. Also, the regular education program has responsibility to differentiate for gifted learners in addition to acceleration or enrichment options that are provided. Criteria for placement might include aptitude, achievement, or standardized tests such as End-of-Grade (assessment) tests, classroom performance, demonstrated products or abilities, student motivation and interests, and teacher observation and recommendation. The degree of precocity should be considered as well.

The composition and role of the identification/placement committee are discussed. Parents must grant permission for both additional testing as well as the placement of the student in the option provided. The term *Differentiated Education Plan* (DEP) is introduced and defined. The DEP should be completed for each student for each phase of the educational spectrum and should list the learning environment, content modifications, and special programs available to the student. An *Individual Differentiated Plan* should be developed for students who demonstrate outstanding intellectual gifts but do not meet the criteria for the DEP. Yearly performance reviews are strongly recommended, and the decision for continuation in a program should be based on the student's performance. Changes in services should be discussed with the parent after they have been considered by the Placement Committee.

An array of services must be available to students K-12, and the criteria for entry into each option must be specified. The description of the service option must include learning environment in which the differentiation will occur, the method of content modification, and any special programs that enhance learning. These options should be listed on the format for the DEP. At the high school level, students will self-select coursework. The DEP for high school should be developed in grade 8 with input from counselors and parents, and with progress monitored through a yearly performance review. A high school counselor may be assigned to follow the progress of the school's gifted population and trouble-shoot when problems present.

The section of the guidelines on evaluation speaks to both program and student evaluation efforts. Districts are encouraged to report on compliance with management objectives and to track indicators such as numbers of teachers receiving licensure in gifted education. The underlying

question is, “Are we providing what our plan says we will provide?” Student evaluation should deal with measurable student learning gains, including End-of-Grade and End-of-Course tests. However, these measures are not deemed sufficient for measuring student progress, and other techniques are encouraged, including portfolio assessments, expert reviews of products, off-grade-level assessments, authentic and performance assessments, and attitudinal surveys. A further caveat says that the AIG program should be “vigorous and challenging and serve to raise the standards of excellence by removing the ceiling of achievement available.”

The section on staff development indicates that the plan must outline the staff development needs for all categories of staff who have any responsibility in the education of the AIG population. The plan should also determine what competencies and level of training teachers must have for each of the options. The plan should include a calendar and schedule for providing the necessary staff development.

The section on name and role descriptions expands the universe of people who should be identified in the planning document. This should include administrative, instructional, and support staff at central office and building levels. The level of preparation needed for each of these individual roles should also be listed.

The section on community involvement suggests appointing an advisory board(s) at the school building level as well as a system-wide advisory board. Parents should be provided with information via a newsletter or other communication channel.

The section on resolving disagreements suggests a multi-tiered process, with the local school board the last step at the local level. The formation of a Grievance Committee is suggested as an alternative to the hierarchical process. Mediation with an impartial facilitator is also encouraged. For disagreements that are brought to the level of an Administrative Law Judge (whose decision is final), attorney’s fees are not recoupable.

The section on additional information includes the following salient points: (a) the statute addresses minimums but districts, if resources are available, may offer programs in the cultural arts, leadership, talent development, etc.; (b) students with DEP’s (or IDP’s) will be included in the Headcount; (c) DPI monitoring will consist of whether the plan contains the components required by law and whether the district is providing the services outlined in the plan; and (d) AIG students who transfer should be reviewed for eligibility and if close to cut-off criteria, should be given probationary status in program.

IV. Follow Up Memo on Identification of Gifted Students

In 2000, a memo was sent to district gifted education coordinators by the Director of the Exceptional Children Division that provided additional clarification of the section of the guidelines dealing with identification. This memo stated that school systems must ensure that “a single criterion is not, unilaterally, eliminating students from eligibility for any service delivery option.” Also, the identification process, in reaching out to under-served populations, should consider and use valid and reliable alternative assessments, such as nonverbal mental ability tests.

V. Rubric for Review of Local Plans

The responsibility of the Department of Public Instruction is to review, not approve, local district plans, and the procedure for conducting this review relies on teams composed of peer reviewers. The rubric used by these teams has undergone revisions, and the most recent instrument is seven pages in length and printed on NCR paper. Reviewers are asked to evaluate specific standards against four levels: not evident, suggest more development, meets expectations, and exceeds expectations. The standards themselves are identified as either “strongly recommended” (coming from the guidelines), “required” (coming from the statute), or “suggested.” Ten of the standards are strongly recommended, 41 are required, and 5 are suggested, for a total of 56 standards. For the most part the alignment between the standards for reviewing the plans and the state policy framework is quite tight. There may be a little latitude taken in the service of strengthening the program. One example is the “required standard” that states, “Programs (workshops and seminars) for parents and other designated caretakers are on-going and provide information beneficial in identifying and nurturing gifted characteristics in children of all ages and cultures.” The actual language in Article 9B seems a little more ambiguous, calling for “a plan for parent and community involvement, including a public information component.”

VI. Pathways to North Carolina’s Licensure in Academically or Intellectually Gifted Education

This 30-page document (plus appendices), first developed in 1991 and revised in 2002, explains the different routes that can be taken to secure licensure in Academically or Intellectually Gifted Education in North Carolina. There are two basic pathways to get an AIG education license; the first is via university course-work (either on-site or through distance learning options), and the second is through the local school system or collaborative partnerships among local school systems. In some cases, a combination of routes is possible as well. The preferred route is on-site university course-work. Teachers who are currently licensed to teach can obtain add-on licensure and/or credit toward a master’s degree in gifted education or advanced master’s in some areas of general education by completing 12 semester hours of circumscribed gifted course-work in conjunction with other university prescribed coursework. The local school system (or collaborative partnership) route requires 18 units. Nine of the units must be satisfied by taking three prescribed 30 contact hours courses; the other nine can be taken from a broader array of selected topics. High school teachers seeking licensure are given some additional options to choose from. Both pathways take 180 instructional hours to complete. Additional study is necessary prior to license renewal.

The document also identifies three categories of competencies that are expected of AIG-licensed teachers. These speak to 19 general competencies, 20 specific skills/techniques/methodologies, and 3 attitudes and standards that the teacher must demonstrate.

A second document, currently in draft stage, is intended to revise the competency standards for AIG licensure. This document identifies six standards with specific sets of indicators for each standard and is aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards as well as other national teacher preparation standards documents.

VII. Supplemental Policy Documents

North Carolina has a number of policies or initiatives designed to strengthen the quality of education for high ability learners. In 1997, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing precocious four-year-olds early admission to kindergarten. In 1998 the Exceptional Children Division prepared standards for implementing this process.

A high school to community college articulation agreement allows the award of community college credit for high school courses covered by the agreement, when students attain a grade of B or higher and enroll in the community college within two years of their high school graduation date. The goal of this agreement is to allow students to make a seamless transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

Project Bright IDEA is a collaborative effort between the NC Department of Public Instruction and Duke University (with the American Association of Gifted Children) to develop a process to equip elementary teachers with the talents and tools necessary to spot gifted children at the K-2 level. Of particular concern are minority and/or low-income gifted children. Six schools are participating in the pilot, launched in 2001-2002.

Recent legislative activity directed the State Board of Education to study the under-representation of minority and at-risk students in Honors classes, Advanced Placement classes, and AIG programs. This 2001 study was carried out by faculty from two NC universities, who produced a report entitled *Report on Increasing Opportunity to Learn via Access to Rigorous Courses and Programs: One Strategy for Closing the Achievement Gap for At-Risk and Ethnic Minority Students*. The report concluded that the gap between White and minority students is significant and widespread, then described some promising programs that are addressing the problem. The report suggested that the changes made through Article 9B have had a positive impact on the identification of under-represented groups, although trend indicators are still young and premature.

At the high school level the state has secured federal funding to expand services such as online exam review and exam fee reduction for low-income students involved in AP. The expansion of online course offerings, particularly in rural areas, and the provision of regional professional development sessions for AP teachers are underway. These efforts were reported in the report described in the previous paragraph.

VIII. Funding Legislation and Reports

The revised mandate for funding gifted education is found in 115C-105.21, which separates the funds for exceptional children into two categories, one dealing with children with special needs and the other with the Academically or Intellectually Gifted population. Funds allocated for AIG may be used only (a) for AIG students, (b) to implement the plan, or (c) in accordance with an accepted school improvement plan as long as the district has provided all of the services for which it committed in the local plan. The funding formula is based on four percent (4%) of the district's average daily membership (ADM). This amounted to \$884.55 per child in 2002-2003, up slightly from \$882.81 per child in 2001-2002. In 2001-2002, four percent of the ADM amounted to 51,355

students (a total state allocation of about \$45.3 million for AIG). In actuality, 139,041 AIG students were served.

IX. The ABC's Plus: North Carolina's Strategic Plan for Excellent Schools Materials

The current iteration of North Carolina's reform initiative has five overarching goals. The first goal deals with high student performance and focuses on academic content standards and assessment systems that result in measurable student outcome indicators. The second focuses on safe, orderly, and caring schools and the environments that sustain them. The third goal addresses quality teachers, administrators, and staff and encompasses some of the changes being made in the licensing standards. The fourth goal speaks to strong family, community, and business support for education. The fifth goal involves attention to effective and efficient operations including elements such as locus of decision-making, reporting systems for results, and adequate funding. All initiatives or changes in regard to the AIG population and services are expected to be aligned with one or more of these goals.

The strong emphasis on accountability at the student level in this plan has enabled the state to track the performance of identified AIG students on the state assessments over time and to report these results statewide. This annual analysis is not only done for the total gifted population, but is broken down by racial/ethnic categories as well.

X. Materials Currently in Development that will impact Policy

The DPI in North Carolina is continuing to develop its approach to teacher certification, including gaining approval for its revised standards based on the CEC professional development standards. The state is also moving toward a concept-based curriculum for gifted learners, with the Project Bright Idea curriculum being refined in the next academic year. Additional curriculum work at other levels of the system include the incorporation of Mary Frasier's (1995) Ten Core Attributes and habits of mind into curriculum models. Four high school units are currently in development.

Overall Assessment of Documentary Evidence

The North Carolina approach to serving the gifted and talented learner shares some similarities with Pennsylvania. The mandate does require that gifted and talented students be both identified and served, and the model has a modified special education orientation. Local districts have the discretion to design and implement gifted education programs based on requirements promulgated in the regulatory framework. These requirements include not only program plans for gifted education but also Differentiated Education Plans (DEP) that must be completed on each gifted student. These plans are more generic than typical individualized special education plan requirements, but interestingly, the state has more individualized requirements for students who are exceptionally gifted but who do not belong in the more generic gifted program services offered by the district and covered by the DEP format. This combined set of planning requirements for the individual, the group, and the program levels of service is unique among the models examined.

Although North Carolina's planning expectations are multi-level, the authority of the state to approve local plans is highly circumscribed. The state is charged with ensuring that the plans meet

the articulated standards, which tend to be descriptive and process-oriented, but the state may only make suggestions in regard to best practice in the field. At this time, one of the biggest shortcomings of the North Carolina approach is the lack of substantive program standards, more akin to what Virginia has evolved. However, the program plan expectations for North Carolina do require districts to demonstrate a match among the student's assessment profile, the learning environment, the curriculum and instruction provided, and the specification of student learning outcomes.

The state definition of the gifted learner is also relatively tightly focused. It recognizes both performance and potential for performance across grades K-12 but is limited to intellectual and specific academic fields or both. Districts may identify and serve in other categories of giftedness, but must use state funds for the mandated group of gifted learners first. Only residual state dollars can be directed to additional categories of gifted learners, according to the state guidelines.

The guidelines add another interpretation to the Article 9B mandate: that differentiated programming must at least occur in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Although the enforcement of this interpretation must be consensually derived, its presence in the guidelines does establish domain priorities for service. Another strength of the state definitional structure is the language regarding equal opportunity for all students, including minorities, the economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities, and the screening and identification procedures further attest to concern with this access.

The elements of the program plan that are required are fairly typical and include components for identification and placement procedures, measurable objectives, professional development strategies, parent/community involvement, and information dissemination. There is also a requirement for a procedure to resolve disagreements with parents (another parallel to the special education orientation).

The requirements also spell out that the local plan should have the input of specific groups including parents, the school community, and relevant others. This is not formally called an Advisory Committee in the statute, but the state's guidelines do suggest the creation of advisory boards at both the school and system levels.

The state's approach to licensure in gifted and talented education is fairly well developed, and like Indiana, the state is moving to a performance-based model. Although licensure is not required to teach gifted students (local districts may establish their own job qualifications), the state has created several pathways to licensure to make it more available. Furthermore, the recommended route is through on-site university coursework, which facilitates involvement and interface with the higher education community in the state.

The state also has some evidence of formal policies that support high ability students, including an articulation agreement with the state's community colleges. The state has a formal early admission to kindergarten for precocious four-year-olds. There is a strong emphasis on Advanced Placement access in the state, although nothing was examined in terms of weighted grading policies.

The state's funding of gifted education is substantial (\$45 million), compared to other states examined, and an additional investment of one million dollars is made in the summer, residential

Governor's School. The four percent cap is somewhat narrow, but districts have used the resources to serve closer to 11% of the school population. There does not appear to be a weighting factor for school wealth.

The state's plan for systemic reform does not appear to have verbiage that specifically addresses the unique learning needs of the gifted and talented population. However, the reform platform is very comprehensive, containing five critical elements, and is focused on growth indicators as well as proficiency indicators. This orientation is favorable to the gifted population, and in fact, gifted education is expected to tie into the components of the reform initiative. Of the five states reviewed, North Carolina was the only state to provide a graph of the performance of identified gifted students on the state assessment exams across time. This graph reported the performance of the total gifted group and detailed racial/ethnic subgroup performance as well, apparently in keeping with the state's concern for equity in both the gifted mandate and the systemic reform platform.

Pennsylvania Document Review

Introduction

Ten documents, or document sections, were examined for the document review for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These documents were selected in consultation with Barbara Thrush, the special education advisor for gifted education in the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Additional information was downloaded from the PDE website to expand the reviewer's understanding of the Pennsylvania educational system.

Pennsylvania, through State Board of Education rule and regulation, has in place a mandate both to identify and to serve gifted students K-12. At one time, gifted students were classified as one category of student under the state special education legislation, but in 2000 the class of gifted students was separated out and given a separate chapter (Chapter 16) in the Pennsylvania rules and regulations. Chapter 16 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code is modeled on a special education mandate, featuring Gifted Individualized Educational Plans (GIEPs) for identified gifted students, and its major components echo the special education orientation, including sections on screening and evaluation, GIEPs, educational placement, and procedural safeguards. The regulations include limits on gifted class size and student/teacher ratios.

The definition of the gifted learner in Pennsylvania is a school age mentally gifted student. Mentally gifted includes students with "outstanding intellectual and creative ability the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services." (§16.1) Districts may not set the threshold for identification above 130 on an IQ instrument but may include students who score below 130 based on other factors and qualifications. Conversely, students who score 130 or above also have to meet additional factors to qualify for services. As a result, about 4% of Pennsylvania's student population is identified as gifted. In the 2001-2002 school year, this percentage included 75,393 students. The state does not keep statistics on subcategories such as gender, ethnicity, or economic status of the gifted population.

Although the commonwealth's mandate is quite strong and prescriptive, there are no state requirements for teacher licensure or endorsement in gifted education. *Act 48*, passed in 1999, does require ongoing professional education to maintain a teaching certificate in the state, and online continuing education coursework is supported with state dollars, making it free to qualified professional educators.

There is no state line item appropriation for services to gifted students under Chapter 16. Districts may use state dollars given to them under the state special education appropriation, but these dollars are stretched across all areas of exceptionality at the district level. Pennsylvania does not have data on dollars specifically spent on gifted education services. The state does have residential summer programs for gifted learners and allocates almost \$2.5 million in the state budget for these five-week-long Governor's school programs.

The Commonwealth's systemic reform platform is called the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Key elements of this platform are curriculum standards across 14 content

areas and mathematics and reading assessment tests at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. State assessments in writing occur at grades 6, 9, and 11. A recent gubernatorial initiative, called The Plan for a New Pennsylvania, calls for three critical investments in children over the next few years: early childhood education, improved student achievement in math and reading, and incentives for schools that exceed performance expectations. Pennsylvania's accountability model was ranked 13th in the country by the Princeton Review, and as of early June (2003) the state has not yet been approved for federal funding under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

I. Organizational Structure

In Pennsylvania, gifted education is the shared responsibility of the Bureau of Special Education and the Bureau of Curriculum and Academic Services, with the former taking the lead. There is a full-time specialist assigned to this role.

II. Title 24 in the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949

Title 24 in the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, amended to date, created a class of students with exceptionalities and defined this term as "children of school age who have a disability or who are gifted and who, by reason thereof, need specially designed instruction." (24 P.S. §13-1371) The law further specifies that a report must be made (by local districts to the PDE) by Oct. 15th of every school year of every child meeting this class. The law also grants responsibility to the State Board of Education for prescribing standards and regulations for the education of these students.

Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code contains the rules and regulations for education. Until 2000, the rules and regulations governing gifted students were incorporated into the subsection of this title covering all exceptionalities. In order to make distinctions between state and federal mandates governing exceptional students, these two categories (students with disabilities and gifted students) were separated out in the recent revisions to the Pennsylvania Code.

III. Chapter 16 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code entitled *Special Education for Gifted Students* and containing the rules and regulations for gifted students

This 16+ page chapter, formally approved on December 9, 2000, has the rules and regulations embedded into one chapter with both carrying the force of law. The chapter has five major sections: General Provisions, Screening and Evaluation, Gifted Individualized Education Plan, Educational Placement, and Procedural Safeguards. The previous regulation included Gifted under the Special Education Chapters 14 and 342, but in this revision the intent was to separate it out while protecting certain rights that had been accorded under earlier state legislation. In general, the regulations provide protections to students who are gifted including (a) provisions for locating and identifying such students, (b) procedures for screening and evaluating them, (C) rules for developing an individualized education program, (d) timelines for development, implementation, and evaluation of the program, and (e) safeguarding parent rights.

The General Provisions section is sub-divided into 7 parts: Definitions, Purpose, Experimental Programs, Strategic Plans, Personnel, General Supervision, and Special Education. The Definitions part defines the following terms: agency, educational placement, gifted education, gifted

multidisciplinary evaluation, gifted student, instructional setting, mentally gifted, parents, party, regular classroom, regular education environment, school day, screening and evaluation process, specially designed instruction, and support services. The two key definitions of interest are as follows:

Gifted Student: A student who is exceptional under section 1371 of the School Code because the student meets the definition of mentally gifted in this section, and needs specially designed instruction beyond that required in Chapter 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment). Only applies to students who are of “school age.”

Mentally Gifted: Outstanding intellectual and creative ability the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program.

The part of this section on Purpose indicates a mandate for “quality gifted education services and programs” (§16.2(b)) for “suspected and identified gifted students who require gifted education to reach their potential” (§16.2(a)). The roles of the state department and the local districts are delineated clearly with specific language on individual needs being addressed, “based on the unique needs of the child, not solely on the student’s classification” (§16.2(d)(2)).

The third part describes waivers for the operation of experimental programs, requiring an annual application and department approval, and tied to improvements in student achievement. After three years of documented success in improved student learning, the annual application is not needed.

Part 4 speaks to the inclusion of gifted education in the districts’ strategic plans (relating to academic standards and assessments). This part requires districts to provide reports of students, personnel, and program elements, including costs, that are relevant to the delivery of gifted education.

Part 5 requires inservice training for gifted and regular education teachers, principals, administrators, and support staff responsible for gifted education under 1205.1 of the School Code. This part also requires that professional personnel responsible for identifying and providing service be certified, but this does not mean specifically in gifted education.

Part 6 grants the Department of Education responsibility for general supervision and fiscal oversight and control over gifted education programs. The Board must review Chapter 16 every four years to ensure consistency in interpretation.

Part 7 ensures that students who qualify as both gifted and special education (dual exceptionalities) receive all the provisions accorded under the special education chapters.

Subsection 2 on the Screening and Evaluation Process is divided into 3 parts: general, gifted multidisciplinary evaluation, and gifted multidisciplinary re-evaluation. The general part sets a threshold for a child of an IQ of 130 and who meets multiple criteria set forth in Department guidelines. However, students with IQ’s below 130 may also be admitted to programs when other criteria strongly indicate gifted ability. The determination of mentally gifted must include an

assessment by a certified school psychologist. Five categories of criteria are expounded and are summarized as follows:

- (a) A year or more above grade achievement level in one or more subjects;
- (b) An observed or measured rate of acquisition/retention of new academic content;
- (c) Demonstrated achievement, performance or expertise in one or more academic subjects as evidenced by products, portfolios, research, and criterion-referenced team judgment;
- (d) Early and measured use of high level thinking skills, academic creativity, leadership skills, intense academic interest, communication skills, foreign language aptitude, or technology expertise;
- (e) Documented or validated evidence that intervening factors such as ESL, LD, physical impairment, emotional disability, gender or race bias, or socio-cultural deprivation are masking gifted abilities.

This subsection addresses awareness activities for students and parents of school age children enrolled in public and private schools.

This subsection also describes requirements and criteria for holding multidisciplinary evaluations; parent requests are limited to one per school year and must be made in writing. Multidisciplinary evaluations must be conducted by a team (GMDT) formed on the basis of the student's needs and comprised of the student's parents, a certified school psychologist, persons familiar with the student's performance, one or more of the student's current teachers, persons trained in the appropriate evaluation techniques, and persons familiar with the student's cultural background. One person may serve more than one role on this committee. Protections regarding evaluation and testing measures are also specified, as is the need for a written report. Specific timelines are set forth for complying with this part of the regulation. Re-evaluations must occur before a change in educational placement is recommended, but there is no requirement that re-evaluations occur at specific intervals.

The subsection relating to the Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) also has 3 parts. The general part explains that the GIEP is a written plan and must be based on and responsive to the evaluation conducted. This part also entitles a gifted student who changes school districts to be covered by the existing GIEP "to the extent possible." The last part of this subsection grandfathered-in students receiving gifted education prior to December, 2000.

The second part of the GIEP subsection, explains that the district must appoint a GIEP team (this is different than the multidisciplinary evaluation team, the GMDT) to review the recommendations of the GMDT and, "if the GIEP team determines that a student is gifted, to develop a GIEP for him/her." The GIEP team must make the placement determination for the student. The GIEP team shall include one or both of the student's parents, the student himself if the parents want his/her participation, a representative of the district authorized to commit district resources (who will chair team), one of more of the student's current teachers, and others at the discretion of the parents. Timelines and requirements for parent notification and involvement, including ESL requirements, and timelines for plan implementation are established. Also noted are the components of the GIEP which include student's present level of performance, statement of annual goals and short-term learning outcomes for student, statement of specially designed instruction and support services to

be provided, dates for initiation and duration of services, objective criteria and assessment procedures and timelines for measuring learning outcomes (at least annually). GIEP team meetings must be convened at least annually.

The third part of the subsection deals with the provision of support service and indicates the criteria by which transportation is deemed a support service.

The fourth subsection of the regulation deals with Educational Placement and is subdivided into two sections; the first is general and the second, parental placement in private schools. The general subsection has five prescriptive intentions and one proscriptive one. These include the following: (a) educational placement decisions must be based on student needs; (b) decisions must ensure that the student will benefit from the rate, level, and manner of instruction; (c) services must be provided beyond the general education program; (d) districts must adopt Board policies relating to caseloads and class sizes; and (e) a waiver by the secretary for item (c) above. Specific maximums of 75 students for an individual teacher's caseload and 20 for gifted class size are specified in this section. The proscription specifies what the educational placement decision must not be based on, including lack of placement alternatives, educational or support services, space, or qualified staff, and administrative convenience. The second issue in this subsection, dealing with parental rights, states that parents at their private expense may have their children educated in private schools, and that the home schooling of gifted children is governed under a different section of the School Code.

The fifth subsection of the regulation, on Procedural Safeguards, has five parts dealing with notice, consent, impartial due process hearing, mediation, and confidentiality. Many of the provisions are modeled on special education legislation. Issues such as timelines, written documentation, and some articulation of parents' rights, including the right to legal representation at the due process hearing, are addressed.

IV. Basic Education Circular for Gifted Education

Basic Education Circulars (BECs) provide guidance from the Department to local districts on the School Code, federal law and regulations, and state regulations. On March 23, 2003, a new BEC was issued for the regulations on gifted students. The expiration date for this BEC is June 30, 2007. This BEC summarizes many of the key requirements in Chapter 16. It emphasizes the importance of outreach and public information in the screening and identification processes, even to non-public school populations. It advises districts to consider a wide variety of assessment instruments and procedures in presenting profile information to the gifted multidisciplinary team. It also cautions districts to beware of factors that may mask high potential, such as disabilities and bias.

Section two of the BEC has more explicit guidance on appropriate program options for gifted students, noting that specially designed instruction may result in the adaptation or modification of the general curriculum, including compacting, acceleration, or placing the student in more than one grade level. Such instruction may also have an impact on learning environments, methods, and materials. Districts are further advised that "the use of extra work, peer tutoring, or helping the teacher does not constitute gifted education, and that Advanced Placement or Honors courses are not in and of themselves gifted education." This section of the BEC also ties gifted education into the reform legislation for the state, identified as a strand in Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code. It

suggests that academic standards and assessments may need to be reorganized across grade levels to allow gifted students to show mastery at earlier junctures in the system. Such adaptations must be reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress.

The third section of this BEC deals with educational placement. Of particular note is the attention paid to the exceptionally gifted. This section identifies provisions for grouping students across grade levels, for gaining credit for coursework in alternative settings, and for gaining credit by examination. The need for graduation planning that begins at an early age for such students is also stressed.

The fourth section identifies events that trigger a 10-day notice to parents (such as conducting the multidisciplinary evaluation or re-evaluation, changing the placement of a student, or making a significant change to the GIEP). Districts are reminded to obtain written parental consent prior to conducting the evaluation or placing the student in a gifted program. Sample forms and formats to use with parents and staff are included with this circular and can be downloaded in printable text.

The last part of this circular discusses how the state undertakes compliance monitoring for Chapter 16. Selection criteria for monitoring can be both random and targeted based on requests for assistance or evidence of violations. The monitoring process includes district completion of a self-assessment instrument (also included with the circular itself and available on the internet) and an on-site visitation. The self-assessment instrument has four sections: administrative review, gifted education program review, administrative and instructional staff review, and a visitation review. The report that is made back to the district following the visitation identifies deficiencies and suggests strategies to achieve compliance.

V. Licensing

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not require special training for teachers of the gifted, and any teacher with certification may be hired in this capacity. Local districts may set staff qualifications beyond this minimal threshold. There are no statewide data currently available on the qualifications of teachers of gifted students. The reviewer was not able to determine whether or not the regular teacher certification requires any undergraduate coursework in gifted education.

Recent legislation, Act 48, has added requirements for continuing education for maintaining teacher licensure. School districts must prepare professional development plans in order to comply with this law. Furthermore, reviews of district gifted programs under Chapter 16 (Self-Assessment Instrument) require that gifted education training be included in these plans for regular classroom teachers, teachers of the gifted, administrators, and support staff. One of the courses available online is “Strategies for Modifying and Adapting Instruction for Gifted Students.”

VI. Supplemental Policies

The state has a written policy (BEC) that permits, but does not mandate, districts to establish policies for early admission to kindergarten. The minimum age cannot, however, be less than four years old. It is not known how many districts have such local policies in place. There are no state policies on Advanced Placement. The BEC on gifted education, as mentioned earlier, does state

that Advanced Placement or Honors courses per se do not constitute gifted education, which must be predicated on the student's individualized needs. The BEC on gifted education, as noted earlier, does address dual enrollment and testing-out accommodations in the context of graduation planning.

VII. National Association for Gifted Children Standards side by side with Chapter 16 Document

This 20-page document presents a matrix that shows the alignment between each of the NAGC standards and relevant sections of Chapter 16 (Pennsylvania regulations for gifted education). The matrix is organized around the standard areas of program design, program administration and management, socio-emotional guidance and counseling, student identification, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and program evaluation. The first column of the matrix cites a section of Chapter 16; the second column cites minimum standards that relate to it from the NAGC standards (including numeric and narrative citations), and the third column identifies the exemplary NAGC standards that apply (including numeric and narrative citations).

The document does not include a summary statement that describes overall alignment, but it appears that all but two of the minimal standards are met. The first unmet minimal standard is "the purpose of student assessments must be consistently articulated" and is noted clearly as having "no Chapter 16 reference." The second unmet minimal standard is completely omitted in the document; this NAGC standard requires that "gifted education must establish an advisory committee that reflects the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the school or school district."

In regard to the exemplary NAGC standards, a similar pattern is found. The document clearly states that the exemplary standard requiring that "students identified in all designated areas of giftedness within a school district should be assessed consistently across grade levels" is not specifically included in Chapter 16. However, there is another standard which also appears to be excluded although no citation to it is made: "parents of gifted learners should have regular opportunities to share input and make recommendations about program operations with the gifted programming coordinator."

Of more concern, however, is the interpretation that is made of some of the exemplary standards. For instance, the standard that requires that "gifted education policies should exist for at least the following areas: early entrance, grade skipping, ability grouping, and dual enrollment" is matched with the following language from Chapter 16: "each school district shall provide, as the Department may require, reports of students, personnel and program elements, including the costs of the elements, which are relevant to the delivery of gifted education." The self-assessment instrument that the Department has developed requires that the gifted education program "enables acceleration such as subject and grade skipping and concurrent enrollment when valid assessments indicate need." It appears that the Department's stated policies do not conflict with the exemplary standard, but the substance of the standard, in terms of definable "policies," does not seem clearly addressed.

A second example is in relation to the exemplary standard on program evaluation that states that "all individuals who are involved in the evaluation process should be given the opportunity to

verify information and the resulting interpretation.” The Department’s document cites the regulatory language that “each agency shall protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding a gifted student or a student thought to be gifted.” This does not address the intention of the standard as understood by this reviewer.

The process of standard alignment with extant legislation/policy is complicated, and the document prepared by the Pennsylvania Department of Education shows a concerted effort to examine state policy in light of national standards work. In general, it shows that the Pennsylvania policy is well aligned with the national standards as articulated by NAGC, but there does appear to be some ambiguity in the alignment of some of the standards.

VIII. Parent Guide to Special Education for the Gifted Brochure

This parent information booklet is available to all parents and explains the Pennsylvania approach to gifted education. The booklet is divided into four chapters that are headed by the following key questions: Is my child gifted? How is my child’s gifted education program determined? What are the school’s responsibilities to my child and me? and What if I disagree with school officials about my child’s education program? The appendix to the booklet includes sample letters for parents to use in requesting an evaluation or re-evaluation of their child, a glossary of terms, and contact information for technical assistance. The book is written in friendly, easy-to-understand language and encourages a collaborative approach to parent involvement.

IX. Materials in Development

Pennsylvania is currently developing a document called *Department Guidelines for the Education of Mentally Gifted Students* that is expected to be available 8/31/03.

Project REAL (Rural Education for Accelerated Learners) is a federal Javits grant recently awarded to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Initiatives being funded under this grant include statewide and regional staff development events and programming options for rural students based on the Johns Hopkins model or an interdisciplinary, problem-based, real world learning model. The grant will also fund diagnostic assessments for students with IQ’s of 145 or higher (for all districts in the state). The results of this pilot project may influence future state guidelines for gifted programs.

X. Funding

The state does provide both a federal and state allocation to local districts for special education. Local districts are permitted to use state only, no federal or local dollars, to serve mentally gifted students. No figures are available on how many dollars, state or local, are directed to such programs and services. There is a state allocation for Governor’s Schools in the amount of \$2,492,000 in the most recent budget.

XI. Systemic Reform

The Commonwealth’s systemic reform platform is called the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and the key elements of this agenda dealing with standards and assessments

are found in Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code. To date, the state has produced curriculum standards across 14 content areas and assessment tests at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 in mathematics and reading. State assessments in writing occur at grades 6, 9, and 11. A recent gubernatorial initiative, called The Plan for a New Pennsylvania, calls for three critical investments in children over the next few years: early childhood education, improved student achievement in math and reading, and incentives for schools that exceed performance expectations. Although the reform legislation does not specifically reference gifted students, the gifted regulations and the BEC in gifted incorporate elements of the reform agenda into the gifted program. Of particular note is the expectation regarding student growth rates, which ensures gifted students are not overlooked in terms of their performance on criterion-referenced assessment measures.

Overall Assessment of Documentary Evidence

The Pennsylvania approach to gifted education is the only state mandate examined that is constructed within the framework of a special education mandate, although this orientation is not unique across the U.S. (Swanson, 2002). The mandate ensures that K – 12 gifted students are both identified and served, and there is a strong focus on individualization both in terms of assessment and placement decisions. Although districts are required to create individualized educational plans for all identified gifted students, districts do not have to develop or submit program plans to the state for review and approval. However, when districts are monitored by the state, they must have evidence of written documentation for a number of program elements (philosophy statement, description of identification/placement procedures, policies on early graduation, placement alternatives, etc.) available for review at that time.

Pennsylvania has one of the narrower and most procedurally rigorous of the identification/placement systems studied. The emphasis in the mandate is on the mentally gifted student and the intent is to focus on the child with an IQ of at least 130, plus or minus testing error. Screening must include extensive outreach, and multiple measures to assess student ability and performance are sanctioned. No single test score ensures or precludes eligibility for services. The determination must include an assessment by a certified school psychologist. Districts are cautioned to examine factors that may mask giftedness in certain under-served populations in this identification process. A separate team is convened to conduct the multidisciplinary evaluation, and parents are included on this team. As a result of this process, about 4% of the total student population are identified as gifted. Gifted students who transfer across PA public school districts keep their gifted status; students transferring from districts outside of the state must be re-evaluated using the PA requirements.

After students have been identified as gifted, the district must convene a different team to develop the child's Gifted Individualized Educational Plan (GIEP). Parents are also expected to participate on these teams. These educational plans must contain diagnostic information, annual goals and short-term outcomes, a description of the instructional and support services to be provided, dates for service, and assessment criteria and procedures. These plans must “go beyond the general education program” of the district and must ensure that the student “will benefit from the rate, level, and manner of instruction.” Specific teacher/child ratios for individual teacher caseloads and class sizes are also delineated.

In the BEC for gifted students, the Commonwealth describes services that do not represent gifted education, i.e., peer tutoring, extra work, or helping the teacher. Explicit linkages are made with advanced placement and honors coursework, and districts are cautioned to begin graduation planning for these learners early in their academic careers. The clarity of the state's language in describing what *is* and *is not* appropriate for gifted students is useful and salient.

The BEC also addresses the educational reform chapter of the legal framework and instructs districts to reorganize curriculum standards and testing opportunities across grade levels as necessary to meet the advanced learning needs of this population. This powerful blend of individual and program standards for gifted education and the explicit integration of the gifted child's needs with the educational reform agenda are impressive and quite thorough.

Because of the special education framework, Pennsylvania has very clearly articulated expectations regarding due process and procedural safeguards. A tiered system is in place in which parents can take unresolved complaints to a hearing officer before seeking court action. The state tracks and reports the dispositions of these cases.

All educational staff must have appropriate credentials, but the state does not require licensure or endorsement in gifted education for teachers of the gifted. This does appear to be a weakness in the regulatory framework, and one that makes it impossible to determine how qualified the staff is. The Chapter 16 regulation does state that inservice must be provided, and new legislation about continuing education (Act 48) may make additional training more accessible through online coursework.

Although there is a dearth of supplemental policies at the state level, the gifted regulation and the BEC clarifying it do address specific issues that support the education of the gifted child. For instance, the policy states that Advanced Placement and Honors courses do not per se constitute gifted education, but may represent an appropriate service alternative for the gifted adolescent. Early graduation, dual enrollment, and testing out are addressed as considerations that districts should undertake. The state also has a written policy that allows districts to determine if they can support early entrance to kindergarten. No state policies on grade weighting were in evidence.

The absence of targeted revenues for gifted education is also problematic. It is not possible to compute the amount of the state's total investment in the program, nor the average per pupil expenditure. The investment in Governor's Schools is positive, but these are supplemental summer programs, and the state does not appear to offer an academic-year alternative for its most highly gifted.

There does not seem to be anything particularly remarkable about the state's systemic reform legislation. It does address both curriculum standards and performance assessment tests at specific grade level junctures. There is no clear statement of other supporting reform initiatives such as changes in licensure to move toward performance-based assessment of teachers. The one element that deserves special mention is the emphasis on the growth of each child served so that group gains do not obviate individual progress or lack thereof. The specific statement is that each child will grow at least a year based on where they start at the beginning of the year. While gifted children may grow more than a year, this ensures that they will not stagnate under the

Commonwealth's accountability model. The state does not report the performance of identified gifted children on the state assessment tests. However, it does seem that it would be possible to integrate the database with the names of identified gifted children and the state testing results, similarly to what South Carolina has undertaken.

South Carolina Document Review

Introduction

Nine documents, or parts of documents, were examined for the document review conducted on the state of South Carolina gifted education policy. These documents were selected in consultation with Wayne Lord, the gifted education coordinator for the state. Additional information was gathered from the website of the South Carolina Department of Education.

Based on statistics from the 1998-99 school year, posted on its Department of Education website, South Carolina has 86 school districts that serve about 670,000 students annually. There is no intermediate or regional support structure in the state. Forty-six percent of their general student population is eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch programs. Fifty-five percent of the student enrollment is categorized as white and 42% black. The state has 48,000+ instructional staff, 81% of which are female. Per pupil expenditures were \$6,516.

The mandate for gifted and talented education in South Carolina is found in both statute (**59-29-170 of the Code of Laws**) and regulation (**Title 19: R43-220**) and requires both the identification and provision of services to eligible students in grades 1-12. The mandate focuses on two broad categories of giftedness: Academic/Intellectual and Artistic Ability. The mandate is intended to serve students who demonstrate high performance or potential and who require an educational program beyond that normally provided by the general school program in order to achieve their potential.

The total numbers of academically gifted students served in 2003 was almost 70,000 across grades 3-12. This represented about 12.5% of the enrollment in those grades. Students in grades 1 and 2 are typically served by enrichment in the regular classroom and not formally identified. No figures were available for numbers identified for the artistic category of giftedness.

The gifted appropriation for the 2003-04 school year is targeted at \$29,497,533. After the set-asides for serving the artistically gifted (10%) and other line item commitments, about \$25.5 million is available for the academically gifted, or \$380.63 per child (77% of full funding needs). The state does operate Governor's Schools for 11th and 12th graders in math and science and in arts and humanities that are funded in a separate line item in the education budget.

The state's mandate for systemic educational reform is the *Education Accountability Act* (EAA) of 1998, and the state recently secured federal approval for the state's implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. The federal mandate was used as a tool to complement what was already being done in the state, and in May, 2003 the Princeton Review ranked South Carolina's testing and accountability system as the 11th best in the nation.

I. Organizational Structure

In South Carolina, the state consultant in gifted education is housed in the Office of Curriculum and Standards. He also shoulders responsibility for the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs for the state.

II. 59-29-170 of the Code of Laws (Amended 1986). **Programs for talented students**

This mandate, originally enacted in 1976, revised in 1986, and containing provisions for the phase-in of services, required school districts in South Carolina to serve gifted and talented students in accordance with regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education. The basis of the funding formula was delineated (ratio of district gifted and talented students to statewide gifted and talented students within the limits of the appropriation), with a minimal allocation of \$15,000 to a district. Priorities were established for service beginning with the academically gifted in grades 3-12 and excluding students in the state-funded Advanced Placement program at grades 11-12. The legislation further reads that “where funds are insufficient to serve all students in a given category, the district may determine which students within the category shall be served.” Furthermore, districts may use local funds to serve additional students.

As needed, provisos are added to this base legislation annually. The provisos since 1986 have set aside 10% of the funding to serve the artistically gifted student. In FY 2000 an additional cap of \$500,000 was set on testing and teacher training, and provisions for two other related services were also included for funding. The proviso for FY 2003 continued the 10% set-aside for the artistically gifted and increased the cap on testing and teacher training to \$850,000. It included resources for the Eighth Grade Advisement program and the Junior Academy of Science as well. Both recent provisos contained language that each district “shall include an accelerated component as part of its academically gifted and talented program.”

III. Title 19: R43-220 **State Board of Education Regulation: Gifted and Talented**

The effective date of the most current regulation governing gifted and talented education in South Carolina is May of 1999. Because some of the provisions of this regulation resulted in the development of new identification procedures, the field was given a phase-in period for the regulation to take full effect. As of 2003, all provisions of the regulation have been implemented, although some remain in early stages of development.

The stated purpose of the regulation is to provide the framework for the provision of gifted education services that are necessary to secure state funding. The 13-page regulatory document covers identified gifted students in grades 1-12 and is divided into three sections. The first section describes the categories of giftedness that the regulation covers and defines relevant terms. The second section describes the requirements for a program for students who fit into the academic and intellectual ability category, and the third section prescribes the expectations for students who are gifted in the visual and performing arts. Sections II and III are broken down into specific program components.

The gifted and talented population in South Carolina is defined as those students, identified in grades 1-12, who demonstrate “high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require an educational program beyond that normally provided by the general school program.” The two categories are further explicated as follows:

Academic and Intellectual Ability focuses on students who have the academic or intellectual potential to function at a high level in one or more academic areas.

Visual and Performing Arts deals with students who have the artistic potential to function at a high performance level in one or more of the fine arts.

Additional terms defined in this section include academic areas, high level, multi-age classroom, screening, referral, assessment, placement, special school, special class, resource room/pull-out, regular classroom cluster/itinerant teacher, and academic disciplines.

Section II describes the critical elements of the program for students in the Academic category. Part A of this section relates to program elements. The first requirement is that districts must develop a plan that includes specific academic requirements, including a) curriculum, instruction, and assessment that maximize the potential of identified students; b) support services; c) program models used; d) teacher/pupil ratios that foster positive results; and e) sufficient instructional time to accomplish goals and objectives. The focus of this planning document appears to be at the school or instructional level, rather than at the program level. The second requirement in Part A provides additional explication of curriculum, instruction, and assessment expectations, and the third requirement is that districts reference the *South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual* for program models and curriculum requirements. Requirement four delineates the teacher/pupil ratios that are allowed in the approved program models at respective grade levels. These are capped at 1:20 for special schools and special classes across elementary, middle, and high schools, and 1:15 for resource rooms and pull-out programs in elementary and middle schools. Requirement five indicates that extension models may supplement but not supplant the approved program models. Requirement six allows for consortium arrangements to deliver services; seven prescribes that teachers be given 250 minutes per week of planning time; and requirement eight details the minimum minutes per year of instructional time in each model. For grades 1-3, this is 4500 minutes, and it increases from there.

The second component of the section on Academics (Part B) deals with the identification of the population to be served. The model employed must be multi-step, multi-modal, and multi-dimensional and must find, assess, and evaluate each gifted student for placement. The second requirement in this component speaks to the diversity of the gifted population (race, income, nationality, gender, disability). In requirement four, districts are again directed to the *Best Practices Manual* and expected to reference it in regard to identification practices. Requirement five describes the class of student eligible for services with the approval of the District Evaluation Placement Team:

- a) Students grandfathered-in from the prior regulations;
- b) Students who meet criteria in two out of three of the dimensions that are described later;
- c) Students who meet the 96th national age percentile composite score or higher in grades 3-12 or the 98th national age composite or higher in grades 1-2 on an individual or group aptitude test.

Students eligible for services in one district are eligible for services in any district.

Requirement six addresses the screening process. Districts must screen all students by reviewing census aptitude and achievement scores and must accept referrals from staff, parents, and students. Screening must include the following procedures: a) written notification to parents; b) training and guidance for teachers and staff on characteristics of giftedness; c) the inclusion of students with both demonstrated achievement and potential for achievement; and d) alignment with approved SC DOE screening options.

Requirement seven explains the expectations for assessment of eligibility and places safeguards on the use of instruments (i.e., absence of bias, accuracy, use of trained personnel for subjective assessments). No private testing is accepted for eligibility. This portion also describes the three dimensions. These dimensions are (A) Reasoning Abilities, (B) High Achievement in Reading and/or Mathematics, and (C) Intellectual/Academic Performance. The criterion for Dimension A is a score at the 90th percentile on verbal, quantitative, or composite areas of an individual or group aptitude test. Dimension B requires reaching the 94th percentile on a nationally-normed achievement test or the state assessment instrument (called PACT). Dimension C provides two overlapping options. Students in grades 5-12 with grades of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale qualify, or students in grades 1-6 may take a state-developed performance assessment instrument and score at or above 4 on the 5-point scale. No single criterion can eliminate students from gifted program eligibility.

Requirement eight deals with placement. An Evaluation/Placement Team is required, and the composition is delineated. The Team has the right to secure additional assessment before reaching a placement decision and may have a trial period of at least one semester but no longer than a year for probationary cases. This Team must develop written procedures for the removal of students from programs that include appropriate counseling with the student, parents, and teacher. Record confidentiality must be maintained.

Part C of the section on Academics describes staff requirements. Teachers must hold valid teaching certificates and must have completed a state-funded course or approved class. Newly assigned teachers have one year to meet the training requirements; seasoned teachers may be granted a waiver based on approval of their credentials by the DOE. The district must provide ongoing staff development.

Part D pinpoints reporting requirements. Districts are required to report quantitative data on the numbers and race of students referred, screened, determined eligible, and served, and the numbers placed in each service model by grade and school. Enrollment reports are also required to calculate the funding allocation to each district.

Parts E and F deal with funding and Accounting Procedures, respectively. Funding allocations are calculated on the ratio of each district's gifted population to the total state gifted population, with unobligated funds redistributed to serve additional students. Districts serving 40 students or fewer receive a minimum funding of \$15,000 annually for academic programs. Funds used must impact directly on students served, and accounting procedures must conform to other state regulatory documents, with a supplemental schedule completed for the gifted program expenditures.

The third section of the regulation deals with the Artistic population and parallels many of the sections described previously for the Academic population. However, there is no component that

calls for the preparation of a planning document for this category of giftedness. Parts A and B delineate the criteria for selection and placement. Three criteria must be met for eligibility for enrollment: a) superior ability as evaluated by at least two people with expertise in the relevant fine art form using an approved rating instrument; b) demonstrated ability; and c) nomination by teacher, administrator, parent, or peer based on an approved instrument. Expectations for the placement process include the use of an Evaluation/Placement Team, which determines the nomination, screening, and placement procedures and instruments and develops written procedures for removing students (including the provision of counseling), and which follows due process procedures. Record confidentiality must be maintained.

Part C of the third section focuses on staff. Professionals in the visual and performing arts may teach in the gifted program if validated by the state Arts Commission; this is in addition to teachers with certificates. Ongoing staff development is also required as a component of the district's staff development plan.

Part D moves on to the nature of acceptable program models. The arts program must focus on creative expression in one or more areas (dance, drama, music, and visual arts). A diversified program may be offered in grades 1-6, and districts may participate in a consortium arrangement to deliver services. Districts may offer programs during the regular school year or in the summer. The programs must be differentiated, and time parameters are specified. Regular programs require 4500 minutes per year for grades 1-3, extending to 8100 minutes for grades 9-12. Summer programs must be 30 days in length and extend from 2.5 to 5 hours per day, depending on the grade level served. Exceptions must be approved by the DOE.

Part E focuses on enrollment reporting and timelines. Parts F and G address funding and accounting, respectively. The emphasis here is on tying the dollars to the population served and documenting the expenditures.

IV. Trial Placement Policy: Academically Gifted and Talented Program

This recent policy amplifies the language in the regulation that permits the provisional placement of students in programs. This option can be used for students who do not meet the state criteria to participate in state-funded classes, pending availability of space. This policy does not allow a waiver of the approved pupil/teacher ratio in these classes. The policy requires district to establish written criteria for trial placement and for determining satisfactory progress. Such students may not be counted for state funding.

V. South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual

The *South Carolina Gifted Education Best Practices Manual* was recently updated (2001) to help districts align the gifted education curriculum with the state's content standards. The manual contains 100+ pages and is divided into ten chapters. The sequence of the chapters is as follows: gifted education, curriculum and instruction, student assessment and evaluation, program models, program evaluation, professional development, support services, identification, monitoring and reporting, and roles and responsibilities. Although several chapters of the manual refer to sections

of the regulation, the actual regulation cross-references only two of the chapters. These two chapters are the ones focusing on curriculum/instruction and identification.

The chapter on curriculum and instruction focuses on working through the state content standards, not around them, to design appropriate curriculum for the gifted learner. A rationale is provided as to why this standards-based approach is important. The chapter also delineates five curriculum goals that serve as a model for local district curriculum work. These goals are as follows:

- a) to support mastery of core areas of learning at a pace, complexity, abstractness, and depth appropriate for gifted learners;
- b) to develop understanding of concepts, themes, and issues which are fundamental to the disciplines and appreciate the interrelationships among them;
- c) to develop inquiry skills at a level of complexity, abstractness, and depth appropriate;
- d) to develop the skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision making at an appropriate level, and
- e) to develop proficiency in communicating abstract ideas, relationships, and issues.

The importance of scope and sequence is also addressed, and examples are provided of a scope and sequence chart for goals 2-5, broken down by grade-level clusters of 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Attention is given to the provision of services in the general education classroom as well, and a list of content, process, product, and learning environment adaptations for gifted students is included.

The chapter on identification is also highlighted in the state regulation. The chapter speaks to the criteria that are important in a good identification process, including “seeks variety, uses many assessment measures, is free of bias, is fluid, identifies potential, and assesses motivation.” The chapter then provides an explanation of the three dimensions of giftedness (for the academically gifted population) and a detailed description of each step in the process. Sample forms are also included. The steps that are explicated are 1) notification, 2) training/guidance, 3) screening, 4) referrals, 5) assessment, and 6) evaluation/placement.

The *Best Practice Manual* is an impressive piece of work, with all the chapters containing relevant and helpful information. The manual is well aligned with the goals of systemic educational reform in terms of both substance and process, and it emphasizes a dynamic approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment as the centerpiece of effective service delivery. New sections or chapters need to be added to round out the state’s expectations for the category of the artistically gifted as the manual is strongly tied to the academically gifted orientation that has been of paramount emphasis in the state until recently.

VI. Add-on Certification and Endorsement in Gifted and Talented

Endorsement is required of teachers teaching classes and/or courses for the academically gifted category (only) and constitutes six hours of graduate coursework. The citation for the endorsement is found in the regulation on gifted education described earlier (43-220). The two courses must address nature/needs of gifted learners and curriculum/instruction for them. Four South Carolina universities have been approved and funded to provide these endorsement courses: University of Charleston, Coastal Carolina University, Converse College, and the University of SC at Aiken.

Add-on certification is optional and is found under the title of the School Code dealing with licensure (43-62.10). The required coursework varies based on the grade level taught, but a total of 18 semester hours is needed for each level.

VII. State Funding for Gifted Education

The current funding for gifted education has a weighting factor of .30 included in the calculation. Once funding for special programs or priorities (i.e., artistically gifted) is subtracted from the appropriation (which grew from \$21.3 million in 1999 to \$27 million in 2001 before it took a cut), then the dollars for the academically gifted population are calculated on base student cost, the ADM from the 135 day count, and the weighting factor (.30). The calculation is based on numbers that are a year behind the current program operation. Per pupil funding for the Academically gifted program has ranged from a high of \$495 per student in 2001 (and representing 82% of full funding) to its current level (2004) of \$381 per student (77% of full funding). Other services funded out of the gifted line item in the 2004 state budget are testing and training initiatives, the Junior Academy for Science, and the 10% set aside for districts to use for artistically talented students. The state does fund Governor's Schools in the math and sciences and the arts and humanities for gifted learners.

VIII. Supplemental Policies

A recent publication (2002) by the South Carolina DOE called *Focus on High School: A Resource Guide to Recommended Course Sequences for College Prep and Tech Prep Curricula* delineates approved policies on Advanced Placement, honors coursework, and dual enrollment (dual credit) for the state. State Board Regulation 43-258.1 requires all districts serving grades 11 and 12 to offer an Advanced Placement course(s). Courses that are funded by the state have the additional requirement that all enrolled students must take the AP exam for the course. Training requirements for AP teachers are also specified in the regulation. Additional language indicates that students in grades 9-12 may earn college credit that is applied toward the units required for a high school diploma. The state also has a uniform grading scale policy that gives added weight to honors courses meeting specified criteria and to AP courses.

There do not appear to be state policies for early admission to Kindergarten or for distance learning opportunities. This does not mean that local districts cannot set their own policies on these areas.

IX. Education Accountability Act (1998)

This document is the cornerstone of the state's systemic reform agenda and focuses on academic standards and assessments. The language of the act does not specifically recognize the gifted and talented learner as a class of learner but does call for the development of standards that are reflective "of the highest level of academic skills ...so that students are encouraged to learn at unprecedented levels ...at each grade level." The state assessment instruments designed to measure student progress are called the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), and student performance on the subject matter tests for reading and mathematics is considered for inclusion in

gifted program eligibility. Curriculum for all students, including the gifted and talented, must be aligned with the content standards. It is possible to track the performance of identified gifted students on the PACT tests, but the state does not routinely do so.

X. Documents Under Development

The state is currently developing a certificate renewal course on the nature and needs of the gifted and talented using a CD-ROM format. The course has been developed by three college professors who teach the course on campus and in partnership with the South Carolina Educational Television Corporation. Funding was provided through a federal grant.

Overall Assessment of Documentary Evidence

The South Carolina system is very prescriptive, with tight central control of the elements of identification and programming. This attribute creates uniformity in the class identified as gifted and reduces friction for students who transfer from one district to another. Only two categories of gifted are included in the definition, and these two categories (Academic/Intellectual and Artistic) are clearly defined and delineated. State resources have been used for over fifteen years to strengthen services to both categories, but the proportion of funding clearly favors the first category of gifted learner. This is the only state examined that targets a specific portion of the annual allocation to the artistically gifted. This predetermined distribution of resources across the two categories is unusual, but ensures that some level of program development occurs over the spectrum of gifted abilities recognized in the mandate. The mandate for identification covers grades 1-12, making it narrower than other states that often start at kindergarten, but districts are not precluded from initiating services earlier.

One of the strengths of the identification component of the model for the academically gifted is the creation of a multi-tiered approach. This approach is somewhat complicated to understand but creates two classes of eligibility. The first class is the typical gifted learner who scores extremely well on a traditional aptitude measure or scores highly on both an aptitude and achievement measure. However, students who score well on either an aptitude or achievement measure have a fall-back opportunity to take an additional state-developed performance-based test during their early elementary years. (In their later elementary experience, grades can be substituted for the performance assessment instrument.) This approach is intended to foster the identification of minority and low-income gifted learners, whose learning styles often respond well to opportunities to demonstrate a level of effort and to the use of hands-on testing materials. The success of this approach in increasing the diversity of the population served is currently being evaluated by the Center for Gifted Education.

The approach to the specification of the second category of giftedness, the artistically gifted, is also more tightly conceptualized than is typical in the field. The class is narrowly limited to the fine arts areas, and the procedures for identification are appropriate to the defined class. Limiting the definition to the two classes, academically or artistically gifted, avoids some of the dilution of resources that occurs when terms like creatively gifted and leadership abilities are interjected into the population eligibility mix.

The South Carolina regulation is also the only state regulation (of the five states examined) that builds in specific instructional time parameters for gifted programs, and the only state, besides Pennsylvania, that limits teacher-student ratios for gifted education teachers. The attention that has been given to specific curriculum goals and the scope and sequence examples in the state's *Best Practices Manual* are outstanding.

The post-graduate training required of teachers is relatively weak, only consisting of 6 semester credits, rather than the 12 credits that is more typical. The requirement that all gifted education teachers be trained is quite strong and has been supported with state-directed and funded initiatives.

South Carolina does not require that a traditional program plan for gifted education services be developed and submitted to the DOE. The absence of this type of planning document may limit what the state is able to provide in assessing program development needs and determining what to offer in terms of statewide technical assistance and training opportunities. It is likely that most district coordinators have created local documents that address this void.

South Carolina has several policies in place that strengthen the availability of services to gifted learners at the high school level. The inclusion of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate program responsibility in the same program unit (in this case, one person has responsibility for all) has ensured that the policies work together, rather than independently. This was the only state that presented a policy on grade weighting for review. The state does not have a policy for early admission to Kindergarten.

The stated formula for funding appears to be tied to the numbers of gifted students served in relation to the total state gifted population. In this case, districts that have larger numbers of students qualifying for service receive increased dollars. A minimum allocation is in place for small districts, but there does not appear to be any weighting based on district wealth. The separate funding for the Governor's Schools is also a positive feature of this state's model, although this is not unique.

Although the state's legislation for systemic educational reform has no verbiage which specifically references the gifted and talented learner, the *Best Practices Manual* is clearly based on integrating the educational reform agenda into the operation of gifted program services. This is addressed in terms of identification practices, curriculum requirements and expectations, and student and program accountability. The orientation of the gifted program to ensuring that the gifted student's needs are met in both the general education program as well as through other service interventions advances strong programming options across the educational continuum. The state has information systems in place to track the performance of gifted students on the state PACT tests, but does not routinely do so.

Virginia Document Review

Introduction

Thirteen documents (or document sections) were examined in order to describe and assess written documentation promulgated for the Commonwealth of Virginia. These documents were selected in consultation with Barbara McGonagill, Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education. All of the documents were downloaded from websites under the umbrella of the Virginia Department of Education via their web-address at www.pen.k12.va.us or were sent to the reviewer by Barbara. Hard copies of the *Virginia Plan for the Gifted*, the state's standards for gifted education, are no longer being distributed by the Department, given the document's accessibility through the internet.

The commonwealth of Virginia has 132 school divisions that served almost 1.2 million students in FY 2002. The state has over 88,000 classroom teachers. The average per pupil expenditure was \$7,836.

Virginia has a mandate that requires both identification and programming for gifted students K - 12. Although the regulations identify four categories of giftedness, divisions (LEA's) are only required to identify and serve in one of the first two categories: general intellectual or specific academic. There are no state cut-offs for identification, so each division may determine its own eligibility as long as it adheres to procedural identification requirements. Furthermore, the role of the DOE is to review and suggest improvements to local gifted education plans, but the DOE does not have approval authority. Virginia is an example of a state with a gifted education mandate, but circumscribed central authority.

Across the state, almost 140,000 gifted students (unduplicated count) were served in 2001-02, with 59% drawn from general intellectual aptitude and 44% from specific academic aptitude. This represented 11.9% of the school population. State funding has grown to around \$23.5 million in the 2002-03 budget, and the allocation per gifted child in the 2001-02 school year was \$166 (based on an appropriation of \$23.2 million). This was down slightly from a high of \$168 per gifted child in the previous year.

Title 8 of Chapter 20 of the Virginia Administrative Code (dealing with education) and Title 22 of the Code of Virginia are the over-arching legal documents for the state. The *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* (20-40-10 through 20-40-70) are embedded in Title 8 of the VAC and are the primary regulations that impact or circumscribe the policy framework for gifted education in the state. The *Virginia Plan for the Gifted* is a companion document that contains the recommended standards for local district programs.

Other relevant regulatory components, particularly in light of Virginia's reform initiative, should also be noted. *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131-10 et seq.) require that "each school shall provide students identified as gifted/talented with instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with gifted/talented students" (Part IV). Additional sections of these regulations offer some flexibility in state testing procedures (related to the passage of proficiency exams) for

advanced learners. An add-on endorsement for gifted education is delineated in 8 VAC 20-21-270. Chapter 13.2 of Title 22 of the Code of Virginia details the Standards of Quality for schools. Two of the standards (Standard 1. Basic skills, selected programs, and instructional personnel, and Standard 5. Training and Professional Development) have elements that address gifted education expectations. Standard 1. calls for “early identification of gifted students and enrollment of such students in appropriately differentiated instructional programs.”

The Standards of Quality and the Standards of Accreditation together contain the elements of Virginia’s systemic reform agenda. Virginia’s educational accountability system is ranked as the 5th best in the country according to the independent *Princeton Review*, but the application for funding under the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* is not yet approved (6/1/03).

The state often uses both the terms “division” and “district.” The distinction is that districts have taxing ability, but divisions do not.

I. Organizational Structure

The full-time state consultant for gifted education is housed in the Division of Instruction in the Unit for Secondary Instruction. She also has responsibility for the Governor’s Schools program.

II. A Brief History of Gifted Education in the Commonwealth

This document is available on the Virginia DOE website and provides a succinct history of the evolution of the state’s role in gifted education since the early sixties, when the state superintendent appointed a steering committee to consider the meaning, purpose, and need for gifted education services. Gifted education was initially posited as an extension of special education (1971) but through successive iterations of the Standards of Quality achieved in own independent status with the current (2001) language requiring, “Early identification of gifted students and enrollment of such students in appropriately differentiated instructional programs.” In 1973, the first four summer residential Governor’s schools were established, the predecessors of 40+ sites today operating summer residential, summer regional, and academic year programs, serving 7,500+ students. Funding for these programs is a separate line item in the state budget.

In the 1973-75 biennium budget, funding was first awarded to local school divisions, with an allocation of 30 dollars per child for up to 3% of the divisions ADM. The allocation formula and the amount have changed significantly since that time. The *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* were first approved in 1980 and have gone through 3 revisions, with the latest version in effect since 1994. The *Virginia Plan for the Gifted* is a companion document that in some cases clarifies, and in other cases extends, language in the regulations.

III. Department of Virginia Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students (8 VAC 20-40-10 through 70)

This document, adopted by the State Board of Education, February 25, 1993, is the state’s major regulatory document governing its mandate for gifted education. It contains a preamble that sets the stage and seven sections. The preamble links gifted education to the State Constitution and to the

state's Standards of Quality. It further indicates that these regulations, when coupled with the *VA Plan for the Gifted*, provide guidelines to ensure compliance with the statute. The statute has statewide applicability with an effective date of 1995.

Critical sections of the regulations are highlighted below.

Section 20-40-20 contains the definitions for the mandate. Gifted students are defined as K-12 students in public elementary and secondary schools "whose abilities and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs." They will be identified "by professionally qualified persons through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated abilities and who have evidence of high performance capabilities, which may include leadership, in one or more of the following areas." The four areas identified are intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, technical and practical arts aptitude, and visual or performing arts aptitude. These four areas are also defined, as are the following terms: appropriately differentiated curricula, identification, placement, screening, service options, and student outcomes.

Sections 20-40-40 through 20-40-50 deal with identification and criteria for screening and identification. Each school division must establish uniform procedures and common criteria. If a division decides to serve the category of specific academic aptitude, it must include the content areas of science, mathematics, and humanities. Referrals must be accepted from school personnel, parents (guardians), persons with related expertise, peers, and self-nominations. The information must be examined by a building or division-level committee. Eligible students must be offered differentiated services, and the division must maintain a review procedure for appealed cases.

Program eligibility must be based on multiple criteria, including four or more of the following:

- Assessment of student products, performance, or portfolio
- Record of observations of in-classroom behavior
- Appropriate rating scales, checklists, and or questionnaires
- Individual interview
- Individual or group aptitude test
- Individual or group achievement tests
- Record of previous accomplishments
- Additional valid and reliable measures

If intellectual aptitude is one of the categories served, then aptitude measures are required. If specific academic aptitude is one of the categories served, then an aptitude or achievement measure in the specific area is required. If either visual/performing arts or technical/practical arts is served, then relevant performance measures are required. No single criterion shall be used to determine students who qualify for, or are denied access to, a gifted program.

The local plan requirements are delineated in Section 20-40-60. These requirements specify that local plans must be submitted to DOE for approval (currently every 5 years). The plan must contain 13 specified elements including the following:

- Philosophy

- Program goals/objectives
- Procedures for identification and placement in at least one of the four areas
- Procedures regarding parental notification on testing and placement
- Procedure for notifying parents regarding change of placement (including exit) and allowing discussion of concerns
- Assurances regarding maintenance of school records
- Assurances regarding breadth and efficacy of identification instruments related to cultural and linguistic diversity and under-served and disabled populations and instrument validation and interpretation,
- Procedures to identify/evaluate student outcomes based on cognitive and affective needs
- Procedures to match service options with student needs,
- Framework for differentiated curricula
- Procedures for selection/evaluation of teachers and training of relevant personnel
- Procedures for program evaluation, and other information as required by DOE.

In FY 2000, House Bill 2415 made some changes to the Standards of Quality in relation to reporting requirements affiliated with this regulation. One of these revisions was to give the DOE permission to reformat and restructure the Annual Report and the Local Plan which were to be submitted by the local division (LEA). The second revision also permitted the department the latitude to conduct on-site, as well as paper, reviews of LEA compliance. Furthermore, written report specifications issued by the DOE required electronic submission of the data in spread-sheet format (Superintendent's Memo No. 20, 5/3/02).

The establishment of a local advisory committee that annually reviews the district plan and makes recommendations through the division superintendent to the local school board is another requirement detailed in the original Section 20-40-60. This committee must annually review and evaluate the plan and its implementation, with the recommendations of the committee submitted in writing. However, a legislative revision enacted in 2000 to the Standards of Quality gave the local advisory committee direct access to the school board.

Section 20-40-70 focuses on funding, and requires that state funds can only be used to support services identified in approved plan.

IV. *The Virginia Plan for the Gifted* (Revised 1996)

The Virginia Plan for the Gifted is a companion piece to the *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* and is designed to clarify and augment the regulations in order to assist local school personnel in the development of a comprehensive plan of educational services for gifted students. The plan responded to specific Virginia Standards of Quality that called for criteria in the early identification of gifted students, staff preparation to serve the needs of gifted students, and the requirement to establish and evaluate differentiated programs. The plan was further spurred by the adoption of curriculum Standards of Learning (SOL) in four content areas and the intent to ensure the alignment of standards with the needs of the gifted learner. The plan was developed and revised by a committee of stakeholders in the field and currently consists of nine sections. Unlike the regulations, which carry the force of law, the plan offers guidelines to district to clarify expectations for program delivery.

The plan speaks to four goals: a) All gifted students in K - 12 shall be appropriately identified and enrolled in services to meet their needs; b) DOE personnel and support staff should be designated and assigned responsibility for these students; c) Funding is based on a composite index cost per-pupil formula and considered comparable to other areas of exceptionality; and d) LEA's must designate an administrator responsible for services to this population.

Relevant points made in the Virginia plan that supplement the Virginia regulations are summarized by category below.

The section on identification makes the following points. Eligibility must seek out aptitude in all populations. The identification effort should begin early, be ongoing, and include an active search for the culturally different gifted learner. The screening process should be routine and annual, with active solicitation from key stakeholders. Additional efforts may be warranted to identify special populations (such as culturally different, disabled, low-income), and suggested strategies are offered. Parents/guardians must be informed before testing of special testing actions being taken. Schools need written formal policies on program entry and exit and appeals procedures. Separate identification procedures are required for each category of giftedness. The procedures and policies used by the Identification/Placement committee need to be written down and re-evaluated annually. All decisions must be documented and written records kept.

The section on programming re-enforces the idea that program adaptations are necessary and identifies possible services models such as grade level or content acceleration, enrichment through pull-out or seminar models, direct instruction in problem-solving skills, and student team competitions. This section also identifies standards for the operation of the model(s) chosen, including the need for the sequential, continuous integration with total school program, optimal match to needs, etc. The current manual identifies 15-16 service options (e.g. special classes, seminars, mentorships, etc), having grown from the nine in the original listing. Expectations for curriculum modification are also addressed in this section, including alignment with the Standards of Learning, the need for balance among content, process, and product skills, an emphasis on inter-disciplinarity and integration of learning strategies, and the provision of appropriate levels of challenge, etc. The section encourages specialists in curriculum/instruction to seek technical assistance. The plan advised that community involvement be quite deliberate and expands the role of the Advisory Committee to planning, developing, and evaluating programs. These guidelines support community involvement in order to extend the program and the financial resources that are available at the local level.

The section on funding re-enforces the responsibility for the local match based on the composite index. It also provides advice on appropriate areas of expenditure, including identification and placement process costs, salaries and benefits for trained staff working with gifted students, staff development costs, curriculum modification costs, program information dissemination, student tuition, etc.

The section on personnel selection and training speaks to the need for a continuum of staff development activities. Expectations for program administrators in terms of duties and training are defined here. There is also the suggestion that the entire instructional staff receive some level of

training, with teachers of the gifted receiving more comprehensive training. Areas of training for teachers of the gifted are laid out. Also recommended is special training for guidance counselors and school psychologists. Collaboration with state colleges and universities is encouraged.

A section on evaluation explains that the district's gifted evaluation plan should clearly address student performance, instructional services, staff development, and parent/community involvement. Evaluation sources should include administrators, parents, students, and teachers, and the evaluation plan should be conducted annually.

In the version of the plan that is provided on the internet, the regulation is included as the first appendix. There are four additional appendices provided. Appendix 2 provides a sample of Local School Division Goals and Activities. Appendix 3 presents the State Department of Education Goals and Activities. The key elements of the DOE's goals include developing and implementing a state plan, providing technical assistance to support service delivery, developing a state budget for maintaining and expanding program services, supporting the maintenance and expansion of Governor's School Programs, evaluating local plans for the gifted (including developing and disseminating DOE minimum evaluation standards and criteria and submitting and annual report to state superintendent), and providing liaison/collaboration to relevant publics. Appendix 4 is the list of the State Advisory Committee members, and Appendix 5, a list of State and National Organizations with a vested interest in Gifted Education.

V. (Teacher Licensure) *Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131-70) and *Regulations Governing Licensure* (22.1-298)

This standard for accreditation requires that "identified g/t students will be provided with instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with g/t students." Title 22.1-298 of the Code of Virginia further ensures that persons seeking licensure after 2000 complete study in gifted education, including the use of multiple criteria to identify gifted students. The actual sentence couples gifted education and attention deficit disorder as specific foci of training. An add-on endorsement (8 VAC 20-21-270) in gifted education is sanctioned by the DOE Office of Teacher Certification and Licensure, consisting of 12 semester hours of graduate-level course-work and a practicum of 45 instructional hours (practicum may be waived if one year of successful full-time teaching has been substituted). The add-on endorsement requires competency in understanding the following areas: (a) the principles of the integration of gifted and regular education; (b) the characteristics of gifted children; (c) specific techniques to identify gifted students; (d) relevant educational and instructional models and materials; (e) theory and principles of differentiation; (f) contemporary issues and research in gifted education; and (g) proficiency in grammar, usage, and mechanics and their integration in writing. However, teachers are not required to have this endorsement. The professional standards promulgated by CEC are not referenced in this document.

The Standards of Quality in Title 22 do require local districts to provide "a program of professional development, as part of the license renewal process, to assist teachers and principals in acquiring the skills necessary to work with gifted students."

VI. Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted (2001-2006)

This 18+ page document is available on the internet and is designed for manual or electronic completion. Much of the form allows for narrative responses, but there are also a number of charts or checklists that must be completed. It is sub-divided into five parts, as follows:

Part I: Requires Mission Statements (for both the district and the gifted program), program philosophy statement, and specific goals for identification, service delivery, curriculum development, staff development, and parent/community involvement.

Part II: Requires specific descriptions of program elements including screening, identification, eligibility, placement determination, and notification/appeals processes and procedures by category of giftedness; code-based matrix of options used for service by category of giftedness and grade level clusters, with separate listings of all center-based programs; curriculum framework including theory, instructional strategies, and assessment strategies by category of giftedness; identification of full and part-time personnel and training requirements by position within program setting and methods of staff selection and evaluation; and strategies for parent/community involvement.

Part III: Requires concrete elements of the five-year plan including objectives, activities, responsible positions, timelines, and expected results; a second form is provided to summarize the objectives due yearly.

Part IV: Requires quantitative description of the composition of the Advisory Committee by role, process of member selection, and frequency of meetings, includes assurances on testing requirements, and provides a signature block for the Superintendent's sign-off.

Part V: Reminds applicants to attach relevant appendices.

VII. Revised Guide (October, 2000) for Completing the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted 2001-2006

This seven-page document provides guidance to districts on the completion of the Five Year Plan. It clarifies that goal statements should not be based on delivering the services that are already required but should focus on program growth and development. The guide also states that the division (LEA) must address the screening, identification, and placement for students in either the General Intellectual Aptitude or in the Specific Academic Aptitude areas, with other categories optional. Although reference is made to the *Virginia Plan for the Education of the Gifted* as the reference for this interpretation, the written plan itself does not actually appear to state such. Other aspects of the guidelines provide explication of specific procedural elements and commitments that need to be stated clearly in each section. For instance, the district must clearly state that it "will screen any student K-12 that is referred." Recommended appendices are also detailed, including copies of all referral forms, an outline of staff development offered by the district, and a narrative of the division's program.

VIII. Peer Review Guidelines

The review of LEA gifted education plans is a two-step process with state personnel evaluating the division's plan for clarity, completion, and appropriate use of terminology. At the second level, peers drawn from local districts review plans for evidence of compliance. The 14-page review form uses a checklist (Evident or Not Evident) to document specific elements or requirements of the

plan. The review form conforms to previously noted legal requirements. However, one element in the checklist asks about strategies for screening and identifying special populations of gifted learners. Although this was *discussed* in the guidelines, it appears that it is actually authorized by a joint House and Senate Resolution (HJR 251, SJR 491).

IX. Annual Report

Districts complete an electronic Annual Report, to be submitted to the state, focused on quantitative program parameters. As noted previously, authority for this report is granted in Article 22 of the Code of Virginia. The data that are collected include grade level breakdowns of gifted students served by category of giftedness, ethnicity of identified students (6 categories), numbers of students referred by grade level, number of designated full and part-time gifted teachers and levels of training, including those with add-on endorsements and advanced degrees in the field. A matrix must also be completed, detailing, first by category of giftedness and secondly by grade level cluster, the numbers of students in specific types of services or settings. The state provides a composite of this information, available on the internet.

X. Funding Documents

Three documents were examined to understand the funding allocated to gifted education. The first document provided the format that the state uses in calculating the state and the LEA shares in funding. This form divides the state budget into three categories. Funding for gifted education is treated in Section I that focuses on Standards of Quality Programs. Other programs in this area deal with basic aid, special education, remedial education, etc. In FY 99-00, the state's gifted allocation was \$21,579,208. Last year the state allocation was \$23,175,154 or \$166 per gifted child. The statewide total of the local match is not calculated in by the DOE. In addition to this program support funding, Section III of the budget contains a separate allocation for Governor's Schools. In FY 01-02 this was \$6+ million.

The formula for calculating the state and local allocation was provided in an email prepared by the state specialist in gifted education. It states that the state's share of the formula is based on the (number of students in grades K-5 divided by 1000) times (one minus the composite index) times (\$35,384 for an elementary teacher) PLUS (number of students in grades 6-12 divided by 1,000) times (one minus the composite index) times (\$37,337 for a secondary teacher). The local match uses the same formula except the second portion of the formula uses the actual composite index rather than one minus the composite index. The composite index is, of course, a barometer of school wealth.

XI. Supplemental Policy Documents

Recent legislative changes have strengthened supplementary policies for high ability learners. In the 2000 session, House Bill 1196 waived the 140-hour class attendance requirement for qualified students, amending the Standards of Accreditation. An additional piece of legislation contained language that allows for the use of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate to be substituted for the state assessment tests in relevant subjects and grade levels. Other bills extended the Gifted Education Pilot Program and the Gifted Education Consortium until 2003, but allocated

no funding for either initiative. No policies on dual credit or early enrollment in Kindergarten were presented for examination.

XII. Documents Under Development

The Virginia DOE has a number of documents under development that are not available for public scrutiny. One of this is an alignment of the state standards with the NAGC standards. Other documents under development are not available at this time.

Overall Assessment of Documentary Evidence

Documents examined from the Commonwealth of Virginia verify that the state has a mandate that encompasses both the identification and the provision of services to the gifted population. This mandate gives local districts control over the selection of identification instruments and cut-off scores in the identification process. The state policy requires that districts serve gifted students in either the general intellectual aptitude or the specific academic aptitude categories of giftedness. The other categories of giftedness specified in the regulation are optional. Even with this local discretion, the state identifies just under 12% of the population as gifted, not unlike other states with more rigid parameters. The standards for districts to use in establishing identification procedures include the need for multiple instruments, attention to under-served populations, and the use of a placement committee.

Local districts must develop a plan for gifted education, under the auspices of a local advisory committee, and secure approval from the local board of education prior to submitting the plan to the Virginia DOE. The Virginia DOE has the authority to approve the plan, but must make the approval decision based on the plan's compliance with the state regulation. The state has additional guidelines, articulated in the Virginia Plan for the Gifted, that are used to identify best practice in the field, and the DOE may recommend changes to the local district based on these guidelines. These guidelines contain well conceptualized and articulated standards for gifted programming, but do not contain minimal standards for instructional contact time or student/teacher ratios. The standards do address many of the elements in the NAGC standards, although the state has not yet completed the alignment review process. Furthermore, although the state does have approval authority over the plans and requires annual statistical reports from districts, there is no formal monitoring mechanism.

Although the state does require that instructional staff for the gifted are trained or experienced in gifted education, local districts may determine how this standard is operationalized. The state does sanction an add-on endorsement in gifted education of 14 graduate education hours, consisting of 12 graduate hours with an additional two-hour practicum. There is also an undergraduate requirement that teacher preparation programs include some coursework in gifted education. There does not seem to be an effort to change the focus of the endorsement to a performance-based model based on the CEC standards.

Supplemental policy components indicate that the state has some provisions that offer flexibility to advanced learners. These include waivers on class attendance and exam taking. No policies were presented regarding early admission, dual enrollment, or weighed grading scales. The state does

invest in the Governor's School concept and has created a variety of academic structures to serve gifted high school students across the state.

The funding formula for gifted education is tied to a district's total population and is adjusted for school wealth. A local match is required. The per pupil allocation for the gifted learner appears to be smaller than those in other states examined, but does not include the local match, which is usually about one-third additional dollars.

There is evidence that the educational reform initiative in Virginia is highly regarded in terms of national comparisons. The state's approach to reform has been to amend the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Quality, rather than to introduce a new piece of stand-alone legislation. To the state's credit, the gifted learner is referenced in these standards both in terms of having educational services and qualified instructional staff in place. There does not, however, appear to be a mechanism in place that lets the state track the performance of identified gifted students on the state assessments.

Section III: Document Review: Alignment of NAGC Standards and State Policies

The following charts illustrate the relationship between the policies of the states examined for this review (Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia), as reported in the document reviews, and the guiding principles for each section of the Pre-K – Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards created by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Each chart is followed by a summary explanation and uses the following symbols to illustrate the alignment of policy and NAGC standards:

- Y = YES, the state policy meets criteria stated in the principle
- N = NO, the state policy does not meet any criteria in the principle
- S = The state policy meets SOME of the criteria stated in the principle

Student Identification

NAGC Principle: Student Identification <u>Description:</u> Gifted learners must be assessed to determine appropriate educational services.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. A comprehensive and cohesive process for student nomination must be coordinated in order to determine eligibility for gifted education services.	N	Y	S	Y	S
2. Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility for gifted education services must measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs in order to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strengths.	N	Y	S	S	Y
3. A student assessment profile of individual strengths and needs must be developed to plan appropriate intervention.	N	S	S	N	N
4. All student identification procedures and instruments must be based on current theory and research.	N	S	S	S	S
5. Written procedures for student identification must include at the very least provisions for informed consent, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures.	N	S	S	S	S

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies on student identification and the NAGC guiding principles on Student Identification. With the exception of Indiana, the states in this review include some aspect of most of the NAGC standards in their policies. The weakest standard under Student Identification for the states included in this review was the requirement for a student assessment profile of strengths and needs to plan intervention for each individual student. The strongest compliance with the NAGC standards was within the categories of screening procedures and instruments used for student assessment.

Many of the states mention part of a guiding principle but do not meet all of the criteria for that principle. For example, none of the states specifically mention that their policies and procedures are based on current theory and research, but many of their policies reflect current best practice in gifted education. Also, few of the states' definitions of giftedness align with the guiding principle that requires a state assessment of students to "provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strengths."

Professional Development

NAGC Principle: Professional Development <u>Description:</u> 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.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. A comprehensive staff development program must be provided for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners.	N	Y	N	S	S
2. Only qualified personnel should be involved in the education of gifted learners.	N	N	N	S	S
3. School personnel require support for their specific efforts related to the education of gifted learners.	N	N	N	S	N
4. The educational staff must be provided with time and other support for the preparation and development of the differentiated education plans, materials, curriculum.	N	N	N	Y	N

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies on professional development and the NAGC guiding principles on Professional Development. Only one state, South Carolina, addresses each of the specified guiding principles. The weakest alignment for all of the states was in the categories related to support services for school personnel and educational staff. The policy for South Carolina was the strongest of all of the states, with mandated teacher/pupil ratios and prescribed preparation and instructional time; however, the funding for materials, etc., was listed as only meeting 77% of indicated need, which is correlated to funding level.

The strongest alignment for this standard was the guiding principle related to comprehensive staff development. North Carolina’s policy was the most prescriptive for staff development, including a requirement of each district plan to “outline the staff development needs for all categories of staff who have any responsibility in the” gifted education program. South Carolina only requires minimal training, only for academically gifted, and the remaining states mention ongoing staff development but with few prescribed guidelines.

Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling

NAGC Principle: Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling <u>Description:</u> Gifted education programming must establish a plan to recognize and nurture the unique socio-emotional development of gifted learners.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. Gifted learners must be provided with differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique socio-emotional development.	N	N	N	N	N
2. Gifted learners must be provided with career guidance services especially designed for their unique needs.	S	N	N	N	N
3. Gifted at-risk students must be provided with guidance and counseling to help them reach their potential.	N	N	N	N	N
4. Gifted learners must be provided with affective curriculum in addition to differentiated guidance and counseling services.	N	N	N	N	N
5. Underachieving gifted learners must be served rather than omitted from differentiated services.	N	N	N	N	N

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies and the NAGC guiding principles on Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling. Most of the states require local school district plans to have a counseling and guidance component but do not specify the required components within counseling and guidance services and therefore do not align well with the NAGC guiding principles. This area is the weakest of all the areas regarding alignment to NAGC standards. Indiana is the only state that partially aligns with the principle regarding career guidance through the development of a manual entitled *The Advanced Placement Program and Indiana Institutions of Higher Learning*.

Program Evaluation

NAGC Principle: Program Evaluation <u>Description:</u> Program evaluation is the systematic study of the value and impact of services provided.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. An evaluation must be purposeful.	N	Y	N	N	Y
2. An evaluation must be efficient and economic.	N	N	N	N	N
3. An evaluation must be conducted competently and ethically.	N	N	N	N	S
4. The evaluation results must be made available through a written report.	N	N	N	N	N

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies and the NAGC guiding principles on Program Evaluation. This is the second weakest area of alignment in this review of state policies. Most states require local plans to have an evaluation component but the quality of the evaluation is not prescribed or specified. A few of the states only require ratings equivalent to compliant/non-compliant to prescribed components and do not address the effectiveness of the program itself. Virginia and North Carolina were the only states that indicated a clear purpose for the evaluation component of the district plans. Virginia is the only state that indicated including multiple stakeholder groups as sources of feedback and therefore partially aligns with the guiding principle that requires evaluations “to be conducted competently and ethically.”

Program Design

NAGC Principle: Program Design <u>Description:</u> The development of appropriate gifted education programming requires comprehensive services based on sound philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners.	N	Y	S	Y	Y
2. Gifted education must be adequately funded.	N	Y	N	S	N
3. Gifted education programming must evolve from a comprehensive and sound base.	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
4. Gifted education programming services must be an integral part of the general education school day.	N	N	N	S	Y
5. Flexible groupings of students must be developed in	N	S	S	N	N

order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.					
6. Policies specific to adapting and adding to the nature and operations of the general education program are necessary for gifted education.	N	N	N	N	Y

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies and the NAGC guiding principles on Program Design. The weakest alignments between state policy and guiding principles are in the categories that address integration of gifted education within the general education program and funding. The strongest alignment was related to providing a continuum of services and establishing a strong rationale for the structure of the gifted program; this determination was based on the strong state definitions of giftedness and alignment between definition and services provided.

Administration and Management

NAGC Principle: Administration and Management <u>Description:</u> Appropriate gifted education programming must include the establishment of a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing services.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. Appropriately qualified personnel must direct services for the education of gifted learners.	N	S	S	N	N
2. Gifted education programming must be integrated into the general education program.	N	N	N	S	Y
3. Gifted education programming must include positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as compliance agencies.	N	N	N	N	S
4. Requisite resources and materials must be provided to support the efforts of gifted education programming.	S	S	N	S	N

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies and the NAGC guiding principles on Administration and Management. The weakest alignment in this standard is regarding the building of positive relationships with constituency and advocacy groups. Virginia is the only state that incorporates an advisory committee at the state and local level and uses multiple stakeholders in the evaluation component. The strongest alignment for this standard is in regards to resources and support. Most of the states are also weak in their requirements for qualified personnel at the administrative or district level and in the integration of gifted education into the general education program.

Curriculum and Instruction

NAGC Principle: Curriculum and Instruction <u>Description:</u> Gifted education services must include curricular and instructional opportunities directed to the unique needs of the gifted child.	Indiana	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Virginia
1. Differentiated curriculum for the gifted learner must span grades pre-K–12.	N	S	S	S	S
2. Regular classroom curricula and instruction must be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.	N	S	S	S	S
3. Instructional pace must be flexible to allow for the accelerated learning of gifted learners as appropriate.	N	S	Y	N	Y
4. Educational opportunities for subject and grade skipping must be provided to gifted learners.	N	Y	Y	N	Y
5. Learning opportunities for gifted learners must consist of continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials.	N	Y	Y	N	Y

This chart illustrates the alignment between the state policies and the NAGC guiding principles on Curriculum and Instruction. The strongest areas of alignment in this category are with the guiding principles for differentiated curriculum across the pre-K-12 grade span and the modification of regular classroom curricula and instruction through various types of individualized learning plans. The weakest area of alignment is within the principle that discusses flexible instructional pacing.

All of the states omit pre-K in their programming and South Carolina also omits Kindergarten in their programming and services. However, a few of the states do allow for early entrance of 4-year-olds into Kindergarten but leave this decision to district level administration. While most of the states include policies that partially meet the requirement for differentiated curricula and modified regular classroom curricula, the types of modifications vary between the states from prescribed individualized education plans to an alternative summer program instead of a school-year program.

Section IV: Within-State Analysis Stakeholders' Assessment

Indiana

The results of an interview and a focus group session held in Indiana are reported below. The interview was conducted with the state Program Manager for Gifted/Talented & High Ability Services. The focus group members were representatives of advocacy organizations, higher education, and school corporations.

Definition and Identification

The state of Indiana's permissive mandate allows corporations to decide what type of gifted learner is to be served and does not limit the numbers of gifted students who may be identified at the corporation level. Thus, the range of the percentages of the school population served through a gifted program varies from 1-100% at the corporation level. The breadth of the definitional sweep across the six acceptable domains of general intellectual, general creative, specific academic, technical and practical arts, visual and performing arts, and interpersonal permits tremendous latitude in the design of services and programs for gifted learners. A report prepared by the Indiana Association for the Gifted supports these findings by citing a failure of the mandate to state which domains of giftedness must be addressed. Procedures for identifying students for gifted programs are not included in the statute; however, the Regulations for High Ability Students do specify that corporations include a multifaceted student assessment plan with performance-based, potential-based, and alternative assessment dimensions. The Indiana Department of Education has funded a grant, the High Ability Identification Project, to establish a standard, operational definition of giftedness for use throughout the state. This grant will also provide coordinators with information to establish and review their identification procedures.

Responses from the focus group echo the concern with a lack of a state mandate requiring corporations to identify and serve gifted students. The focus group comments also express a concern regarding the possible disconnect between the written plan submitted to the state and its implementation, and the lack of a mechanism to measure the quality of programming. The state Program Manager also cited the "variability of services and identification throughout [the] state" as a weakness in the state's gifted policy.

Service Delivery and Programs

The Indiana Code (IC) and the Indiana Administrative Code (IAC) do not specify gifted program services that must be available to K-12 students. Both the IC and the IAC do contain requirements that each corporation's gifted plan include a component on program development and implementation, with specific plans for curriculum and instructional strategies and program assessment, but the quality of these requirements is not monitored. The IAC does indicate that "services outside the school day may supplement, but not supplant, the levels of services provided."

Focus group members indicated that choice of program type (e.g. cluster grouping, pull-out enrichment, self-contained, etc.), is up to the local corporations, and that evaluation of programs is also under local control. Other focus group comments describe a lack of accountability for program quality and excuses by local corporations not providing gifted services based on lack of funding. The Program Manager also indicated that local control of programming includes decisions such as early entrance to Kindergarten and early graduation from High School and that there are inconsistencies across the state in regard to types of programming.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Local school corporation plans must include specific plans for curriculum and instructional strategies, but the quality of these plans is not clearly prescribed. A report by the Indiana Association for the Gifted states that the current mandate for gifted education does not require differentiation in the core curriculum and advocates strengthening curriculum standards, specifically through providing financial and programmatic support for the Advanced Placement (AP) program.

The impact of standards-based curriculum reform was evident in comments from the focus group regarding curriculum standards. The standards were perceived as not being aimed at the needs of gifted learners; the standards were also cited as the cause for schools to increase focus on students not reaching proficiency on standards-based curriculum assessments. The Program Manager shared that programmatic emphasis on curriculum has decreased since the Gifted and Talented Program moved out of the Curriculum and Instruction department.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

The state's approach to strengthening the licensing of teachers of the gifted represents a performance-based approach to licensure linked to nationally recognized professional standards (CEC). Colleges and universities are responsible for awarding the educational certification. However, local districts are allowed to establish the staff qualifications necessary to teach in the local gifted education program. Both the IC and the IAC require local corporation plans to include a component on professional development but do not prescribe specific requirements for a professional development plan.

Focus group members shared that the state needs to require a minimum level of training for teachers that work with gifted learners. The Program Manager indicated that the new license to be phased in by 2006 will be embedded at the undergraduate or pre-service teacher-preparation level and may discourage teachers from developing content expertise because of its emphasis on generic pedagogy. She also stated that "the work we do with the Educational Service Centers improves services at local school corporations and they do on-going professional development."

District Program Administration and Management

Indiana is a locally controlled state with a permissive rather than mandatory policy on gifted and talented education. Local school corporations must develop and submit a local plan for serving gifted students to secure state funding for services. The focus group indicated that the state program

needs strong leaders to promote gifted education interests but that school corporations are accustomed to local control and planning. The Program Manager cited local control as a positive and effective policy in the state, as well as the newly established State Advisory Board and collaboration within the state Department of Education. She also added that “the local plan must be approved by the local school board or designee (e.g. Superintendent).

Aspects of the Role of State Government

The role of the state is to support the development of local services by providing information/materials, technical assistance, research and development activities, and professional development. The state also has the authority to establish requirements that local plans must meet if funding is to be awarded; however, these requirements tend to be process-oriented or descriptive. Public Law 221 is the educational reform platform for the state and has components dealing with academic standards, accountability and assessment, accreditation, professional development, data, and school improvement. The Princeton Review ranked the Indiana accountability system as 27th in the nation; the state has been approved for the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* funding.

One member of the focus group commented that “higher-level curriculum is feared or not allowed because of the necessity of preparing for” the state’s assessment of students. Generally, the focus group members highlighted the effect of federal education legislation on state requirements, specifically an emphasis on proficiency rather than reaching each child’s full potential. The Program Manager referred to the state’s relationship with local corporations through the Educational Service Centers and therefore the state’s effect upon local program development.

Supplemental Policies

No formal supplemental policy documents have been examined. Several documents are under development but not ready for review. These include a handbook of relevant readings for educators of the gifted, materials on program evaluation, materials to assist coordinators in establishing and reviewing identification procedures, and a manual to provide high school students with information about the College Board Advanced Placement courses, and the policies of each Indiana college and university regarding the award of course credit.

Funding

In the 2001-2002 school year, districts reported serving 91,380 gifted students. Indiana’s current appropriation to support gifted education is \$5.8 million, representing a 15% cut from the previous fiscal year. Of this amount, \$4.8 million goes to corporations based on a funding formula. The formula ensures a floor of \$10,000 to each district plus an apportionment based on the total district population. Grants have typically ranged from \$14,300 to \$87,500, but more recently were reduced in size due to funding cuts. This has also reduced the per pupil average from \$64.00 to \$53.00. The lack of an adequately funded mandate was cited as a weakness by both the focus group and the state Program Manager.

Assessment of Strengths, Limitations, and Priorities for Improvement

Responses assessing the relative strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement included comments from focus group members and the state Program Manager. The themes that emerged across sources for major strengths were the inclusion of multifaceted methods of identification, flexibility of state definition of “high ability,” local control, supplemental policies and materials in development, strong working relationships within the state Department of Education, the newly established State Advisory Board, and the stronger teacher licensure program. The “high ability definition recognizes difference from others in the environment as signifying need for difference in instruction, in order to develop potential,” stated one focus group member. Another focus group member shared that the state had “a well thought-out program for Gifted and Talented such that any district serious about wanting a quality system can put one in place....”

As for limitations, participants cited lack of funding, a weak mandate, lack of accountability, a focus on “proficiency,” state testing for minimum competencies, and inconsistencies of identification and program services throughout the state. One focus group member observed, “NCLB obviously focuses on minimal competency,” while another stated that “though there may be opportunities to use some of the funding through NCLB for Gifted and Talented, corporations are using it for the lowest [performing] students.” The Program Manager indicated that the understanding of differentiation has been distorted and instead “equals inclusion,” thus current curriculum and instructional strategies may not meet the educational needs for all gifted learners served through the state gifted program.

Participants perceived various areas for improvement, including the development of a clear state philosophy for gifted education to guide policymaking, a state mandate for the identification of gifted learners, a state mandate for specific program services, and teacher training requirements. The Program Manager stated that all stakeholders must define “who and what we mean when we say ‘gifted’” in order to dispel “myths at the state and local level.”

Below is a table summarizing the overall assessment of Indiana’s gifted policy strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement based on document reviews, interviews, focus group sessions, and the researchers’ own background in gifted education policy.

Strengths	Limitations	Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive, strong relationship between the state Department of Education and regional Educational Service Centers. • DOE encourages formation of local plans (with mandated components) • Improved teacher licensure standards to be phased in by 2006 and tied to national professional standards (CEC) • Broad state definition encompassing multiple categories of giftedness • Gifted contained in Indiana Code • Collaboration with higher education institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permissive policy mandate • Limited state funding not tied to quality of programming • Strong local control over teacher qualifications, identification procedures, and program quality • Curriculum differentiation is not required • Emphasis is not on individual student strengths/needs • State testing creates tensions around meeting the needs of gifted students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly articulated identification procedures • Alignment of identification and service provided • Stronger mandate with required minimum level of teacher training, and identification of and services provided for at least one category of giftedness • Mechanism for monitoring local plan implementation and local plan quality

North Carolina

The results of a series of interviews and focus group sessions held in North Carolina are reported below. The interviews were conducted with the state Consultant for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program and the Section Chief for Exceptional Children. The focus group members were representatives of advocacy organizations, higher education, and school districts.

Definition and Identification

The state definition of the gifted learner is relatively tightly focused. It recognizes both performance and potential for performance across grades K-12 but is limited to intellectual and specific academic fields or both. Districts must identify in the areas of general intellectual and specific academic areas and use multiple criteria for identification. Districts may serve other categories of giftedness, but must use state funds for the mandated group of gifted learners first. Only residual state dollars can be directed to additional categories of gifted learners according to the state guidelines. One of the critical interpretations made in the section on identification/placement is that differentiated education beyond the Standard Course of Study should be provided in grades K-12, at least in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The matching of students with services should be based on needs and abilities. Also, regular education has responsibility to differentiate for gifted learners in addition to acceleration or enrichment options that are provided. Criteria for placement might include aptitude, achievement, or standardized tests such as End-of-Grade tests, classroom performance, demonstrated products or abilities, student motivation and interests, and teacher observation and recommendation. The degree of precocity should be considered as well.

Focus group members amplified that having multiple criteria for identification and services for students meeting the district's criteria was a positive aspect of the policy, but expressed concern with the apparent lack of congruence between identification and services provided. "Article 9B has forced us to look at all populations in terms of identification and services, but some districts are still behind the eight ball on matching services to the needs of the identified population." The state Consultant for gifted shared that perception: "Historically, there's been too much emphasis on identification and not enough on what's going on in the programs in terms of curriculum and teacher training. We need to continue beyond identification and look at what is happening with the students in classes. We're not there yet."

Through Article 9B, school districts are prohibited from the use of a single instrument in qualifying or eliminating a student for gifted services. There is not a state-level cut-off for identification, and there must be a three-step process involving screening, identification, and placement articulated in the local plan. The state does require written parental consent for program placement, but parents are not required to be included on the placement team.

Service Delivery and Programs

An array of services must be available to students K-12, and the criteria for entry into each option must be specified. The description of the service option must include learning environment in which the differentiation will occur, the method of content modification, and any special programs

that enhance learning. These options should be listed on the format for the student's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). At the high school level, students will self-select coursework. The DEP for high school should be developed in grade 8 with input from counselors and parents, and with progress monitored through a yearly performance review. A high school counselor may be assigned to follow the progress of the school's gifted population and trouble-shoot when problems present.

Focus group members shared that, due to Article 9B, gifted education is a vital and integral part of public education, and that policy drives gifted services. One of the perceived strengths of the gifted policy is that gifted students are served based upon their needs. "Mandated services through Article 9B reflect continuous growth and a willingness on behalf of the local school system to find ways to meet the needs of these students." The state Consultant for gifted said that services have improved around the state because school systems are mandated to have a written plan. The Section Chief of Exceptional Children felt that one of the unintended positive impacts of local plans in regard to service delivery was that "no one person was making the decisions around service delivery and programming."

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Although Article 9B mandates services for the gifted, it does not speak to the level of specificity at the classroom level. The state addresses the need for curriculum differentiation through materials selection or other means and requires core curriculum (North Carolina Standard Course of Study) expectations for students, but there are no requirements around grouping, acceleration, compacting, or individualization of curricular approaches.

The impact of standards-based curriculum reform and its testing component was a clear concern from all qualitative sources. Focus group members shared that "teachers' concerns over testing and pressure on scores have overshadowed all other curriculum intervention approaches." The state Consultant cited her number one area for improvement was targeted at curriculum development: "I'm seeing isolated activities or strategies but I am not seeing alignment and rigorous and challenging curriculum used." The fact that school systems and teachers' priorities for instruction are driven by North Carolina's state standards document and its testing component was cited as a major concern, because much of a gifted student's day is within the regular classroom, and, hence, the instruction may not be challenging or designed around the learner's needs.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

Article 9B mandates local plans to contain a section on staff development with references to teacher preparation. The section in the local plan on staff development indicates that the plan must outline the staff development needs for all categories of staff who have any responsibility in the education of the AIG population. The plan should also determine what competencies and level of training teachers must have for each of the options. The plan should include a calendar and schedule for providing the necessary staff development.

North Carolina has created a document entitled *Pathways to North Carolina's Licensure in Academically or Intellectually Gifted Education* as a guideline to school personnel interested in obtaining an add-on endorsement in gifted education. There is no state regulation requiring teachers

to have specific endorsement or certification to teach gifted students. A second document, currently in draft stage, is intended to revise the competency standards for AIG licensure. This document identifies 6 standards with specific sets of indicators for each standard and is aligned with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards as well as other national teacher preparation standards documents.

Qualitative sources saw teacher preparation and staff development as strong vehicles for both implementing local plans and for providing a degree of certainty that differentiation for gifted students would occur at the classroom level. The *Pathways* manual was cited by all of the sources as being effective in moving gifted education forward in North Carolina. “We have been able to have a huge impact on staff development and the qualifications of teachers,” was the view held by the focus group. The Section Chief of Exceptional Children felt that “Gifted education has the possibility through staff development of attaching itself to NCLB and the ‘highly qualified teacher’ piece.” The state Consultant of gifted cited the licensure manual as a positive step forward, but she would like to “see us develop standards for teacher preparation and then develop program standards before a plan is implemented.”

District Program Administration and Management

North Carolina is a locally controlled state. Local school systems must develop a local plan for serving gifted students, and the plan must be approved by the local school board. The state department can review and recommend but cannot approve. “Each LEA plan must have local board approval and then it becomes a legal document,” shared the state Consultant. “Every time a change is made in the plan, it goes to the local school board and then comes to DPI for review and comment prior to implementation.” The perception of strong local control was confirmed by the Section Chief, who added, “We have no authority for sanctions.” The state Consultant also acknowledged that there are differences between what is written in each school system’s plan and what is actually done in the classroom. “Peer review has tried to address this concern,” she noted.

Aspects of the Role of State Government

The state’s statutory reform agenda is called *The ABC’s School-Based Management and Accountability Model* and represents a comprehensive plan to organize schools around three goals. These goals are (a) strong accountability, (b) an emphasis on higher educational standards within the basics, and (c) providing schools and school districts with as much local control as possible. The cornerstone of the plan is improved student performance, analyzed at the building, rather than the system, level. The plan holds schools accountable for the educational growth of the same students over time. The most current iteration of the plan is called *The ABC’s Plus: North Carolina’s Strategic Plan for Excellent Schools*. The state’s accountability program was ranked 4th in the country by the Princeton Review in its most recent report, and North Carolina has been approved for federal funding under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The current iteration of North Carolina’s reform initiative has five overarching goals. The first goal deals with high student performance and focuses on academic content standards and assessment systems that result in measurable student outcome indicators. The second focuses on safe, orderly, and caring schools and the environments that sustain them. The third goal addresses quality

teachers, administrators, and staff and encompasses some of the changes being made in the licensing standards. The fourth goal speaks to strong family, community, and business support for education. The fifth goal involves attention to effective and efficient operations including elements such as locus of decision-making, reporting systems for results, and adequate funding. All initiatives or changes in regard to the AIG population and services are expected to be aligned with one or more of these goals. The strong emphasis on accountability at the student level in this plan has enabled the state to track the performance of identified gifted students on the state assessments over time and to report these results statewide. This annual analysis is not only done for the total gifted population, but is broken down by racial/ethnic categories as well.

The state Consultant reported that some of the other state-wide initiatives such as NCLB have enabled her to dialogue and find avenues for collaboration. For example, “a study was just completed on licensure standards; every school district has updated their teacher licensure requirements, so that will impact gifted licensure, as well.” The Section Chief reported that “gifted has the opportunity to attach itself to school improvement and assistance teams.” The idea that gifted education is part of the larger state school reform agenda is a positive step in securing the specialty as part of the larger educational environment.

Supplemental Policies

North Carolina has a number of policies or initiatives designed to strengthen the quality of education for high ability learners. In 1997, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing precocious four-year-olds early admission to kindergarten. In 1998 the Exceptional Children’s Division prepared standards for implementing this process.

A high school to community college articulation agreement allows the award of community college credit for high school courses covered by the agreement, when students attain a grade of B or higher and enroll in the community college within two years of their high school graduation date. The goal of this agreement is to allow students to make a seamless transition from secondary to post-secondary education.

Project Bright IDEA is a collaborative effort between the NC Department of Public Instruction and Duke University (the American Association of Gifted Children) to develop a process to equip elementary teachers with the talents and tools necessary to spot gifted children at the K-2 level. Of particular concern are minority and/or low-income gifted children. Six schools are participating in the pilot, launched in 2001-2002.

Recent legislative activity directed the State Board of Education to study the under-representation of minority and at-risk students in Honors classes, Advanced Placement classes, and AIG programs. This 2001 study was carried out by faculty from two NC universities, who produced a report entitled *Report on Increasing Opportunity to Learn via Access to Rigorous Courses and Programs: One Strategy for Closing the Achievement Gap for At-Risk and Ethnic Minority Students*. The report concluded that the gap between White and minority students is significant and widespread, then described some promising programs that are addressing the problem. The report suggested that the changes made through Article 9B have had a positive impact on the identification of under-represented groups, although trend indicators are still young and premature.

At the high school level the state has secured federal funding to expand services such as online exam review and exam fee reduction for low-income students involved in AP. The expansion of online course offerings, particularly in rural areas, and the provision of regional professional development sessions for AP teachers are underway.

The state Consultant reported that “DPI in North Carolina is continuing to develop its approach to teacher certification, including gaining approval for its revised standards based on the CEC professional development standards. The state is also moving toward a concept-based curriculum for gifted learners, with the Project Bright Idea curriculum being refined in the next academic year.” “We are excited about our curriculum work at other levels of the system including the incorporation of Mary Frasier’s ten core attributes and habits of mind into curriculum models. Four high school units are currently in development.”

Supplemental policies that are in place or in development allow for alignment between earmarked gifted initiatives and other state priorities.

Funding

The primary statutory basis for gifted education in North Carolina is Article 9B. During the 2001-2002 school year, the state served almost 140,000 AIG students, amounting to about 11% of its total student population. The state appropriation for that fiscal year was about 45 million dollars, or about \$325 per gifted student actually served. Because the state caps its formula for local district funding at 4% of the school population, the General Assembly was allocating over \$880 per gifted student.

The funding formula is based on four percent (4%) of the district’s average daily membership (ADM). This amounted to \$884.55 per child in 2002-2003, up slightly from \$882.81 per child in 2001-2002. In 2001-2002, four percent of the ADM amounted to 51,355 students (a total state allocation of about 45.3 million for AIG). In actuality, 139,041 AIG students were served.

While qualitative sources spoke about the need to raise the level of funding for gifted, they were quite cognizant that North Carolina ranks in the top ten in the country in terms of funding for gifted and were quick to temper any criticisms. There was general consensus that funding should be more sharply focused and that school systems should be able to document how the funds are being spent. “Funds are used at local discretion and it depends on how the school systems say they are meeting the needs of the gifted,” shared a focus group member.

Assessment of Strengths, Limitations, and Priorities for Improvement

Responses assessing the relative strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement included comments from focus group members, the state Consultant, and the Section Chief of Exceptional Children. The themes that emerged across sources for major strengths were the development and implementation of local plans, state leadership, and collaboration with other initiatives or personnel through professional development opportunities. “The fact that we are mandated to have local plans and that they are developed from a cross-section of people at the local level is a real strength across this state,” noted the Section Chief. In terms of state leadership, a focus group member summed up

the theme by saying, “We have a state consultant who is dedicated and shares information with us based upon research and best practice.” Lastly, the strength of collaboration was cited, whether it occurs at the local level in terms of developing local plans or at the state level when the state director of gifted collaborates with other departments in terms of staff development or other initiatives.

In terms of limitations, sources cited local use of gifted monies, inconsistencies between identification and service delivery, and addressing other categories and grade levels of the gifted population. The Section Chief shared that while local control is a strength, it is also a limitation. “Because of local control, school systems can use gifted monies at their own discretion. In other words, if they say gifted needs are met we have no ability to monitor them, no assurances that they are doing what they say they are. We review and advise.”

Perceived priorities for improvement centered around the themes of improving the consistency between identification and programming, curriculum development, and a stronger accountability mechanism. Focus group members shared that even though school systems are doing a better job at identifying more diverse populations, work needs to be done with regard to matching services. “Without these policies, we would be falling behind, yet we still need to work on matching service to the need of the child,” shared a focus group member. Curriculum development as it relates to the instructional program was another area for improvement. In general, there is not a systemic curriculum framework for the gifted, nor are there specific ready-made materials or units that teachers across the state employ in their classrooms. Due to the emphasis on meeting the state’s Standard Course of Study, teachers are reluctant to stray too far from what the state requires, even if students have demonstrated mastery. Lastly, a stronger accountability system was cited from the State department as an area for improvement in order to increase consistency but balance local control.

Below is a table summarizing the overall assessment of North Carolina’s gifted policy strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement based on document reviews, interviews, focus group sessions, and the researchers’ own background in gifted education policy.

Strengths	Limitations	Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded mandate • Guideline manual for teacher licensure • Strong state leadership • Pro-active in collaborating with other state DPI departments on state reform initiatives • Supplemental policies support gifted education • Local plans with mandated components • Inclusive definition & identification structure • Aggregation of test data tracking gifted students' growth • Governor's Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State's statutory reform agenda does not explicitly cite gifted • No tracking mechanism for finding out how LEA's spend their gifted monies • State testing creates tensions around meeting the needs of gifted students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoring up alignment between ID & services • Articulation of curriculum for the gifted • Stronger mechanism for monitoring local plan implementation • Make stronger connections with higher education institutions • Develop program standards

Pennsylvania

The results of a series of interviews and a focus group session held in Pennsylvania are reported below. Focus group members were representatives of selected Intermediate Units and local school personnel. Interviews were conducted with the Special Education Advisor, the Coordinator for School Psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and the State Director for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education.

Definition and Identification

The definition of the gifted learner in Pennsylvania is a school age mentally gifted student. Mentally gifted includes students with "outstanding intellectual and creative ability the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services." (§16.1) Districts may not set the threshold for identification above 130 on an IQ instrument but may include students who score below 130 based on other factors and qualifications. Conversely, students who score 130 or above also have to meet additional factors to qualify for services. As a result, about 4% of Pennsylvania's student population is identified as gifted. In the 2001-2002 school year, this percentage included 75,393 students. The state does not keep statistics on subcategories such as gender, ethnicity, or economic status of the gifted population.

Pennsylvania, through State Board of Education rule and regulation, has in place a mandate both to identify and to serve gifted students K-12. At one time, gifted students were classified as one category of student under the state special education legislation, but in 2000 the class of gifted students was separated out and given a separate chapter (Chapter 16) in the Pennsylvania rules and regulations. Chapter 16 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code is modeled on a special education mandate, featuring Gifted Individualized Educational Plans (GIEPs) for identified gifted students, and its major components echo the special education orientation, including sections on screening and evaluation, GIEPs, educational placement, and procedural safeguards. The regulations include limits on gifted class size and student/teacher ratios.

The higher education representative shared that "although they tell you it's not driven by IQ, Chapter 16 puts a number in the law, so there is a lack of intent." Focus group members felt that the explication in Chapter 16 took the "guess work" out of who is identified. "Also, once they're tested, a student does not need to be re-tested for eligibility." "Because students have Gifted Individualized Educational Plans (GIEPs) it provides a safeguard for them," shared the Special Education Advisor.

Service Delivery and Programs

In the General Provisions section of Chapter 16, a mandate is indicated for "quality gifted education services and programs" for "suspected and identified gifted students who require gifted education to reach their potential." The roles of the state department and the local districts are delineated clearly with specific language on individual needs being addressed, "based on the unique needs of the child, not solely on the student's classification." Additionally, the proscription specifies what the educational placement decision must not be based on, including lack of

placement alternatives, educational or support services, space, or qualified staff, and administrative convenience.

Moreover, in the Basic Education Circular (BEC), section three deals with educational placement. Of particular note is the attention paid to the exceptionally gifted. This section identifies provisions for grouping students across grade levels, for gaining credit for coursework in alternative settings, and for gaining credit by examination. The need for graduation planning that begins at an early age for such students is also stressed.

With regard to programming, the State Director commented, “The good news is that we have Chapter 16 (addendum to Chapter 4) but many districts do enrichment pull-out programs, which address a child holistically, yet emphasis of core knowledge may be lacking. Additionally, I see a disconnect between identification and services. For example, a child with high precocity gets served in a pull-out.” The Special Education Advisor agreed with this perception. “The indirect benefit of Chapter 16 is that more consideration is given to placement and programming because it’s explicit, but the reality is that most school systems do not actually put in place programming that really is in tune with students’ needs.” Focus group members concurred: “Programs should have a variety of options for the delivery of service. They should not be limited to enrichment alone but must include opportunities for acceleration.”

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Part Three of the subsection relating to GIEPs has prescriptive intentions in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment and includes that gifted students’ educational placement must ensure that the student will benefit from the rate, level, and manner of instruction and go beyond the general education program. Section two of the BEC has more explicit guidance on appropriate program options for gifted students, noting that specially designed instruction may result in the adaptation or modification of the general curriculum, including compacting, acceleration, or placing the student in more than one grade level. Such instruction may also have an impact on learning environments, methods, and materials. Districts are further advised that “the use of extra work, peer tutoring, or helping the teacher does not constitute gifted education,” and that Advanced Placement or Honors courses are not in and of themselves gifted education. This section of the BEC also ties gifted education into the reform legislation for the state, identified as a strand in Chapter 4 of the Pennsylvania Code. It suggests that academic standards and assessments may need to be reorganized across grade levels to allow gifted students to show mastery at earlier junctures in the system. Such adaptations must be reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress.

While Pennsylvania is explicit in describing what *is* and *is not* appropriate for gifted students, focus group members felt “it’s open to interpretation in the eyes of many end-users.” They further added, “because of the emphasis on standardized test scores and PSSAs, the curriculum has become more narrow and class instruction has become more focused on teaching for the test (minimum competencies).” The higher education representative felt that it was a little deeper than pressure on teachers driven by state assessment. “I think there’s a feeling against grouping, acceleration, early admission or any of these allowances for gifted. I think because of the emphasis on bringing up the bottom rather than top-end learning, these gifted policies only reinforce the negative feelings

people already have.” She further added, “As I visit classrooms, it seems like that because gifted is an exceptionality, it is very difficult for teachers to integrate curriculum and collaborate with regular education teachers.” A slightly contrary view of integrating the curriculum in the regular classroom was held by the state Director. She said, “Building classroom capacity to allow differentiation of instruction to occur is the key to improving instruction.”

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not require special training for teachers of the gifted, and any teacher with certification may be hired in this capacity. Local districts may set staff qualifications beyond this minimal threshold. There are no statewide data currently available on the qualifications of teachers of gifted students.

Recent legislation, *Act 48*, has added requirements for continuing education for maintaining teacher licensure and online continuing education coursework is supported with state dollars, making it free to qualified professional educators. School districts must prepare professional development plans in order to comply with this law. Furthermore, reviews of district gifted programs under Chapter 16 (Self-Assessment Instrument) require that gifted education training be included in these plans for regular classroom teachers, teachers of the gifted, administrators, and support staff. One of the courses available online is “Strategies for Modifying and Adapting Instruction for Gifted Students.” Moreover, part 5 of the General Provisions subsection of Chapter 16 requires in-service training for gifted and regular education teachers, principals, administrators, and support staff responsible for gifted education under 1205.1 of the School Code. This part also requires that professional personnel responsible for identifying and providing service be certified, but this does not mean specifically in gifted education.

Qualitative sources all shared the concern that teacher preparation was the vehicle toward meeting the needs of gifted students and successfully implementing Chapter 16. They felt that without a state requirement for teacher licensure or preparation, the mandate’s effectiveness was undermined. “In the districts where teachers are coming to training, change is occurring,” shared the Special Education Advisor. “But there’s no incentive for them to come, so it’s about affecting change one person at a time, rather than systemically.” The higher education representative mentioned that no higher education institution in Pennsylvania offered an endorsement, much less a Master’s or Doctorate in gifted education. “Some teachers are taking courses on-line but we don’t have a handle on how many and which courses they are signing up for. It is a great untapped resource.” This does appear to be a weakness in the regulatory framework, and one that makes it impossible to determine how qualified the staff is.

District Program Administration and Management

The mandate ensures that K – 12 gifted students are both identified and served, and there is a strong focus on individualization both in terms of assessment and placement decisions. Although districts are required to create individualized educational plans for all identified gifted students, districts do not have to develop or submit program plans to the state for review and approval. However, when districts are monitored by the state, they must have evidence of written documentation for a number of program elements (philosophy statement, description of

identification/placement procedures, policies on early graduation, placement alternatives, etc.) available for review at that time. The regulatory chapters are frameworks. Districts are responsible for designing and implementing local programs.

Focus group members pointed out that “each school district is required to include gifted in their strategic plan, so that may be one way to monitoring program implementation, through the larger umbrella of a district’s strategic plan.” In that way, local board policy may influence the services offered over the state’s prescriptive regulations.

Aspects of the Role of State Government

Pennsylvania has a mandate to identify and serve gifted students K-12. Yet, there is no state line item appropriated for services to gifted students. Because of the special education framework, Pennsylvania has very clearly articulated expectations regarding due process and procedural safeguards. A tiered system is in place in which parents can take unresolved complaints to a hearing officer before seeking court action. The state tracks and reports the dispositions of these cases.

There is no monitoring or evaluation conducted on the implementation of Chapter 16. “There is not a mechanism to assess Chapter 16 formally and that is quite frustrating,” shared the Special Education Advisor. The State Director mentioned that in terms of the state role in assessment, “the state’s data collection is on head count numbers. There [are] not data on twice-exceptional children, clarity in PSSA’s data collection or aggregation of gifted scores.” Focus group members were concerned about the lack of monitoring, “we’ve heard from some districts, ‘why follow the regs if they aren’t going to check on us?’ ” Districts are not all held to a standard of compliance, and therefore large discrepancies exist across the state on implementing Chapter 16.

Supplemental Policies

The state has a written policy (BEC) that permits, but does not mandate, districts to establish policies for early admission to kindergarten. The minimum age cannot, however, be less than four years old. It is not known how many districts have such local policies in place. There are no state policies on Advanced Placement. The BEC on gifted education does state that Advanced Placement or Honors courses per se do not constitute gifted education, which must be predicated on the student’s individualized needs. The BEC on gifted also addresses dual enrollment and testing-out accommodations in the context of graduation planning. Additionally, there is a 20-page document presenting a matrix that shows the alignment between each of the NAGC standards and relevant sections of Chapter 16 (Pennsylvania regulations for gifted education). Pennsylvania has also developed a parent guide to special education for the gifted. This parent information booklet is available to all parents and explains the Pennsylvania approach to gifted education. Supplementary materials in development are Department Guidelines for the Education of Mentally Gifted Students and Project REAL (Rural Education for Accelerated Learners).

The Special Education Advisor mentioned that at PDE, “there is no connection with AP, IB, or dual enrollment or any policies governing these programs.” The State Director commented that recently the Secretary of Education in Pennsylvania issued a position statement in support of IB,

AP, and dual enrollment: “There may be positive implications for gifted from the Secretary’s position statement, but it’s too early to tell.”

Funding

There is no state line item appropriation for services to gifted students under Chapter 16. Districts may use state dollars given to them under the state special education appropriation, but these dollars are stretched across all areas of exceptionality at the district level. Pennsylvania does not have data on dollars specifically spent on gifted education services. The state does have residential summer programs for gifted learners and allocates almost \$2.5 million in the state budget for these five-week-long Governor’s school programs.

Funding is of real concern from all qualitative sources. “We need specific line item funding,” said the Special Education Advisor. “Without monies, our hands are tied in terms of program improvement, staff development, even in building stronger liaisons between the IU’s and school districts.”

Assessment of Strengths, Limitations, and Priorities for Improvement

Responses assessing the relative strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement included comments from focus group members, a representative from higher education, the State Director for Governor’s Schools & Gifted Education, and the Special Education Advisor. Major strengths identified were Chapter 16, state leadership, and the growth of a gifted liaison network. “Chapter 16 gives us a degree of power because of its link with special education and the ability to write GIEP’s for students,” shared focus group members. The Special Education Advisor shared, “Chapter 16 has enabled us to provide foundational workshops. As a result of these workshops, we have served 2500 educators.” The State Director confirmed that Chapter 16 has “enabled gifted to be at the table.” State leadership emerged as a strength from both the focus group members and the higher education representative. “Our state director has provided a framework, training and guidance, collaborative support, and she’s pulling people together.” Lastly, due in part to the state leadership, a network of gifted liaisons has been formed and cultivated. “We’re moving toward a more collaborative system because of opening dialogues with PAGE organization and other departments. We’ve just begun but it’s exciting to see a little momentum.”

In terms of limitations, sources cited weaknesses and inconsistencies for plan implementation, no direct funding, no compliance, and no teacher licensure requirements. “There’s a clear disconnect between the intent of the law and what’s being implemented,” shared a focus group member. In terms of compliance and monitoring, this comment summed up the common perspective: “All districts should be held to a standard of compliance. How else are we going to prove that gifted students, any students, are making progress?” Comments such as the following were shared by several sources on teacher training and budget: “Chapter 16 does not include teacher certification or budget authority.” “It totally depends upon the leadership within the district. If they see Chapter 16 favorably and Chapter 4, then things happen - programs go forward, teachers are trained. If the paradigm is not pro-gifted, than nothing happens.”

Perceived priorities for improvement centered around increased need for teacher training and licensure, increased funding, and stronger compliance mechanisms. “We need a tighter system of checks and balances,” said the State Director. This assessment was repeated by other sources as well. The State Director further added, “Parents want monitoring but we can’t do it, so it creates frustration and a vicious cycle. For example, a parent applies for due process. The department action is to withdraw from action until such time that due process checking report is received. It reports a specific amount and type of education at the system’s expense but when the system can’t pay, then nothing happens for the student, equaling parent frustration. The parent calls PDE, PDE writes letters and the cycle repeats.” Another area cited as both a limitation and an area for improvement was the unintended consequences of both the state testing and the momentum to embrace NCLB and its potential implications for gifted.

Below is a table summarizing the overall assessment of Pennsylvania’s gifted policy strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement based on document reviews, interviews, focus group sessions, and the researchers’ own background in gifted educational policy.

Strengths	Limitation	Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 16: Prescriptive ID mandate • Chapter 16: Prescriptive service delivery mandate • Strong state leadership • Gifted at PDE nested within two departments: Special Education and the Bureau of Curriculum & Academic Services • Governor’s Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No on-site monitoring or evaluation of plan implementation • No state line item funding • State testing creates tensions around meeting the needs of gifted students. • Inconsistencies between authority for gifted services between IU’s and local school districts • No aggregation of test data tracking gifted students’ growth • Teacher licensure & training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoring up alignment between ID & services • Articulation of curriculum for the gifted • Stronger mechanism for monitoring Chapter 16 • Develop stronger connections with higher education • Incentives for teacher for licensure • Increase articulation of supplemental policies to support gifted education • Funding • State should place priority on teacher training & licensure

South Carolina

The results of a series of interviews and focus group sessions held in South Carolina are reported below, with reference to the state's policy documents.¹ The interviews were conducted with the state Coordinator for Gifted and Talented, AP, and IB, and with the Director of Instructional Services in the Department of Education. The focus group session was conducted with 10 individuals from the Superintendent Advisory Group.

Definition and Identification

Under Title 19: R43-220 State Board of Education Regulation: Gifted and Talented, the gifted and talented population in South Carolina is defined as those students, identified in grades 1-12, who demonstrate "high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require an educational program beyond that normally provided by the general school program." The identification model employed must be multi-step, multi-modal, and multi-dimensional and must find, assess, and evaluate each gifted student for placement. Districts must screen all students by reviewing census aptitude and achievement scores and must accept referrals from staff, parents, and students. Students eligible for services in the Academic/Intellectual area include the following:

- (a) Students grandfathered-in from the prior regulations;
- (b) Students who meet criteria in two out of three of the dimensions [(a) Reasoning Abilities, (b) High Achievement in Reading and/or Mathematics, and (c) Intellectual/Academic Performance];
- (c) Students who meet the 96th national age percentile composite score or higher in grades 3-12 or the 98th national age composite or higher in grades 1-2 on an individual or group aptitude test.

Students eligible for services in one district are eligible for services in any district. No private testing is accepted for eligibility.

Focus group members highlighted the clear definition of the gifted and talented population in discussing their understanding of state policy, noting also the research-based nature of the identification protocols and the legitimacy promoted by this feature. Moreover, they cited the state's Best Practices Manual as a key source for program standards across multiple components, including the emphasis on identification. The state Director of Instructional Services also noted the clear identification criteria as a strength of the state's gifted education policy, although she indicated a concern that exit policy is not well delineated and that too many students are identified for service delivery to be accomplished within the current systems.

Focus group members noted that the state policy had served to broaden the process of identification, particularly with regard to increased efforts to identify minority students. The state Coordinator for Gifted and Talented also commented on this issue, noting that improving access of

¹ Although the South Carolina policy documents specify requirements related to programs for students gifted and talented in the arts, as well as in academics, stakeholder comments focused primarily on academic programs, or on issues relevant to both types but without specifying anything related to arts programs. Thus, the discussion below primarily references policy details related to academic programs.

minority students to gifted programs is one major indicator he uses to judge policy success. However, early identification, particularly related to early childhood readiness within disadvantaged populations, was noted in the focus group as an area needing improvement, and focus group comments related to service delivery echoed the notion that service delivery may be inadequate to serve the needs of all identified students, particularly in the early grades.

Service Delivery and Programs

South Carolina requires identification and service delivery to eligible students in grades 1-12. The state regulation also delineates required elements of gifted programs, including the development of a plan addressing (a) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (b) support services, (c) program models, (d) teacher/pupil ratios to foster positive results, and (e) sufficient instructional time. The regulation also specifies maximum teacher/pupil ratios and minimum instructional time. Program models and curriculum requirements are also detailed in the *South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual*.

The Coordinator for Gifted and Talented highlighted the high expectations of the policy across multiple elements as a strength influencing all stakeholders. Focus group members reflected that the policy specifications around overall programs and service delivery, as well as the details of contact time and teacher/pupil ratios, have increased consistency and professionalization of gifted programs statewide. Again, the *Best Practices Manual* was cited as a resource for standards across program components. Focus group members also noted that the policy supports systematic communication and creates general awareness and a common language across key stakeholders, as well as maintaining a student-centered focus on programming. The state Director of Instructional Services noted that the teacher/pupil ratios specified in the policy respond to stakeholder wishes for small class sizes, and that the flexibility in administration possible through the policy allows greater service delivery at the district level.

Although focus group members indicated that the policy supported consistency in programming across the state, they also commented that policy is unevenly implemented across districts. Focus group members suggested that this unevenness is at least partially a result of the flexibility noted above, because of different district-level decisions about how to allocate resources. Moreover, the required elements of the plan focus largely at a school and classroom-instruction level, perhaps contributing to the stakeholder perceptions of problems with consistency and leadership at the district level. The focus group and the state Coordinator mentioned limited program accountability as an issue with the policy, indicating a need for greater monitoring of policy implementation. The Coordinator also noted that small districts, representing a large percentage of the state, often have little or no infrastructure to support program development, exacerbating the uneven implementation of policy across the state.

Additional stakeholder perceptions related to specific aspects of programs and services are included within the sections below. However, one key point noted by all groups was the importance of developing and emphasizing overall program vision and implementation. Focus group members noted that state policy provides a vehicle for developing a “whole sense” of programming, but that this needs greater translation into practice. The Coordinator cited development of clarity in program vision as a key area for improvement in the state, and the Director of Instructional

Services argued that careful reflection on program purposes, desired outcomes, and place within the larger education picture in the state is essential to effective gifted policy development.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The South Carolina regulation for gifted program services includes a requirement that districts include a description of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices of gifted programs in their state plan; the regulation also delineates some specific explanation of expectations regarding these practices. In addition, the *Best Practices Manual* delineates five curriculum goals and emphasizes a standards-based approach and the importance of vertical articulation and differentiation in the general education classroom. State policy also specifies minimum instructional time for gifted programs, and the *Best Practices Manual* emphasizes a dynamic approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment as the centerpiece of effective service delivery.

Focus group members noted that the state policy has become more specific in the direction it provides related to curriculum, partially as a result of several statewide evaluations that recommended a greater curriculum focus. Moreover, they indicated that the policy regulations around curriculum, along with the advocacy of the state Consortium for Gifted and Talented, provided the opportunity for programs to examine more carefully the appropriateness of the curriculum used with gifted learners and to make good decisions around this issue.

The state Director of Instructional Services noted the call for increased rigor in curriculum throughout the educational environment as an influence on strengthening curriculum in gifted programs, but also indicated a need within the state for improving curriculum for students gifted in nonverbal areas. The state Coordinator indicated assessment at the program level and through state testing as an important aspect of judging policy success and also of promoting high expectations for curriculum for the gifted. He also noted a need to incorporate existing strong programs with clearly defined expectations, such as the IB program, more clearly into policy and to ensure that such policies work hand in hand with the larger scope of gifted program policy instead of competing with other gifted program offerings for funding.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

The South Carolina regulation for gifted programs delineates a few requirements for teachers of the gifted. Teachers must hold valid teaching certificates and must acquire endorsement in gifted education through a state-funded course or approved classes constituting six hours of graduate coursework. Newly assigned teachers have a year to meet the requirement. Add-on certification in gifted education is also an option for teachers, with required courses varying by level taught but representing at least 18 hours at each level. In addition, school districts are required to provide ongoing staff development. The *Best Practices Manual* also includes a chapter with recommendations related to professional development.

Focus group participants commented that the gifted education policy has been effective in promoting teacher training and professional development related to gifted education, both by providing greater access to teachers through options such as grant-funded training institutes and by encouraging greater commitment to teaching of the gifted across the state. Participants also noted

the interplay of identification, teacher training, and curriculum within the overall policy as an important aspect of moving gifted services forward in the state. The state Director of Instructional Services also emphasized professional development, arguing that teacher training for differentiation and requirements and options for endorsement/certification are key aspects to include in gifted education policy at the state level.

Although professional development options and requirements were cited by several stakeholders as strengths related to the state policy, several concerns and issues were also raised. Focus group participants noted the need for recurring professional development as an area for improvement, reflecting the more general comment of the need for more even policy implementation. They also suggested that while the required endorsement is a positive aspect of the state policy, more depth and breadth of study are needed for many teachers. The Director and the state gifted Coordinator noted increasing needs for professional development related to broader policy and accountability issues, to strengthen teacher expertise both in gifted education and in the content areas as standards and accountability requirements continue to grow. In addition, the Director noted that the wording of the policy necessitates that a large population of teachers achieve endorsement, and that resources are stretched to be able to provide the teachers with the needed coursework.

District Program Administration and Management

South Carolina policy maintains tight control over some aspects of gifted programming at the state level, primarily the specific requirements related to identification. However, other aspects of gifted programming are more flexible and allow considerable discretion for local school districts. Districts are charged with developing a plan that addresses each key aspect of their programming, but considerable flexibility is provided around how resources are to be allocated and around program model options. Moreover, few specifications are made regarding local program leadership and stakeholder involvement structures. Local systems may make choices, based on available funding, about which students within identified categories to serve, and they may expand their programs to include more students as local funding allows.

The state Director of Instructional Services highlighted the administrative flexibility within the policy as one of its key strengths, especially in that it allows districts to serve more students “unofficially.” However, the Coordinator for Gifted and Talented noted that most small districts have no infrastructure for program development, and the limited specificity from the state around some aspects of programming may create an obstacle for such districts. Focus group participants emphasized that state policy provides some consistency across districts and ensures that the gifted program does not become “something to do in spare time” for individual districts. However, in the perception of the focus group members, the policy may allow too much flexibility at the district level, resulting in differential allocation of resources and uneven programs from one district to the next.

Aspects of the Role of State Government

As noted above, South Carolina policy demonstrates tight central control over identification and also provides state-level funding for some portion of professional development and service delivery. Other aspects of the state’s role are not specified within policy documents. Program

monitoring is not clearly detailed, nor do state policies explicitly link gifted programming to the larger scope of the state's systemic reform agenda, although the *Best Practices Manual* includes recommendations to link curriculum and instruction in gifted programs to the state standards and accountability system.

With regard to state governmental influence, focus group members highlighted the state's role in promoting some level of consistency across districts, especially regarding identification, and in increasing awareness of gifted education in the state. They also cited the importance of a series of state-wide evaluations in developing and implementing policy that broadened identification and focused more sharply on curriculum. The state Director of Instructional Services emphasized the linkage of gifted programs to the wider state agenda for education, especially given the focus on accountability and standardized test scores. She commented that in the current context, under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), scores on the state-wide tests have a strong influence both on funding of programs and also on determining the emphasis to be given to enhancing high-level performance. The state Coordinator for Gifted and Talented also noted the influence of high test scores from gifted students as an important piece of the state's consideration of funding and emphasis for gifted programs. He placed less emphasis on the influence of the NCLB, though he noted that content expertise under newer standards is a growing issue with regard to bolstering middle and high school gifted programs. Focus group members also commented on the need for increased content expertise among teachers, particularly at the middle school level. Both of the administrators indicated that encouraging growth and high scores among gifted students is a goal that benefits both the overall state agenda and gifted programming specifically.

Although South Carolina has no regional governmental structure between the district and state levels, stakeholders noted the importance of some interdistrict connections to support more even implementation of state policy. Focus group members noted the influence of the South Carolina Consortium in supporting the implementation of state policy, particularly regarding curriculum, and the Director of Instructional Services recommended that states create an advisory council and a gifted coordinator group to support this implementation as well. Such structures were suggested as ways to overcome some of the issues stakeholders perceive in the state policy structure; among the focus group members specifically, concerns were raised that the flexibility in policy and limited monitoring from the state allowed uneven implementation and a reliance on district-level leadership that was problematic in some cases.

Supplemental Policies

Beyond the gifted education policies so far outlined, South Carolina policy also includes regulations surrounding Advanced Placement (AP) coursework at the high school level. The state requires that all districts serving grades 11 and 12 offer at least one AP course. In addition, the state maintains a uniform grading scale policy that gives added weight to honors courses meeting specified criteria and to AP courses. This regulation for high school also indicates that college credit may be applied toward the units required for a high school diploma (dual enrollment).

The Coordinator for Gifted and Talented commented on the impact of the AP policy on gifted programs, noting that the AP policy provides funding that does not have to come out of gifted program budgets. He also noted the uniform grading policy as a positive influence on gifted and

talented programs, in that it helped to promote the gifted endorsement and to define stronger criteria for an honors course. The state Director of Instructional Services also emphasized the importance of the AP policy in supporting gifted education, but noted that the dual enrollment policy has led to some decreases in AP involvement. Both administrators also commented on International Baccalaureate as an area for policy attention; the Director noted that the state pays for IB testing, helping to provide student access, but the Coordinator commented that although interest in IB is increasing, limited specific policy attention has been given to IB to date despite its viability as a gifted program option.

The focus group members did not make extensive comments related to supplemental policies, although they noted the key point that the *Best Practices Manual* itself, though it represents only guidelines rather than official policy specifically, in some ways serves as a supplemental policy document.

Funding

The current funding for gifted education has a weighting factor of .30 included in the calculation. Once funding for special programs or priorities (i.e., artistically gifted) is subtracted from the appropriation (which grew from \$21.3 million in 1999 to \$27 million in 2001 before it took a cut), then the dollars for the academically gifted population are calculated on base student cost, the ADM from the 135 day count, and the weighting factor (.30). The calculation is based on numbers that are a year behind the current program operation. Per pupil funding for the Academically gifted program has ranged from a high of \$495 per student in 2001 (and representing 82% of full funding) to its current level (2004) of \$381 per student (77% of full funding). Other services funded out of the gifted line item in the 2004 state budget are testing and training initiatives, the Junior Academy for Science, and the 10% set aside for districts to use for artistically talented students. The state does fund Governor's Schools in the math and sciences and the arts and humanities for gifted learners.

Stakeholder comments indicated that although current funding for gifted education supports many programs and services for students, more funding would be helpful in promoting consistency and depth in programming. The state Director for Instructional Services commented that the state policy is effective in ensuring that funding is allocated specifically to gifted education; the state Coordinator for Gifted and Talented also suggested that the fiscal policy serves as an incentive to identify and serve gifted students. However, the Director noted that identification policy results in too many students identified to be served with current resources, and also noted that the regulation regarding funding priorities should be tightened and clarified.

Focus group members cited the need for more funding as the primary need for improvement in gifted education in the state, indicating that the regulation in gifted education has never been fully funded. They also commented on the differential allocation of resources toward aspects of gifted education in different districts as a potential problem. They did, however, note the effectiveness of the policy in funding professional development programs and thereby improving services across the state.

Assessment of Strengths, Limitations, and Priorities for Improvement

Across the categories delineated above and across stakeholders interviewed, several themes emerged related to the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement around gifted education policy in South Carolina. With regard to strengths, key areas cited included the state's clear, research-based criteria for identification and statewide application of a common identification system, especially the influence of the policy on increasing minority identification and gifted program participation. Other perceived strengths of the policy include the policy specifications around teacher-student ratios, minimum instructional time, and the requirements for teacher endorsement. Interviewees commented that these key policy emphases have helped to raise awareness of gifted education statewide and to provide some consistency across districts, as well as maintaining high expectations for all stakeholders. Another major strength related to South Carolina state policy is the *South Carolina Gifted and Talented Best Practices Manual*. Although not officially a policy document, this resource is referenced within the state regulation and forms essentially a set of gifted program standards for the state. The perceived benefits of this document include the guidelines it provides in all major areas of gifted programming and specifically its emphasis on curriculum goals and scope and sequence.

Limitations of the gifted education policy emerging from the data sources centered around the major categories of accountability and unevenness. With the policy's limited requirements around program accountability and the flexibility provided for district-level decision making, stakeholders perceived a problem with consistency in programming across the state, and noted also that more monitoring was necessary to ensure stronger programming. A related limitation was raised in terms of allocation of funds for gifted education, with the concern that district-level decision-making around funding differs sharply across the state because of varying priorities and uneven leadership at the district level. Again with regard to funding, an additional limitation emerged in that policy requirements for identification and for teacher endorsement, while in some respects strengths of the policy, also place demands on the system for service delivery and professional development that existing resources cannot effectively provide.

Priorities for improvement perceived by stakeholders included strengthening the accountability for gifted programs through stronger requirements within policy, both to ensure effective use of gifted education resources and to improve implementation consistency across the state. Another priority noted was the need to continue to enhance professional development to ensure depth and breadth in teacher understanding of gifted learners and of the advanced content to be taught. Additional priorities related to funding specific aspects of programs, such as primary grade services, were also noted.

The table below summarizes the strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement demonstrated in individual and focus group interviews, echoing strengths and limitations discussed in the review of South Carolina state documents.

Strengths	Limitations	Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-wide, research-based identification system that has increased minority involvement • <i>Best Practices Manual</i> as a useful guideline for many aspects of programming • Curriculum goals and scope and sequence modeled in <i>Best Practices Manual</i> • Requirement for local plans addressing multiple aspects of gifted programs • General awareness and professionalization around gifted education related to state policy • State regulations related to teacher-student ratio and minimum instructional time • Requirements for teacher endorsement • High expectations overall from state policy for all stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited accountability structure for program implementation • Uneven implementation across districts • Limited service at the early childhood level • Endorsement requirements for so many teachers may result in limited depth in professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing accountability requirements around district plans and implementation • Improving consistency across districts, especially around resource allocation • Strengthening and lengthening professional development programs • Ensuring alignment between identification structure and service delivery possibilities • Increasing primary grade services

Virginia

The results of a series of interviews and a focus group session held in Virginia are reported below. Focus group members were representatives of state-wide advocacy groups. Interviews were conducted with the Principal Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education and with the Director of Secondary Instruction.

Definition and Identification

Virginia has a mandate that requires both identification and programming for gifted students K - 12. Although the regulations identify four categories of giftedness, divisions (LEA's) are only required to identify and serve in one of the first two categories: general intellectual or specific academic. There are no state cut-offs for identification, so each district may determine its own eligibility as long as it adheres to procedural identification requirements. Gifted students are defined as K-12 students in public elementary and secondary schools "whose abilities and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs." They will be identified "by professionally qualified persons through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated abilities and who have evidence of high performance capabilities, which may include leadership, in one or more of the following areas."

The four areas identified are intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, technical and practical arts aptitude, and visual or performing arts aptitude. These four areas are also defined, as are the following terms: appropriately differentiated curricula, identification, placement, screening, service options, and student outcomes. Each school division must establish uniform procedures and criteria for screening and identification. If a division decides to serve the category of specific academic aptitude, it must include the content areas of science, mathematics, and humanities and link back to the identification criteria. Referrals must be accepted from school personnel, parents (guardians), persons with related expertise, peers, and self-nominations. The information must be examined by a building or division-level committee.

The Principal Specialist for Gifted felt that the identification system was effective and added, "the identification process has evolved to accommodate alternative assessment and children are better prepared on how to use and understand alternative assessment." The Director of Secondary Instruction confirmed that the identification process was effective and shared that "we are able to reach more diverse populations with the system that we have."

Focus group members shared that identification was a critical aspect of each school division's process because it is one of the areas targeted by the state regulations that govern the development of local plans. The Principal Specialist felt that even though Virginia is in good shape in using multiple criteria and the use of norm referenced achievement and ability tests for identification purposes, "I think it would be ideal if everyone on the identification committee had some sort of training in gifted."

Service Delivery and Programs

In the Virginia Plan for the Gifted, the section on programming re-enforces the idea that program adaptations are necessary and identifies possible service models such as grade level or content acceleration, enrichment through pull-out or seminar models, direct instruction in problem-solving skills, and student team competitions. This section also identifies standards for the operation of the model(s) chosen, including the need for the sequential, continuous integration with total school program, optimal match to needs, etc. The current manual identifies 15-16 service options (e.g. special classes, seminars, mentorships, etc).

While focus group members supported the Virginia Plan for the Gifted, there was consensus that the application of the plan depends to a large extent on local school divisions. “There are state regulations that govern the development of local plans for the gifted. The regs target areas of identification, delivery of services, curriculum, and staff development. Each division is required to provide gifted services, K-12, but there are no specific ‘how-to’s.” The Principal specialist confirmed this perception when she shared, “The regulations around gifted establish the ‘what’; local divisions establish the ‘how.’” Additionally, she added, “I see that as a strength but school divisions may see that as a negative. The regs are not prescriptive - they establish what we want to see.” The Director of Secondary Instruction spoke to the broader picture of service delivery through her discussion of Governor’s Schools in Virginia. “We are able to meet the needs of many of our secondary gifted students through Governor’s School both in the summer and during the academic year. We continue to increase the numbers of students applying and accessing Governor School programs throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, the Governor’s Schools are able to deliver a more diverse instruction program (e.g., videoconferencing).”

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Expectations for curriculum modification, including alignment with the *Standards of Learning*, the need for balance among content, process, and product skills, an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and integration of learning strategies, and the provision of appropriate levels of challenge are also addressed in the Virginia Plan for the Gifted. Plans submitted to the Department of Education must address a framework for implementing differentiated curricula for the gifted. “The DOE does review and look at alignment, but the school divisions make the decisions about which curriculum package or approach they want to use with gifted,” shared the Principal Specialist. She also expressed the concern that “the biggest impact on the curriculum has been the SOL’s because they are the foundation of the curriculum. General education is taking over the ‘hallmarks’ of gifted. One of the implications of this is that gifted needs to become innovative. I see this as a wonderful opportunity for gifted to lead the way.” The Director of Secondary Instruction shared this perception of gifted in the forefront: “I don’t see the SOL’s impacting gifted as much as I see gifted impacting general education. I mean differentiation is the buzz word, and even with NCLB, making adequate yearly progress rings of differentiated instruction.” While focus group members cited having a differentiated curriculum mandated in the plan as a strength, they were more reticent in terms of how school divisions employed differentiation techniques. They shared that in terms of curriculum and instruction it was left up to the individual teacher and that “there is no incentive for a teacher to go beyond the minimum competencies.” In terms of assessment of student achievement, Virginia employs the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment with all students in all

core content areas in grades 3, 5 and 8. At the high school level, the SOL's are given to students in all core content areas. The state does not aggregate the data for high end learners. Additionally, there is not a mechanism for DOE to annually progress the status of local plans. "Some LEAs conduct their own evaluations of programs, but not too many," shared a focus group member. School divisions submit their local plan annually to the state department and are reviewed every five years. DOE does not do on-site evaluations of implementation of local plans. The review of local plans is done utilizing a peer review process. A new system is under development.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

The standard for accreditation requires that "identified g/t students will be provided with instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with g/t students." The Code of Virginia further ensures that persons seeking licensure after 2000 complete study in gifted education, including the use of multiple criteria to identify gifted students. The actual sentence couples gifted education and attention deficit disorder as specific foci of training. An add-on endorsement (8 VAC 20-21-270) in gifted education is sanctioned by the DOE Office of Teacher Certification and Licensure. However, teachers are not required to have this endorsement. The *Standards of Quality* do require local districts to provide "a program of professional development, as part of the license renewal process, to assist teachers and principals in acquiring the skills necessary to work with gifted students." In the Virginia Plan, the section on personnel selection and training speaks to the need for a continuum of staff development activities. Expectations for program administrators in terms of duties and training are defined here. There is also the suggestion that the entire instructional staff receive some level of training, with teachers of the gifted receiving more comprehensive training. Areas of training for teachers of the gifted are laid out. Also recommended is special training for guidance counselors and school psychologists. Collaboration with state colleges and universities is encouraged.

The Director of Secondary Instruction shared that the state advisory council for the gifted has been working on a set of recommendations, and one area is teacher training. "The state advisory council has had the foresight and is being proactive in aligning staff development in their set of recommendations with Title 2 (NCLB)." Focus group members felt that teachers of the gifted, minimally, should be endorsed. "There needs to be an incentive for gifted teachers to be certified just like it's expected for special education teachers."

District Program Administration and Management

Every local school division has a local plan that the state says is a "living document." While focus group members applauded the structure and process of local plans for the gifted, they were less enthusiastic when it came to local program administration. "Many school divisions are not committed to gifted students and while there are local advisory councils in each school division (as mandated by the Plan), the extent to which they have any clout varies tremendously."

Aspects of the Role of State Government

Virginia has a state-funded mandate that encompasses identification and provision of services for gifted education. This mandate gives local districts control over the selection of identification instruments and ways to serve their local gifted population. Local districts must develop a plan for gifted education, under the auspices of a local advisory committee, and secure approval from the local school board prior to submitting their plan to the Virginia DOE. The Virginia DOE has the authority to approve the plan, but only on the basis of the plan's compliance with the state regulation. While the state has approval authority over the plans and requires annual statistical reports, there is no formal monitoring mechanism. A peer review provision is in place, which draws peers from comparable districts to review plans for evidence of compliance. The Principal Specialist commented, "state regulations are meant to be a baseline floor. Every regulation can be perceived as a floor or ceiling. Each local district has a local plan that is submitted annually and reviewed every 5 years."

There is evidence that the educational reform initiative in Virginia is highly regarded in terms of national comparisons. The state's approach to reform has been to amend the *Standards of Accreditation* and the *Standards of Quality*, rather than to introduce a new piece of stand-alone legislation. The gifted learner is referenced in these standards both in terms of having educational services and qualified instructional staff in place. "Gifted is an integral part of general education by being written into the SOA's and SOQ's (Standards of Accreditation and Standards of Quality, respectively)," shared the Principal Specialist. "While this is an incredible strength in Virginia, an area of weakness is that there are areas in the regulations that are not clear." There does not, however, appear to be a mechanism in place that lets the state track the performance of identified gifted students on the state assessments.

The Principal Specialist felt that gifted education was in a unique position in terms of its relationship to NCLB. "We are at the table and we have a strong relationship with personnel responsible for NCLB. We are especially focusing on professional development and alignment between NCLB and gifted." The Directory of Secondary Instruction confirmed that gifted education is an integral part of the overall educational reform initiatives. "The Board of Education in Virginia understands the importance of gifted education and included it in regulations with a funded mandate. I think that is part due to the work of the state advisory council for the gifted." Focus group members were not so enthusiastic about the connectivity between gifted and other state reform initiatives. "The SOL's and NCLB have indirectly impacted gifted. Much of the emphasis at the local level is placed on getting all students to 'pass' the SOL's, and soon to show adequate yearly progress for NCLB. As a result, many localities have placed greater emphasis on the lower quartile and as such have left gifted out of the picture." Another member added, "My opinion, based on the feedback from teachers, is that due to the pressure they feel by the state assessment (SOL test), many teachers are eliminating the more divergent instructional activities (e.g. student selected projects, in-depth research) in order to cover content for the test and pace themselves."

Supplemental Policies

Recent legislative changes have strengthened supplementary policies for high ability learners. In the 2000 session, House Bill 1196 waived the 140-hour class attendance requirement for qualified students, amending the *Standards of Accreditation*. An additional piece of legislation contained language that allows for the use of Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate to be substituted for the state assessment tests in relevant subjects and grade levels. Other bills extended the Gifted Education Pilot Program and the Gifted Education Consortium until 2003, but allocated no funding for either initiative. No policies on dual credit or early enrollment in Kindergarten were presented for examination. The Virginia DOE has a number of documents under development that are not yet available.

The Principal Specialist commented that the supplemental policies around International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) policies are not under her jurisdiction. “Essentially, at the state level, it’s a paperwork process. I respond to the questions from parents and schools, but other departments do the paperwork as far as how many students are in these programs.” The Director of Secondary Instruction added, “The state school board has approved AP and IB assessment in lieu of the high school End-of-Course assessments and recognizes credit and assessment for those courses. However, some school divisions require students to take both the End-of-Course and the AP tests.”

Funding

Across the state, almost 140,000 identified gifted students were served in 2001-02. This represented 11.9% of the school population. State funding has grown to around \$23.5 million in the 2002-03 budget, and the allocation per gifted child in the 2001-02 school year was \$166 (based on an appropriation of \$23.2 million). This was down slightly from a high of \$168 per gifted child in the previous year.

The formula for calculating the state and local allocation was provided in an email prepared by the state specialist in gifted education. It states that the state’s share of the formula is based on the (number of students in grades K-5 divided by 1000) times (one minus the composite index) times (\$35,384 for an elementary teacher) PLUS (number of students in grades 6-12 divided by 1,000) times (one minus the composite index) times (\$37,337 for a secondary teacher). The local match uses the same formula except the second portion of the formula uses the actual composite index rather than one minus the composite index. The composite index is, of course, a barometer of school wealth.

The Principal Specialist commented, “1/3 of the funding for gifted is local and 2/3 is from the state. The total dollars spent on gifted must be spent on items in their local plans.” Focus group members responded to concerns over funding relative to the state’s decision to withdraw funding for the dissemination of the Stanford 9 test. “As a cost cutting measure the state dropped the Stanford testing for all 4th graders in Virginia. Yet, that’s the main nationally normed test that the school divisions use for identification. Unless school divisions pick it up on their own, there will not be a standardization across the system for screening.”

Assessment of Strengths, Limitations, and Priorities for Improvement

Responses assessing the relative strengths, limitations, and areas for improvement included comments from focus group members, the Principal Specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education and with the Director of Secondary Instruction. The themes that emerged across sources for major strengths were a state-funded mandate for serving gifted students, local control for implementation, and the relationship between DOE and local gifted coordinators as well as other state agencies. "That fact that we have a mandate with funding shows that Virginia is serious about gifted education," replied the Principal Specialist. The Director of Secondary Instruction confirmed with, "the funding for gifted is holding in Virginia and that is incredible given the current economic climate." Local plans were also seen as a strength, but focus group members were more reticent about the implementation of local plans. "The fact that the implementation of local plans is left up to the local district is a strength and a weakness and changes from Superintendent to Superintendent, but because it is mandated in the plan to have a local advisory council for gifted, at least there is some mechanism of accountability." Lastly, the collaborative efforts between DOE and local school division coordinators as well as DOE and other state agencies were perceived as a strength. "There are strong collaborative efforts and strong communication between the state and university folks and state to local," shared the Director of Secondary Instruction.

In terms of limitations, sources cited weaknesses and inconsistencies for plan implementation, no penalty for non-compliance, and multiple demands placed upon local gifted coordinators. "If the school division is not committed to gifted, then it doesn't matter what the local plan has in it, it won't get done," shared a focus group member. The Principal Specialist shared, "There is a difference between what is stated in the plan and the actual implementation of the plan. Since DOE does not do on-site evaluations of site implementation we have no control over the extent to which local plans are being implemented true to form." A focus group member confirmed with, "there is no penalty for a noncomplying school division." Lastly, the issue of multiple demands emerged especially in the focus group. "We have school divisions where the gifted coordinator is wearing many hats and frequently, gifted takes a back seat to other things more pressing, like the SOL test." The Principal Specialist commented that the attrition rate of gifted coordinators hovers around 30% annually. "Individuals feel like they are always fighting battles, and sometimes it is only one person in the system who is there to advocate for these students. That can wear you down."

Perceived priorities for improvement centered around increased need for teacher training and licensure, increased funding, and attention to policies for the gifted that balance those of lower achieving students. "There need to be incentives for teachers to go back and get their endorsement or some staff development. It's a shame that in this state we have nationally known leaders in the field of gifted and Virginia only encourages (not mandates) teacher licensure for gifted," shared a focus group member. With regard to funding, concerns were expressed over increasing it but more importantly, tracking how the money was spent at the local level emerged as a paramount concern across all qualitative sources. "School divisions receive money to implement their plan, but are they using it for that? We have no way of tracking this." Lastly, a perception emerged from stakeholders that within the context of state testing, NCLB initiatives, and inconsistencies of advocacy efforts at the local level, gifted education, typically, takes a back seat. "We need some sort of policy to balance gifted with those priorities around other students. Teachers have no incentive to go beyond the minimum with the gifted and administrators have no incentive to

advocate for them because all the money and attention is on the other end,” shared a focus group member. However, this perception was not shared by DOE personnel. In fact, contrary to gifted taking a back seat, the Director of Secondary Instruction shared that gifted was leading the way at the state department. “I see more dialogue and collaboration between gifted and other departments here than I have ever seen. Gifted is at the table and is influencing curricular decisions, professional development decisions, and even assessment.”

Below is a table summarizing the overall assessment of Virginia’s gifted policy strengths, limitations, and priorities for improvement based on document reviews, interviews, focus group sessions, and the researchers’ own background in gifted educational policy.

Strengths	Limitations	Priorities for Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded mandate • Strong state leadership • Pro-active in collaborating with other state DOE departments on state reform initiatives • Supplemental policies support gifted education • Local plans with mandated components and review process • Local advisory councils • Inclusive definition & Identification structure • State’s statutory reform agenda explicitly cites gifted • Governor’s Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No on-site monitoring or evaluation of plan implementation • No tracking mechanism for finding out how LEA’s spend their gifted monies • State testing creates tensions around meeting the needs of gifted students. • Inconsistencies at local level with advocacy and high attrition rates of program coordinators • No aggregation of test data tracking gifted students’ growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoring up alignment between identification & services • Articulation of curriculum for the gifted • Stronger mechanism for monitoring local plan implementation • Develop program standards • Incentives for teacher for licensure • Increase articulation of supplemental policies to support gifted education

Section V: Cross-State Analyses

All of the states examined had written policy documents regarding the education of gifted students, although the policies for one state (Indiana) were permissive in nature. Local schools in that state could determine whether or not to identify and serve the gifted population. Incentive funding was available to encourage them to do so, and this funding carried with it certain minimal regulations. In the other four states, gifted education was mandated, and each state had regulations or standards with which districts were required to comply whether or not they accessed state funding. In addition to having regulatory standards, all of the states had additional policy documents speaking to the issue of best practice. The comparisons illustrated in the following sections of this report make distinctions among three categories of oversight: (a) Is the element even present in written policy (NP); (b) If yes, is it addressed through regulation (R) or (c) through advice/guidance (G) to the district.

The key for the charts provided is as follows.

- R Found in State Regulatory Framework (Statute, Rule, or Regulation carrying the force of law);
- G Found in State Guidelines, State Best Practice Manual, or Monitoring Instruments (recommended practice only);
- NP No evidence of this element (Not Present) found in the written policy documents examined.

Because the language itself and the organization of central ideas in each state's policy framework varied, the reviewer used some discretion in determining whether or not an element was present. In two of the following analyses (Teacher Preparation/Staff Development and Supplemental Policies), an additional code is included, DK for Don't Know, that indicates documents were not made available or not found on the internet to allow the reviewer to determine the presence or absence of that element.

The comparisons in this section are drawn from elements selected to highlight similarities and differences across the states. The elements were selected after reading all of the written documentation and the salient NAGC standards for the sub-category. The elements are primarily descriptive and illustrate the comprehensiveness of the gifted education policy framework across states.

Definition and Identification Elements

All of the states had document sections that addressed the definition of the gifted population and provided standards for the identification and placement of gifted students in programs. In Indiana, these standards had to be met in order for districts to receive incentive funds. In all the other states, these standards were extensions of the mandate or regulations. In addition to the mandate, all states had documents shaping best practice.

This section of the policy study summarizes comparative information regarding the specific components of *population definition* and *identification of gifted students*. The following chart contains a listing of key elements in these two components. The elements in the chart are drawn

from the Document Review process itself, with some incorporation of the NAGC standards on student identification that seemed salient.

Definition and Identification	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
Statewide percentage of students identified as gifted and talented	10	11	4	12.5	11.9
<i>The written state-level gifted education policy documents:</i>					
1. Mandate that local districts identify gifted students.	R* (open)	R (K-12)	R (K-12)	R (1-12)	R (K-12)
2. Define the gifted population in terms of actual performance and potential for performance.	R	R	R	R	R
3. Prioritize service to the general intellectual or specific academic categories or both.	NP	R	R	R	G
4. Recognize <i>other</i> categories of giftedness.	R	NP	NP	R	R
5. Describe a three-step process involving screening, identification, and placement.	NP	R	R	R	R
6. Require the annual dissemination of information to parents and staff on characteristics/identification of gifted students.	NP	R	R	R	G
7. Accept nominations from any source: administrators, teachers, parents, peers/self.	NP	G	NP	R	R
8. Require written notice to parents for additional testing of child.	NP	G	R	R	R
9. Specify types of instruments that must be used for specific types of giftedness.	NP	G	R	R	R
10. Specify measurement criteria such as instrument reliability, validity, etc.	NP	G	R	R	R
12. Prohibit the use of a single instrument in qualifying or eliminating a student for eligibility.	NP	G (elim only)	R	R (elim only)	R
13. Emphasize accommodations or extended effort in assessing special populations (i.e. low-income, ESL, disabled, culturally different).	R	G	R	R	R
14. Require trained professionals to administer instruments/assessments.	NP	NP	R	R	R
15. Establish state-level cut-off on instruments.	NP	NP	R	R	NP
16. Require a written profile on each eligible child addressing both strengths and needs.	NP	G	R	G	NP
17. Require assessment to occur at least once during elementary school, middle school, and high school.	NP	G	R	G	R
18. Require team to handle evaluation/identification process and identify composition.	NP	NP	R	R	R
19. Include parents on evaluation/identification team.	NP	NP	R	NP	NP

20. Identify members and require different team to make placement/service decisions.	NP	NP	R	NP	NP
21. Include parents on placement team.	NP	NP	R	NP	NP
22. Require written consent of parents regarding student's participation in program.	NP	G	R	G	R
23. Do not "de-gift" students who transfer from one district to another.	NP	G	R	G	NP
24. Address due process/complaint procedures for contested eligibility or placement decisions.	NP	R	R	G	R
25. Require written procedures or conditions for program retention and exit.	NP	G	R	R	R

* Only as condition of state funding

Discussion

With the exception of Indiana, the states studied had fairly comprehensive parameters in place regarding the identification of gifted students. Indiana had the broadest definition of the gifted student, but because the mandate was permissive, only ten percent of students statewide were identified as gifted. Variations at the local level in Indiana were far more substantial. Pennsylvania was the most prescriptive in terms of focusing on the mentally gifted and suggesting a statewide cut-off score. This clearly impacted the statewide percentage of students identified, limiting it to four percent. South Carolina created a system with different levels of eligibility that resulted in the highest percentage of identified students, 12.5 percent. All of the states defined the population in terms of students with demonstrated performance or the potential for performance, and three of the states clearly prioritized services for intellectually or academically gifted students in their regulatory framework. In spite of the variations in eligibility across states, four of the five sets of identification standards resulted in about 10-12 percent of the total student population identified as gifted.

All of the states, except Indiana, also recognized that identification is a multi-stage process and that referrals should be actively sought. Considerations regarding testing accommodations for special populations were also widely addressed through either regulation or best practice, as was the disclaimer that no single instrument should preclude a child from placement in a gifted program. The need for written procedures for program retention and exit and for handling parental complaints was also addressed in some capacity across the four states, with Pennsylvania and North Carolina having the most detailed requirements for the latter.

The central issues that distinguish state programs in regard to identification appear to be the breadth of the definition and whether or not the definition of the population is centrally or locally controlled. The locus of this decision then impacts student transfers across districts. More importantly, however, the breadth of the definition should intersect directly with the distribution of available funds, and in only one state, South Carolina, was there a connection between the numbers of identified students and the formula for the distribution of state dollars. Given the absence of this direct connection in at least three of the other four states (Pennsylvania is excluded because of the lack of revenue data), it is surprising that the overall percentage of students identified as gifted is so similar across states.

Service Delivery and Programs

All of the states examined had sections in their policy documents that addressed the provision of programs and services to identified gifted students. In Indiana, these standards were again permissive and only had to be adhered to as a condition of securing state dollars. In all the other states, these standards were extensions of the mandate or the regulations. In addition to the mandate to provide services to identified gifted students, all states had documents shaping best practice.

This section of the policy study summarizes comparative information regarding the specific component of *service delivery and programs for gifted students*. The following chart contains a listing of key elements in this component. The elements in the chart are drawn from the Document Review process itself, with some incorporation of the NAGC standards on Program Design that were particularly salient.

Service Delivery and Programs	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level gifted education policy documents:</i>					
1. Require that services be provided to all identified gifted students under the mandate.	R* (open)	R (K-12)	R (K-12)	R (1-12)	R (K-12)
2. Address integration of gifted services with general education program.	G	R	R	R	G
3. Require multiple service delivery options within the district or through cooperative programming.	NP	G**	G	NP	G
4. Require program/service articulation across grade levels.	NP	G	R	G	G
5. Require either comprehensive programming across four basic disciplines or sets subject area minimums (more than one subject).	NP	G	R***	G	NP
6. Speak to maximizing student development.	R	G	R	R	G
7. Require optimum match between student's need and level of service provided.	NP	G	R	R	R
8. Identify specific models/service options that are appropriate for gifted students.	NP	G	G	R	G
9. Identify specific models/service options that do not constitute gifted programming.	R	NP	G	R	NP
10. Specifically address ability grouping or flexible grouping arrangements.	NP	G	NP	R	G
11. Require individualized educational plans for identified students.	NP	G	R	NP	NP
12. Address both acceleration and enrichment provisions.	NP	G	R	R	R
13. Contain language that services must address both cognitive and affective needs.	NP	NP	NP	G	R
14. Describe maximum teacher/student ratios.	NP	NP	R	R	NP
15. Describe parameters for minimum instructional time.	NP	NP	NP	R	NP

16. Address differential needs of highly gifted students.	NP	G	R	NP	NP
17. Speak to need for special services or program interventions for at-risk populations of identified gifted students.	NP	G	G	G	NP
18. Permit the provisional placement of students in gifted programs.	NP	NP	NP	R	NP

* Only as a condition of state funding

** Also requires that criteria for accessing service options be specified in student plan

*** Implied by approach to mandate, but not specifically stated

Discussion

This comparison illustrates that all states require services for gifted students, although the range varies from being wide open (Indiana) to covering K-12 (North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia). All states also speak to the need to integrate gifted education services with general education services in some capacity. All states, except Indiana, address the issues of program/service articulation and optimal match between student needs and interventions/services. To be fair, Indiana does address the importance of maximizing student development, but does not directly link this idea to the provision of service options.

There are significant differences in the regulatory framework across states in regard to specific service provisions. Pennsylvania and South Carolina have the most extensive regulatory language addressing this component. Only Pennsylvania's model appears to require comprehensive programming for gifted students, although North and South Carolina either state or imply programming across both language arts and mathematics subject areas in their guidelines. Only two states required some version of an IEP for the gifted student (Pennsylvania and North Carolina). Pennsylvania and South Carolina detail maximum teacher/student ratios, and South Carolina even specifies minimum instructional times. Elements that are not consistent across states, but may be important in developing comprehensive service delivery policy, include the following:

- (a) requiring multiple service options;
- (b) describing models/services that are both appropriate and inappropriate as illustrative of gifted education;
- (c) addressing the issues of ability grouping;
- (d) attending to the unique needs of the highly gifted student, and
- (e) recommending service accommodations or supports for at-risk gifted students admitted to programs.

Some consideration of trial placement opportunities might also be advisable.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Because program and service requirements do not always address the classroom level of a program, this section on *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment* has been included to identify how the states speak to expectations at this more finite level. The following chart contains a listing of key elements in these components, drawn from the Document Review process itself, with some

incorporation of the NAGC standards on Curriculum and Instruction that were particularly accessible in the written documentation.

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level gifted education policy documents:</i>					
1. Specifically address core curriculum expectations for gifted students.	G	R	G	R	G
2. Address need for curriculum differentiation through materials selection or other means.	G	R	R	G	G
3. Address issues/needs of grouping for instruction.	NP	G	G	R	G
4. Speak to need for scope and sequence in curriculum goals.	NP	NP	G	R	G
5. Speak to issue of acceleration through pacing, development and planning, content telescoping, or subject compacting.	NP	G	R	G	G
6. Speak to individualization of learning needs in some capacity.	NP	G	R	G	G
7. Address pedagogical strategies/applications.	R	NP	R	R	G
8. Include provisions for academic planning or career counseling specific to gifted.	R	G	G	G	NP
9. Require assessment of individual learning gains/student growth.	R	G	R	R	R
10. Discuss appropriate student assessment techniques.	R	G	R	G	NP
11. Discuss parent involvement and feedback at classroom level for individual child.	NP	G	R	G	NP

Discussion

The impact of standards-based curriculum reform is clearly documented in this analysis showing that all states studied addressed the issue of core standards and the importance of curriculum differentiation. All states also had language regarding the measurement of student learning, although this was not consistently linked to the state assessment instruments as one component of monitoring student progress. Pennsylvania required that all students demonstrate at least a year's growth for a year in the program. Several states had particularly forceful language regarding the need to adapt the scope and sequence of core curriculum standards for gifted learners, usually present in guideline rather than regulation. Most states discussed the importance of individualization. Surprisingly, no reference was found in the Virginia plan regarding academic and career planning, but the other states addressed this in varying degrees. North Carolina in particular discussed the criticality of this issue during transition to high school.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development

This section of the comparative analysis examines elements of *Teacher Preparation and Staff Development*. Teacher preparation is a particularly complex area to assess because the regulatory base regarding teacher licensure and advanced certification is often addressed in different sections of the statutes. In the case of Indiana, the licensure process is even handled by a Professional Standards Board that is independent of the State Department of Education. As a result, there are some elements in the chart below where the code of DK (Don't Know) is used to signify that documents were not made available to allow for inferences regarding that element. In addition, although many states addressed the issue of the use of qualified staff in regard to the selection of gifted personnel, the implementation of this was typically under district control.

Staff development is more clearly embedded in gifted education regulations. All states had some language regarding the importance of staff development. The elements selected below were drawn from the Document Review process itself, with some incorporation of the NAGC standards on Professional Development that were particularly salient.

Teacher Preparation and Staff Development	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level policy documents:</i>					
1. Show that some exposure to gifted education is a pre-requisite for initial teacher licensure.	R	DK	DK	DK	R
2. Require that teachers of gifted students (in gifted programs) have specific endorsement or certification.	NP	NP	NP	R	NP
3. Suggest/encourage that teachers of gifted students (in gifted programs) have specific endorsement or certification.	G	G	G	NP	G
4. Show that the state offers a license or endorsement in gifted education at the higher education level.	R	G	DK	DK	R
5. Tie licensure/endorsement to national professional standards (CEC).	R	(in draft)	NP	NP	NP
6. Require ongoing staff development to maintain regular teacher licensure/certificate.	DK	DK	R	R	DK
7. Require districts to provide ongoing staff development in gifted education.	R	G	R	R	G
8. Permit non-certified staff to be used for non-standard programs such as mentorships.	R	DK	DK	R	G
10. Provide planning time minimums for teacher preparation.	NP	NP	NP	R	NP
11. Expect all district instructional staff to receive inservice in gifted education.	NP	G	R	G	G

Discussion

There are two elements that are most consistently addressed across state policies in regard to teacher preparation and staff development. The first is that all states recognize that teachers of the gifted need specialized training and experience, but only one state mandates the completion of a specific number of post-graduate training hours. That state is South Carolina, and the number of hours (6) is quite minimal. All states also have language in their documents that recommends that districts provide ongoing staff development in gifted education. In some cases this is mandatory; in others, it is a guideline. Four of the five states recognized that such exposure to gifted education was necessary for regular classroom teachers as well as teachers of the gifted and other ancillary personnel.

One of the salient issues identified in this comparison deals with the emerging basis for certification or advanced licensure. It is apparent that some states are moving to a standards-based model requiring demonstration of competencies, rather than completion of graduate hours. The basis for the professional standards in gifted education were promulgated by CEC and are used as part of the NCATE review process for universities.

Two other elements that deserve mention emerged through the analysis of this section. The first is that some states made mention of the allowable use of non-licensed staff for special programs such as mentorships. South Carolina, in particular, had language regarding the qualifications of staff who could be used in serving students identified in the visual and fine arts category of giftedness. The other element dealt with the provision of planning time for teachers of gifted students. Only South Carolina formally addressed this idea and did it through regulation rather than guideline.

The level of the requirement in regard to staff selection and employment in gifted education appears to intersect with the availability of graduate coursework/degree programs in gifted education within states or with the creation/availability of an alternative certification model (such as that in North Carolina). This raises the question of the involvement of the higher education community in staff development work. However, documents were not provided across all the states that consistently addressed these issues, so it is difficult to make inferences.

District Program Administration and Management

This section of the comparative analysis examines elements of *District Program Administration and Management*. Program administration as addressed in this section focuses on the use of Advisory Councils. Program management is defined to include relevant aspects of program planning, evaluation, and information dissemination (reporting). The specific elements in the charts below were drawn from the document review process itself as well as from the two sections of the NAGC standards on (a) Program Administration and Management and (b) Program Evaluation. The coupling across NAGC strands is done to re-enforce the dynamic nature of program management as a recursive process designed to focus on continuing improvement through data-driven decision-making.

Program Administration and Management	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level gifted education policy documents:</i>					
1. Reference the state’s systemic reform agenda’s relationship to district gifted programs.	R	G	R	R	G
2. Require the designation of a local advisory committee (AC) or planning team.	R	R	NP	NP	R
3. Specify that parents must be included on AC.	R	R	NP	NP	R
4. Require that local school boards review and approve district gifted education plans.	R	R	NP	G	R
5. Require a written planning document at the program level for the district.	R	R	NP	R	R
6. Require periodic updating of plan.	R	R	NP	NP	R
7. Include a statement of program philosophy in the district plan.	NP	G	G**	G	R
8. Require linkage of gifted education plan to district mission statement or district strategic plan.	NP	NP	G	NP	R
9. Require program goals and objectives in plan.	NP	R	NP	NP	R
10. Require plan component on identification.	R*	R	NP	G	R
11. Require a program evaluation plan.	R	R	NP	G	R
12. Require specific evaluation plan parameters in terms of types of data collected, frequency of process, involvement of stakeholders, etc.	NP	G	NP	G	G
13. Require a plan component on parent/community involvement.	NP	R	NP	NP	G
14. Require a plan component on professional development.	R	R	R**	NP	R
15. Require a plan component on instructional services.	R	G	NP	R	R
16. Require a plan component on counseling/guidance services.	R	G	NP	R	NP
17. Require that the plan be available for public inspection.	R	NP	NP	NP	NP
18. Tie local gifted program accountability to larger reform agenda.	G	G	R	G	NP
19. Suggest or require that annual program evaluation be in writing.	NP	G	NP	G	R
20. Require specific information dissemination activities related to parents and larger community.	NP	R	G	G	NP
21. Speak to level at which due process provisions or requirements are handled.	NP	R	R	G	R

*Regulation uses the term “student assessment” but in context means identification.

** Referenced in district’s strategic plan or staff development plan, not gifted services plan per se.

Discussion

Although all states referenced the state's systemic reform agenda/platform in their gifted education documents, the focus of this connection varied greatly, and the converse was not always true. In other words, the state's documents on systemic reform did not always contain references to gifted education or gifted students per se. (See next section for documentation). The primary point of interface was in relation to core curriculum standards. In all cases, gifted students were expected to master the core standards, but some states more strongly emphasized acceleration of the scope and sequence for these students (Pennsylvania and North Carolina). The connection with assessment testing was less pronounced. South Carolina referenced the use of PACT data in identifying gifted learners, but the potential for using state assessment data as one indicator of program effectiveness was rarely addressed in regulation (Pennsylvania only). In practice, North Carolina was the only state that made targeted use of this data source, while South Carolina did so as a mechanism to evaluate its identification policy. This element is addressed in this section of the report because it speaks to the interface between strategic planning at the district level, which by necessity must cope with educational reform needs, and gifted program planning and evaluation.

Three of the five states required the creation of local Advisory Councils that had some responsibility for gifted program planning and review. These same states required the appointment of parents (as well as other groups) to these local councils. Four of the states also specified that the local school board had to sanction the gifted program plan. One of the states, Virginia, required the creation of a state Advisory Council. In Virginia, the Advisory Council was given direct access to the local school board via recent legislative change.

Four of the states also required local districts to produce a gifted education planning document. The Pennsylvania model was tied to compliance with detailed program standards based on a special education model. In the other states, the nature of this planning document and the role of the state in "approving" its contents varied widely. South Carolina appeared to require the fewest components, and it was not clear from the written material if the plan had to be submitted to the state in order to receive funding. Four of the five states addressed the need for a professional development plan for educators of the gifted, but in Pennsylvania, the gifted staff development needs were covered in the district's professional development plan. Four of five states also required or recommended a program evaluation plan, although only three made it clear that the annual evaluation report needed to be in writing in order to be communicated to relevant constituencies.

Due process was also handled differently across states, with Pennsylvania following a special education model and North Carolina incorporating modified aspects of this model. In other states, districts were expected to resolve disputes within their own district borders.

Aspects of the Role of State Government

Most state policy documents addressed gifted education from two perspectives, i.e., the role of state government and the role of local school districts. The elements in the following chart were selected to illustrate some of the ways in which states were similar and dissimilar in addressing *Aspects of the Role of State Government*. This distinction was not addressed in the NAGC standards, so they are not incorporated into this particular analysis.

Aspects of the Role of State Government	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level policy documents:</i>					
1. Give the state DOE responsibility for review and approval of district program plans or services.	R	(review only in R)	R	NP	R
2. Give the state DOE responsibility for the provision of technical assistance to districts in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs.	R	R	G	G	G
3. Give the state DOE responsibility for monitoring of local programs.	NP	NP	R	NP	NP
4. Illustrate the assignment of at least one full-time professional to gifted education.	G	G	G	NP	G
5. Demonstrate evidence of a regional technical assistance (TA) structure to design and deliver support services to local districts.	R	NP	NP	NP	NP
6. Require the submission of an Annual Report by the local district.	NP	R	NP	R	R
7. Grant waivers for the operation of experimental programs.	NP	NP	R	NP	NP
8. Spell out role of the state in research & development (R & D) and materials development and dissemination.	R	NP	NP	NP	NP
9. Include language regarding gifted students/education in the state's systemic reform agenda/legislation.	R (amendment)	NP	NP	NP	R

Discussion

Three states clearly had responsibility for the review of, but not necessarily the approval of, gifted education program plans. Pennsylvania was given responsibility for “general supervision” of local district programs, a term that needed clarification in the on-site process. In South Carolina, districts were instructed to develop a plan that met several criteria but did not delineate specific plan components. These plans were not subject to substantive review by the state, however, as a condition of funding.

All states evidenced some responsibility for technical assistance to districts. In Indiana and North Carolina, this role was clearly addressed in regulatory language. In the other states, this role was inferred through guideline or documents reflecting practice. Responsibility for program monitoring was also absent in language regarding the state's role. Pennsylvania described a tiered program review process that included an on-site assessment. This suggested that “general supervision” included program monitoring.

Staffing for gifted program management at the state level was fairly consistent. The individual assigned to gifted education in South Carolina also carried responsibility for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, but, in fact, this intersection of roles resulted in complementary policy parameters. In Virginia, this individual was also responsible for Governor's

Schools that were becoming increasingly popular at the secondary level; again, a productive fit in role definition. In Indiana, state resources were used to fund a regional technical assistance (TA) structure that extended the capacity of the central state office to provide TA as well as to prepare support materials for the field.

States were inconsistent in requiring the preparation and submission of data on program implementation. The three states that did require the submission of these data were able to track program demographics and in some cases the types of service actually provided (e.g. Virginia). These informational structures were very useful in documenting quantitative indicators of student identification practices and service delivery. North Carolina routinely tracked performance of identified gifted students on state assessments. It is not known if this was facilitated by the interface between two separate databases or through another means, but it was important information to showcase for the program.

Evidence of Supplemental Policies

This section compares states on their evidence of *Supplemental Policies*. Supplemental policies are those policies that support the needs of the gifted student but are not typically found in the gifted education regulatory framework or, in some cases, have application to a broader constituency. The elements identified below are those that emerged looking across states' documents that appeared to extend and/or strengthen service or service access for high ability learners. The list includes some elements also referenced in the NAGC standards on Program Design. The designation of DK (Don't Know) is also used in this chart, as it was difficult to access information on supplemental policies for every state studied.

Evidence of Supplemental Policies	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level policy documents affecting gifted students:</i>					
1. Prescribe early admission to kindergarten.	NP	R	R*	NP	DK
2. Require that local districts permit grade skipping for gifted learners.	NP	G	R	G	NP
3. Encourage proliferation of AP programs.	G	G	DK	R	R
4. Provide additional resources to encourage taking of AP exams.	R	G	DK	R	DK
5. Exempt gifted students from instructional time through testing out options.	R	G	NP	NP	R
6. Strengthen dual enrollment options through interagency agreements.	NP	R	G	R	DK
7. Require uniform weighted grading policy across districts.	NP	NP	NP	R	DK

* Permissive at local level

Discussion

This section of the comparative analysis is not exhaustive but does begin to identify and consider other policies in state government that impact directly or indirectly on the advanced learning needs

of precocious students. Of the states examined, South Carolina appears to have the most extensive regulatory support policies in place, and this may be reflective of their more centralized approach to the articulation of state policy. The issue of uniform weighted grading is one that impacts students' willingness to take more rigorous high school coursework. Only South Carolina appears to have addressed this issue at the state level. Early admission to kindergarten is also surprisingly absent in the policy landscape. This issue would appear to have no fiscal impact yet would be favorable to young gifted students and is the first step in a policy on acceleration. Only North Carolina appears to have a state policy that prescribes this early entrance practice.

Only two states have regulations regarding testing out of state standards at earlier ages. This may become more prolific as state assessment practices advance. Most states appear to recognize dual enrollment practices in some formal way.

Of particular interest in this category is the issue of Advanced Placement policies. Proliferating Advanced Placement opportunities and increasing the numbers of students taking AP exams represents a key initiative in the *No Child Left Behind Act* and perhaps the only part of that federal legislation that complements the goals/needs of the gifted education sector. Yet only South Carolina and Indiana had formal policies on Advanced Placement, at least that were presented for review. One of the incidental observations that came into focus was that states take different approaches to their discussions of the intersection of Advanced Placement and gifted education. Pennsylvania is very clear that Advanced Placement in no way represents gifted education. This is predicated on their restrictive identification system. North Carolina, on the other hand, clearly considers Advanced Placement and Honors coursework reasonable service options for gifted students in secondary schools.

Funding

This section compares states on the basis of *Funding* formula and supportive allocations. All of the states examined had separate state appropriations specifically for identified gifted students except for Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania, local districts received state supplemental funding for children with exceptionalities, but services for gifted students were not delineated as a separate category. The other four states had specific gifted education appropriations with funding formulae regarding the distribution of these dollars to local districts. The elements in the following chart show how these formulae differed. The elements in the chart also deal with the availability of other state revenues to support related or companion gifted education services. No NAGC standards were included in this comparison of elements as the NAGC standards seem to cut across subcategories or to be focused on qualitative distinctions rather than quantitative ones.

Funding	IN	NC	PA	SC	VA
<i>The written state-level gifted education policy documents:</i>					
1. Allow for portion of state line item to be used for statewide leadership/development initiatives.	R	NP	NP	R	NP
2. Provide for minimum level of funding to districts offering programs.	R	NP	NP	R	NP
3. Tie the funding formula to general population	R	R	NP	NP	R

ADM.					
4. Tie the funding formula to gifted ADM.	NP	NP	NP	R	NP
5. Adjust funding formula based on school wealth.	NP	NP	NP	NP	R
6. Provide funding to off-set the costs of teacher graduate course-work in gifted education.	R	G	DK	R	G
7. Provide funding to create on-line coursework in gifted education.	NP	G	G	G	NP
8. Allow funding to be used for supplemental summer school programs.	R	G	R	R	G
9. Provide funding to support governor's schools or state academies for highly gifted students.	R	R	R	R	R

Discussion

While the biggest issue in the funding of gifted education is the need for a good cost-benefit analysis study, there are secondary issues that can be explored through the examination of how states distribute fiscal resources. All of the states, except Pennsylvania, had specific funding formulae in place regarding gifted education, but only one state, South Carolina, linked its district allocation to the impact from its identification system. Two states, Indiana and South Carolina, ensured that districts with small numbers of gifted students would still receive minimum allocations (\$10,000 and \$15,000 respectively), and only one state, Virginia, appeared to weight its funding formula with a school wealth factor. Most states made provisions for funding to support teacher preparation, although the avenues for accomplishing this varied across states. All of the states supported Governors' Schools through separate, and often sizeable, appropriations in the state's budget.

Two of the states (Indiana and South Carolina) had funds that enabled them to support statewide initiatives to strengthen gifted education program development. These funds were used for a variety of purposes. Although Virginia did not have such a provision, the state had recently appropriated additional line item expenditures to support some collaborative efforts. It appeared that funding for these efforts was not continued into the next fiscal year, however.

Summary of Cross State Analyses

This study of state policies in gifted education was quite revealing in terms of understanding the conceptual and regulatory frameworks of several states. Although it is inappropriate to make generalizations beyond the sample, some synthesis across states has been done to help shape the state policy development conversation in Ohio. The following summary areas are offered for consideration:

- 12) The different states studied reflected different models for the distribution of power between state and local governance. Four of the five states in the sample required that all districts both identify and serve the gifted student population. However, the definition of the population, the specification of parameters for identification, and the nature of the approach (special education or general education orientation or combination of both) varied. These distinctions often reflected at what level the control of the relevant decision was vested. It

would seem imperative that the politics of this issue be addressed up-front and that a rationale be included that justifies the approach that is taken in the context of the larger educational policy landscape of the state. In other words, it would be useful to make this decision explicit rather than implicit in the policy development process. Two states in the analysis successfully employed cutoff score control on specific instrumentation types while others provided guidelines for identification. States that were more stringent in their identification mechanism appeared also to exert greater pressure on other policy levers to control quality.

- 13) Attention to identification issues received the greatest emphasis in all state regulations, due in part to the process link to funding and in part to continuing emphasis in the field of gifted education. With the exception of Indiana, identification parameters across states were fairly tight. The attention that has been focused on identification since the release of the Marland Report (1972) and the *National Excellence Report* (1993) has clearly helped the field to narrow the definition of gifted, yet acknowledge and try to respond to concerns regarding diversity and under-representation of key groups. However, states do not uniformly track or report the numbers of gifted students identified and served by demographics. Virginia and South Carolina were examples of states that were able to do this.
- 14) Less prominent in state regulation, however, was an emphasis on appropriate programs and services to gifted students. Standards regarding service provision shared many of the same foci but were not addressed in the same manner or even the same sequence across states. Although many important dimensions of service delivery were addressed, no clear template emerged to guide the articulation of a model service delivery policy. Also, the decision as to what belonged in regulation versus guideline/best practice seemed particularly haphazard. It is hoped that some of the elements identified in this analysis will underscore the need for more comprehensive and conceptually clearer program/service policy. Issues of grouping, contact time, content-based instruction, specialized programming for highly gifted and at-risk learners, and comprehensive articulation of services all need to be explicitly addressed in program standards.
- 15) The parameters outlined in policy documents on teacher preparation and staff development seemed underdeveloped and lacking in connectivity to issues of service delivery. Teacher preparation in the form of endorsement or certification was present in the language of all five states, but lacked specificity in respect to standards of preparation in line with NCATE and involvement with a state's higher education community as players in this area of policy development and implementation. Preservice regulations cited in Virginia and Indiana currently suffer from lack of enforcement. Moreover, there was no policy language that linked staff development to improved teacher performance (although it is possible that Pennsylvania's strategy did address this issue in some way). Neither was there much recognition that regular classroom teachers need far more sophistication in differentiating curriculum for high ability learners in light of the relatively new curriculum standards. This may be indicative of a dilemma that the field of gifted education is facing. Should we continue to expect regular teachers to differentiate effectively; and if so, what are the implications for staff development policy? Or conversely, should we recognize that effective service delivery for this group of students requires different organizational models

staffed by trained experts? If so, why are we perpetuating the myth that differentiation in the general education classroom is a viable option?

- 16) The technical assistance and monitoring role of state governments in gifted education needs more attention. The state personnel are the only individuals whose perspective, by necessity, looks across the sweep of programs, so they are well positioned to suggest policy and program improvements. While most state governments accorded responsibility for the review of program plans, the on-site monitoring expectations were not in evidence. Annual accountability for gifted student learning was not addressed either. This seems to be a crucial link in providing visionary leadership. Even if the model recommended is one that supports district self-governance, there still needs to be increased accountability for program quality as well as quantity through the mechanism of annual local plan review internally by an LEA advisory committee and Board of Education. Similarly, in order for the state to deliver technical assistance, resources need to be accorded to support such efforts. It was interesting that the state with the largest technical assistance role and budget was also the state with virtually “no teeth” in its monitoring capacity.
- 17) Consideration should be given to systematically identifying supplemental policies that complement the interests of the gifted education community. States should incorporate references to these prescribed policies in the gifted education mandate or regulatory base where they exist. Where they do not exist, educators of the gifted should create a political platform that addresses the void. Even if states have delegated the responsibilities for such policy development to local districts, there needs to be a repository of information on what local decisions are made, as these choices significantly impact program development within the field. Specific policies regarding acceleration, weighted grades, Advanced Placement, testing out of standards, and dual enrollment are all areas highly relevant to gifted education. State policies are needed in each of these areas to complement existing gifted education policy so as to maximize benefits to gifted students. Creating linkages through the leadership role assignments in the state department may also facilitate this.
- 18) In the sample, the absence of state legislation that mandates identification and services across all districts (Indiana) corresponded to a limited investment of state revenues in this population of learners. Correspondingly, the states with a tighter focus on the intellectually and academically gifted student appeared to have greater state revenues targeted to the need. This, however, was not a linear relationship. Unfortunately, the state with the narrowest definition of the population identified was not able to show the amount of money that was specifically invested in gifted education. Nevertheless, in an era of educational accountability, the link between resources and results should be strengthened rather than loosened. Several funding structures seemed to be progressive. All five states allocated special monies for Governor’s Schools or state-wide academies, summer and academic year lighthouses for servicing gifted students and showcasing best practices. Four out of five states tied program funding to identified students, a mechanism that safeguards the optimal match of service to identification mechanisms. Two states invested targeted monies in state leadership activities, an essential aspect of ensuring policy implementation. Only one state funded teacher preparation overtly, another wise expenditure in keeping this policy thrust dynamic. It was unclear how small and poor districts were treated in the allocation of

funding. Two states set minimum levels for district funding and one state used a weighted formula for poor districts. Ohio may want to consider the implications of small allocations that may be insufficient to launch viable programs and how fiscal policy creates this untenable situation.

- 19) The opportunity for integrating systemic educational reform ideas and gifted education has not yet been fully realized. Only one state, North Carolina, presented data that tracked the performance of identified gifted students on state assessment measures over time. Although state assessment testing practices are still struggling with the measurement of complex learning behaviors and there is unevenness across states in terms of the level of challenge embedded in curriculum standards, North Carolina's attention to the value of monitoring these data is quite exemplary. South Carolina's efforts to evaluate its identification policy also employs an analysis of state assessment data over a two year period. As a field, we need to take more assertive steps in documenting and studying the relationships among standards, assessments, and the instructional pathways affecting such learning for gifted students. Such data may ultimately be valuable in supporting arguments for increased revenues.
- 20) One of the most revealing aspects of the analysis was the dearth of documented evidence of the evaluation of policy effectiveness. Only two states appeared to have any documentation that spoke to this issue at all. In the case of South Carolina, a recent change in its identification system is being formally evaluated to determine what its impact has been on the types of students selected and the nature of services provided. This report was not available for review but is expected to be completed soon. In the case of North Carolina, a report that examined the involvement of minorities and low-income students in advanced learning opportunities was shared. One of the findings in this report addressed the changes in gifted program composition in response to concerns for greater equity. However, it was not clear how these policies were going to continue to be monitored in light of these concerns. States that undertake major policy change should be responsible for examining the impact of such change on the field.
- 21) The issue of state leadership mechanisms is an important one that emerges from the data across these five states. Not only is state department leadership crucial in policy development and implementation, so too is local leadership in the form of a cohesive gifted program coordinator's group and a state advisory council, capable of supporting change. Only in South Carolina were all "three legs of the stool" working as complementary levers for the dynamics of policy enactment to be visible and viable. There has been deep involvement of the professional gifted education community in South Carolina, including local districts and university personnel in the development of the regulations and the Best Practices Manual, so there is much buy-in for the system used. The phase-in of different aspects of the regulations and the collaborative leadership provided by the state department of education and a cadre of gifted program coordinators have facilitated local district accomplishment of the fairly rigid requirements of the regulations. Many of the typical problems associated with a centralized initiative and an agenda of significant program change have been avoided, and many of the perceived difficulties with the new regulations have been resolved. Program development in states will remain stagnant unless attention to

sufficient leadership resources is forthcoming. A program of this complexity requires full-time personnel for optimal management at all levels – state, regional, and local. Where size of district limits this reality, then rural cooperatives should be formed to address common program development needs.

- 22) The cross-state analyses also revealed scant attention to consistency in state program regulations for addressing major standards in the field of gifted education as articulated in the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards document that was also analyzed for this study. While curriculum and instructional differentiation applications were specifically addressed in three out of the five states with accompanying “best practices” manuals, no explicit language in this area was provided in the other two states. A scope and sequence of curriculum offerings was required in only one state, although “comprehensive articulation of program” language was found in all five. Without scope and sequence of curriculum, such articulation lacks meaning. Academic planning and counseling appeared in only one state regulation, even though it is a prominent set of NAGC standards. Grouping and acceleration suffered a similar fate, being articulated in only one state regulation, even though each is a central facet of gifted program design as articulated in the NAGC standards. To be fair, these standards are relatively recent, having been adopted in 1999 by the organization. However, state policies need to be reflective of research-based emphases in a field, and to date, none of the states reviewed had plans for changing their policies in the next year.

These summary analyses are drawn from the document reviews of the five states, the Ohio regulations, the NAGC standards, and the interviews and focus groups of the five states selected for the study. The next section of the report focuses on recommendations emerging from both within-state and across-state analyses of all data sources.

Section VI: Implications for Policy Research

Based on a triangulation of the data sources used in this study and the relevant findings from within- and cross-state analyses, the following implications are proffered as important for Ohio to consider in reviewing their current state policy in gifted education and subsequently, creating a set of recommendations and course of action. The implications are divided into six categories: identification, program/curriculum/service provisions, personnel preparation, program management, supplemental/related policies, and funding.

Identification

Identification remains to be the category where the states in this study exert more state control through the degree to which they define and prescribe criteria attached to gifted students. The primary impetus behind stronger state control, is in large part, due to the funding mechanisms that are tied to personnel unit based on identified students. Yet, the control is uneven in its rigor and intended purposes. While many states have clear quantitative cutoffs for advanced cognitive and academic areas, both creativity and the visual and performing arts are typically less stringent in respect to student threshold of functioning and the technical adequacy of the tools approved for use. For these identification areas, states deferred to local control over the qualifications and screening devices employed. Moreover, the degree to which a match was made between area(s) identified and services or programs provided was unclear and typically not articulated. Thus, the implications for policy research for identification involves (a) providing equal stringency in identification for all categories, (b) clearly specifying that identification may occur in all categories, (c) prioritizing cognitive and academic areas, and (d) linking identification procedures to appropriate program/curriculum/service provisions.

Program/Curriculum/Service Provisions

Because most states' current regulations focus on identification tied to personnel unit funding, actual delivery of appropriate services to students receives less attention. While a written educational plan for each student provides a process for constructing an appropriate intervention, the plan itself does not guarantee it in the language of the regulation. Programs for the gifted must provide an optimal match to the identification mechanisms used to identify students. Thus a careful delineation of program components must be included in state regulation.

The implication in this area is for states to consider crafting specific regulations for what constitutes an appropriate program for the gifted, with special attention to counseling and guidance services as well as differentiated curriculum. The following components would need to be addressed in regulations:

- (a) The grouping arrangements would be conducive to administering gifted programs, including cluster, resource room, pull-out, or self-contained.
- (b) The contact time for programs would constitute no less than 150 minutes per week.
- (c) The curriculum would be differentiated in each relevant subject area for identified students according to the need for acceleration, complexity, depth, challenge, and creativity. Such

curriculum differentiation would also require the use of alternative materials designed for gifted students.

- (d) The instruction employed in classrooms for the gifted would be appropriate in respect to its diversity of technique and its emphasis on the higher level skills of problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and research skills.
- (e) The assessment employed for gifted programs would be matched to the demands of the specific curriculum objectives and employ performance-based tasks and portfolio approaches that adequately capture appropriate level achievement for these students.
- (f) The program would be modified and extended (i.e. value-added) as needed for accommodating at-risk and highly gifted populations identified.
- (g) Academic guidance and career counseling would be available provisions at Grades 6-12, emphasizing the need for advanced course-taking early and the use of assessment data to counsel students on career alternatives.
- (h) A local advisory council would provide oversight to the local service delivery plan, which should receive local Board of Education approval.

Personnel Preparation

The need for well-qualified personnel is spelled out in most states regulations where the language strongly suggests (but not necessarily requires) endorsement or certification of teachers to teach gifted students. Additionally, all states studied had put into place extensive staff development opportunities vis a vis summer institutes, in-service days, underwriting conferences, and through providing technical assistance. This thrust of providing multiple venues and opportunities for staff development implies a tacit recognition on the states' part of the need in this area for personnel preparation. The implications for personnel preparation would be for states to have a provision, in regulation, which addresses this issue in relationship to appropriate program delivery of services. The personnel preparation initiative should contain these components:

- (a) A minimum of 12 hours of coursework linked to university-based programs is an essential connection, with a state-wide university network collaborative working on implementation. The 12-hour course requirements should be linked to current NCATE standards for gifted education programs, initiated by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) under special education provisions.
- (b) It is also important to include annual staff development opportunities for targeted staff and to acknowledge the criticality of all teachers' receiving some education in working with gifted students in this section of regulation.
- (c) The inclusion already of an emphasis on program leadership requirements is admirable and appropriate.

Program Management

The implications for program management emerge from concerns about ensuring that appropriate program delivery mechanisms are in place. State leadership must exert quality control over programs at the local level. This may be accomplished through a three-pronged approach:

- (a) An annual department review of Local Education Agency (LEA) plans may be instituted, mobilizing local coordinators to carry out the task at a specially designated 2-3 day session. An outline of major state plan components should be specified by regulation, including (1) program provisions employed at each level K-12, (2) goals, student outcomes, and student assessment process for each specified program model, (3) contact time for each model, (4) pupil-teacher ratios for each, (5) a professional development plan, (6) counseling and guidance plan, and (7) a program evaluation design.
- (b) A State Education Agency (SEA) monitoring plan may be developed to ensure local compliance with program implementation. On-site visits to local school divisions should be undertaken annually, with all districts visited within five years.
- (c) A system of SEA review of LEA evaluation of programs may be developed, requiring annual assessment and evaluation as a part of the documented plan submitted each year, tied to funding.

Supplemental/Related Policies

Since all states now have relatively new standards of learning in place for all students, there is a need to ensure that the differentiation features of curriculum, instruction, and assessment are appropriately connected to these quality standards of learning for all. Specific implications in this regard are as follows:

- (a) States need to consider the alignment of gifted education curriculum to state standards of learning so that districts can see how gifted education extends yet goes through the standards. Moreover, the alignment process needs to acknowledge the option for the accelerated rate of gifted learners' testing out of the standards early.
- (b) The state department needs to review annually state-wide proficiency data to ensure that gifted students are reaching proficiency levels desired (i.e., proficient or advanced) in each academic area relevant to their identification.
- (c) The state department needs to monitor participation of gifted students in the hallmark secondary programs of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment, ensuring that all gifted students in the state are participating in at least one of these options. Where state policies already exist to promote these programs, gifted regulations should be linked to them; where state policy does not address these programs, gifted regulation should.
- (d) The state department needs to craft an acceleration policy that allows for flexibility in gifted student learning, such that:
 - Students may enter kindergarten early, based on meeting the identification guidelines for general intellectual ability.
 - Students may advance more than one grade based on the same criteria.
 - Students may be advanced in one subject area and accommodated flexibly by advanced curricular placement.
 - Students may enter middle school, high school, or college early as determined by overall performance and demonstrated readiness.

Funding

Based on a review of funding structures in the states in this study, it seems that great variance exists in how programs are funded. Since the critical unit of analysis is the teacher in current regulation, tying evidence of appropriate program delivery to the allocation of funds for personnel would appear prudent. Funding allocations for professional development and certification along with identification allocations should clearly stay in place. Some consideration should be given to a weighting formula, however, for small and poor districts.

Evaluation of Policies

Based on a careful review of all states, an evaluation of any new regulation policies enacted after three years of implementation is warranted. The most successful state studied in respect to interrelated policies was South Carolina, where such evaluation has been somewhat institutionalized. A study of how well the mechanisms of identification, program, personnel preparation, program management, supplemental policies, and funding structure are working together to benefit a given state's gifted children would be important to undertake. This process would allow for a feedback loop of how well the intent of a given state's policies and regulations are being operationalized and the degree to which current practices reflect policy goals and directives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What is your view of “working” policies in the state? Policies that are really effective? What are policies that don’t work?
2. Explain your understanding about any current policies for gifted education in your state. How well do you think it (they) are working?
3. How do you see general education policies impacting on gifted education policies? What are the other policies that are not directly related to gifted, but indirectly impact on gifted services (e.g. NCLB)? In what ways are the general education policies aligned with the gifted?
4. How do you see the cluster of policies around IB, AP, or Dual Enrollment impacting or related to gifted policies?
5. What do you perceive as the relative strengths of the gifted policy? Weaknesses? What do you see as priorities for improvement?
6. What are the indicators of policy success? How do you judge at the state level that a policy is successful? Do you evaluate it? How frequently?
7. How effective have the gifted policies been in moving gifted education forward in your state? What impact have the policies had on improvement of services, identification, or teacher training?
8. In closing, you have one shot to tell another state, what they should do with their own gifted policies in terms of representing “best practice.” What would you tell them?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Questions

1. Explain your understanding about any current policies for gifted education in your state.
2. What are the other policies that are not directly related to gifted, but indirectly impact on gifted services (e.g. NCLB)? In what ways are the general education policies aligned with the gifted?
3. How does your state assess the effectiveness of gifted policies implemented? How frequently is this done?
4. How do you perceive the impact of policy on the state's assessment of the gifted?
5. What do you perceive as the relative strengths of the gifted policy? Weaknesses? What do you see as priorities for improvement?
6. Overall, how effective have the gifted policies been in moving gifted education forward in your state? What impact have the policies had on improvement of services, identification, or teacher training?

APPENDIX C

Introduction

This document delineates both *requisite* and *exemplary* standards for gifted education programming, and depicts pre-collegiate gifted programming standards for gifted education, representing a range of minimal, or requisite, and exemplary, or visionary, levels of performance. These standards may serve as benchmarks for measuring programming effectiveness; criteria for program evaluation; guidelines for program development; and recommendations for minimal requirements for high-quality gifted education programming.

Several **organizing principles** guided the work of the task force, including:

- Standards should encourage but not dictate approaches of high quality.
- Standards represent both requisite program outcomes and standards for excellence.
- Standards establish the level of performance to which all educational school districts and agencies should aspire.
- Standards represent professional consensus on critical practice in gifted education that most everyone is likely to find acceptable.
- Standards are observable aspects of educational programming and are directly connected to the continuous growth and development of gifted learners.

Definitions of some terms may be found on the back cover.

Definitions

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.

A standard is a designated level of performance that programming must achieve for the criteria to be deemed a success (Worthen, Sanders, & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Gifted learners are “children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment” (U. S. Dept. of Education, 1993, p.3).

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

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



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Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards



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Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Student Identification

Description: Gifted learners must be assessed to determine appropriate educational services.

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

Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Professional Development

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

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Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling

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

Guiding Principles	Minimum Standards	Exemplary Standards
1. Gifted learners must be provided with differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique socio-emotional development.	1.0M Gifted learners, because of their unique socio-emotional development, must 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 should be provided by a counselor familiar with specific training in the characteristics and socio-emotional needs (i.e., underachievement, multipotentiality, etc.) of diverse gifted learners.
2. Gifted learners must be provided with career guidance services especially designed for their unique needs.	2.0M Gifted learners must be provided with career guidance consistent with their unique strengths.	2.0E Gifted learners should be provided with college and career guidance that is appropriately different and delivered earlier than typical programs.
3. Gifted at-risk students must be provided with guidance and counseling to help them reach their potential.	3.0M Gifted learners who are placed at-risk must 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 should be provided with specialized intervention services.
4. Gifted learners must be provided with affective curriculum in addition to differentiated guidance and counseling services.	4.0M Gifted learners must 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 should be provided to gifted learners.
5. Underachieving gifted learners must be served rather than omitted from differentiated services.	5.0M Gifted students who are underachieving must not be exited from gifted programs because of related problems.	5.0E Underachieving gifted learners should be provided with specific guidance and counseling services that address the issues and problems related to underachievement.

Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Program Evaluation

Description: Program evaluation is the systematic study of the value and impact of services provided.

Guiding Principles	Minimum Standards	Exemplary Standards
1. An evaluation must be purposeful.	1.0M Information collected must reflect the interests and needs of most of the constituency groups.	1.0E Information collected should address pertinent questions raised by all constituency groups, and should be responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.
2. An evaluation must be efficient and economic.	2.0M School districts must provide sufficient resources for program evaluation.	2.0E School districts should allocate adequate time, financial support, and personnel to conduct systematic program evaluation.
3. An evaluation must be conducted competently and ethically.	3.0M Persons conducting the evaluation must be competent trustworthy. 3.1M The program evaluation design must address whether or not services have reached intended goals. 3.2M Instruments and procedures used for data collection must be valid and reliable for their intended use. 3.3M Ongoing formative and summative evaluation strategies must be used for substantive program improvement and development. 3.4M Individual data must be held confidential.	3.0E Persons conducting the evaluation should possess an expertise in program evaluation in gifted education. 3.1E The evaluation design should report the strengths and weaknesses found in the program as well as critical issues that might influence program services. 3.2E Care should 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 should 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 should be given the opportunity to verify information and the resulting interpretation.
4. The evaluation results must be made available through a written report.	4.0M Evaluation reports must present the evaluation results in a clear and cohesive format.	4.0E Evaluation reports should be designed to present results and encourage follow-through by stakeholders.

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Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Program Design

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

Guiding Principles	Minimum Standards	Exemplary Standards
1. Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners.	1.0M Gifted programming services must be accessible to all gifted learners.	1.0E Levels of services should be matched to the needs of gifted learners through the provision of a full continuum of options.
2. Gifted education must be adequately funded.	2.0M Gifted education funding should be equitable compared to the funding of other local programming.	2.0E Gifted education programming must receive funding consistent with the program goals and sufficient to adequately meet them.
3. Gifted education programming must evolve from a comprehensive and sound base.	3.0M Gifted education programming must be submitted for outside review on a regular basis. 3.1M Gifted programming must be guided by a clearly articulated philosophy statement and accompanying goals and objectives. 3.2M A continuum of services must be provided across grades pre-K–12.	3.0E Gifted education programming should be planned as a result of consultation with informed experts. 3.1E The school or school district should have a mission/philosophy statement that addresses the need for gifted education programming. 3.2E A comprehensive pre-K–12 program plan should 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 must be an integral part of the general education school day.	4.0M Gifted education programming should be articulated with the general education program. 4.1M Appropriate educational opportunities must be provided in the regular classroom, resource classroom, separate, or optional voluntary environments.	4.0E Gifted services must 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. 4.1E Local school districts should offer multiple service delivery options as no single service should stand alone.
5. Flexible groupings of students must be developed in order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.	5.0M The use of flexible grouping of gifted learners must be an integral part of gifted education programming.	5.0E Gifted learners should 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 must include provisions for the needs of gifted learners.	6.0E Gifted education policies should exist for at least the following areas: early entrance, grade skipping, ability grouping, and dual enrollment.

Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Program Administration and Management

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

Guiding Principles	Minimum Standards	Exemplary Standards
1. Appropriately qualified personnel must direct services for the education of gifted learners.	1.0M The designated coordinator of gifted education programming must 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 must have completed a certification program or advanced degree program in gifted education.
2. Gifted education programming must be integrated into the general education program.	2.0M The gifted education program must 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 schoolwide.
3. Gifted education programming must include positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as compliance agencies.	<p>3.0M Gifted programming staff must establish on-going parent communication.</p> <p>3.1M Gifted programs must 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.</p> <p>3.2M Gifted education programming staff must 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.).</p>	<p>3.0E The gifted education programming staff should 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.</p> <p>3.1E Parents of gifted learners should have regular opportunities to share input and make recommendations about program operations with the gifted programming coordinator.</p> <p>3.2E The gifted education program should consider current issues and concerns from other educational fields and agencies regarding gifted programming decision making on a regular basis.</p>
4. Requisite resources and materials must be provided to support the efforts of gifted education programming.	<p>4.0M Resources must be provided to support program operations.</p> <p>4.1M Technological support must be provided for gifted education programming services.</p> <p>4.2M The library selections must reflect a range of materials including those appropriate for gifted learners.</p>	<p>4.0E A diversity of resources (e.g., parent, community, vocational, etc.) should be available to support program operations.</p> <p>4.1E Gifted education programming should provide state-of-the-art technology to support appropriate services.</p> <p>4.2E The acquisition plan for purchasing new materials for the school should reflect the needs of gifted learners.</p>

Gifted Education Programming Criterion: Curriculum and Instruction

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

Guiding Principles	Minimum Standards	Exemplary Standards
1. Differentiated curriculum for the gifted learner must 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 must be integrated and articulated throughout the district.	1.0E A well-defined and implemented curriculum scope and sequence should be articulated for all grade levels and all subject areas.
2. Regular classroom curricula and instruction must be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.	2.0M Instruction, objectives, and strategies provided to gifted learners must be systematically differentiated from those in the regular classroom. 2.1M Teachers must 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 must be established to facilitate appropriate academic acceleration. 2.3M Gifted learners must 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 should include objectives, content, and resources that challenge gifted learners in the regular classroom. 2.1E Teachers should 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 should demonstrate plans for gifted learners based on specific needs of individual learners. 2.3E Gifted learners should be assessed for proficiency in all standard courses of study and subsequently provided with more challenging educational opportunities.
3. Instructional pace must be flexible to allow for the accelerated learning of gifted learners as appropriate.	3.0M A program of instruction must 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 should 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 must be provided to gifted learners.	4.0M Decisions to proceed or limit the acceleration of content and grade acceleration must only be considered after a thorough assessment.	4.0E Possibilities for partial or full acceleration of content and grade levels should be available to any student presenting such needs.
5. Learning opportunities for gifted learners must consist of continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resource materials.	5.0M Diverse and appropriate learning experiences must 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) must be available.	5.0E Appropriate service options for each student to work at assessed level(s) and advanced rates of learning should be available. 5.1E Differentiated educational program curricula for students pre-K–12 should be modified to provide learning experiences matched to students' interests, readiness, and learning style.