

EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTING GIFTED EDUCATION FOR OVERLOOKED STUDENTS IN PA

Examination and Recommendations
for Modification of Pa. Code 22 Ch. 16



GIFTED STUDENTS IN PA

The National Association for Gifted Children identifies children as “...those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).” The Pennsylvania Department of Education defines mentally gifted as possessing “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.” As a mentally gifted student who was k-12 educated in the Philadelphia Public School system I am choosing to look in dept at PA Code 22 Section 16: Gifted Education. This portion of school policy is unfamiliar to many families and educators simply because the products of the code, such as specialized staff, classes and resources are considered “overbudget” resources that their schools cannot afford for their students. In many cases the habit of looking at Special Education in negative perceptions, only considering disabilities as the only cause for evaluating for students counts many inner-city gifted youths out of the race, before a mentally gifted evaluation is even considered.

PA. CODE 22 CH. 16

Special Education for Gifted Students

This regulation recognizes that gifted students are considered to be “children with exceptionalities” under the Public School Code of 1949 and in need of specially designed instruction. The guidelines are an overview of both acceptable and best practices, procedures and policies designed to meet the learning needs of gifted students.

These guidelines reflect Pennsylvania’s continuing commitment to providing educational services appropriate for mentally gifted students that are consistent with their individual needs, outstanding abilities and potential for performing at high levels of accomplishment.



PAST AND PRESENT

Advancements in education prompted Congress to ask the U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland, to give a detailed report on gifted education research. In 1972, the Marland Report was published and offered the initial formal definitions of the term "giftedness." The Marland definition is still being used to date in the U.S. as the basis of defining giftedness. according to Marland, gifted children refers to those that are "identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programmes...beyond those normally provided by the regular school programme in order to realize their contribution to self and society." Marland's definition covers specific academic aptitude, general intellectual ability, leadership ability, performing arts, creative thinking, and psychomotor ability. During this particular period, gifted education programs were perceived as being elitist. However, the Marland Report cautioned that intelligent children from minority communities were especially vulnerable, thus could not educational apathy and neglect. The Report further detailed that gifted children were the most deprived and may suffer psychological damage and permanent impairment of their capabilities to function as normal human beings if they are not accorded proper attention. The view was that gifted children had few special needs.

"intelligent children from minority communities were especially vulnerable,."

Today, the U.S. legal framework lacks a national policy education for gifted children. Moreover, the law does not offer a working definition for giftedness and the requirements for educating gifted children. However, the law specifies policies concerning children with other special needs such as disabilities. As a result, each U.S. state has instituted policies that guide the provision of gifted education. These state policies cover the definition, program options, teacher qualifications, and funding. According to Gallagher (1994), these individual policies have led to stark differences. Generally, middle, and elementary schools have talented and gifted education programs, while high schools have honors and advanced placement courses. he National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) sets forth gifted education programming standards with procedures, rules, and asystematic programming policies for talented children.

Unfortunately, Gallagher suggests that only a quarter of school districts use these standards.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

For a very long time, a lot of attention has been paid to research work on gifted education. The system is still widely accused of sidelining gifted individuals and low funding to offer them sufficient education. The gifted education is not a new idea; it has been quite prominent since the ancient period. Even though substantial support for the gifted individuals with the government is written and various organizations' help is listed as a resource for these students more must be done to guarantee sufficient gifted education, for it is continuously overlooked in Urban educational institutions. For this study it was very difficult to find any true updated specific information on gifted education programs in Pennsylvania.

Students who are academically gifted constitute nearly 10% of the total school population. There is a sharp difference between academically gifted students and other typical children. Therefore, there is a need to modify the educational programs to meet the needs of all students. The NAGC reports that most children are given their education in the regular classroom setting. Besides, teachers who lack formal training in dealing with high ability students teach these children. In the U.S., grouping students based on their abilities, part-time assignment to classes, and taking college-level courses are highly common practices in gifted education.

Recently, the NAGC released a report on the most talented students' education status in the country. The Report identifies a quiet crisis in the education of gifted children in the U.S. According to this Report, an impressive number of issues have been identified as affecting talented children's education. The issues affect these children either directly or as unintentional effects of striving for other academic objectives.



HERE'S THE ISSUE...

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA

District Composition



ProPublica has found that in school districts across the country, Black and Hispanic students are, on average, less likely to be selected for gifted programs and take AP courses than their white peers. They are also more likely, on average, to be suspended and expelled. Another measure of disparities is how segregated schools are in a district. Explore if disparities exist at this school across all racial groups. The first scores shown below are for racial groups with the highest disparities.



Opportunity 2.6x

White students are 2.6 times as likely to be enrolled in at least one AP class as students of Two or More Races.

White students are 1.6 times as likely to be enrolled in at least one AP class as Black students.

White students are 2.3 times as likely to be enrolled in at least one AP class as Hispanic students.

Asian, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian students are 2.1 times as likely to be enrolled in at least one AP class as White students.

A comparison between Native American or Alaska Native students and White students enrolled in at least one AP class is not available.



Discipline 3.1x

Black students are 3.1 times as likely to be suspended as White students.

Hispanic students are 1.9 times as likely to be suspended as White students.

White students are 2.9 times as likely to be suspended as Asian, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian students.

Students of Two or More Races are 1.5 times as likely to be suspended as White students.

Native American or Alaska Native students are 2.4 times as likely to be suspended as White students.



Segregation Index High

Segregation between Black students and White students is High, indicating that the distribution of these two racial groups among schools in this district is very uneven

Segregation between White students and Hispanic students is High, indicating that the distribution of these two racial groups among schools in this district is very uneven



Achievement Gap 2.1 grades

Hispanic students are, on average, academically 2.1 grades behind White students.

Black students are, on average, academically 2 grades behind White students.

PHILA. SCHOOL DIST. CLIMATE DEMOGRAPHICS

Statistics DEPT. OF EDUCATION GIFTED ED. STATISTICS

Year Data Collected

2013-2014

Total Student Population

1,753,536

Number of Identified Gifted Students

68,000

State Funding for Gifted and Talented Education

2014-2015: \$0

2013-2014: \$0

2012-2013: \$0

STUDENT DIVERSITY

BLACK/ AFRICAN-AMERICAN 52%

HISPANIC/ LATINO 21%

WHITE 14%

ASIAN 7%

MULTIRACIAL/ OTHER 6%



SCHOOL DIST. OF PHILA DEMOGRAPHICS

"Pa. Code 16 has left room for loose interpretations and maintains no real structure for evaluation and implementation."

WHERE IS THE DISCONNECT?

Over the years, sporadic attention has been accorded to the needs of bright students. Sadly, a sizeable percentage of gifted children continue to spend their time in school either under-performing or working below their capabilities. The issues discussed below represent the most critical topics of current concern within the gifted education field.

1. Underserved Populations - To date, the most significant percentage of young people enrolled in talented and gifted education programs throughout the country represent most of the culture. There are few doubts concerning why minority groups and economically disadvantaged children are underrepresented in talented and gifted programs. For instance, Reis (2020) indicates that selection and identification procedures could be inappropriate and ineffective for identifying these children. Bonner (2020) also notes that limited nominations and referrals of young people from minority and disadvantaged groups affect these children's eventual placement in the programs. She mentions test inappropriateness and bias as underlying reasons for the continued over-reliance on traditional identification and selection strategies.

2. Decline Of Challenges - Gifted children continue to suffer significant ramifications in the country's schools. These children are overly under-challenged, something that delays or completely halts their development. If the instructional contents are below a student's knowledge and understanding level, learning becomes inefficient and intellectual growth stops. Many of the brightest students do not learn to work hard. Consequently, they develop poor working habits. Reis (2020) cites a study conducted by Reis, Hébert, Díaz, Maxfield & Rattley in 1995, which recruited a sample of 35 high ability students in urban schools who were under-achievers. These students cited the over-simplified elementary school program as the primary reason behind their continued poor performance. The students further said they never studied in class and at home. Over the years, sporadic attention has been accorded to the needs of bright students. Sadly, a sizeable percentage of gifted children continue to spend their time in school either under-performing or working below their capabilities.

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Underserved Populations

02

Decline of Challenges

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Outdated Education Reform Policies

3. Outdated Educational Reforms in PA -The controversy and confusion surrounding the nature of giftedness have led to an advocacy for a fundamental change in how the traits and characteristics of gifted children must be viewed in future. The traits of any advanced students within different population groups should be identified. This means efforts must be made to identify the traits that talented students have within each population and educational context. Such information would be useful in helping educators to differentiate between general students and those in need of different service levels in school to achieve their maximum potential. This would bring significant changes in how the general public and educators view giftedness. However, it will bring key implications for how educators should structure their programming and identification approaches. Moreover, the change might bring flexibility in both programming and identification approaches which will promote the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds into the gifted programs. Defining the different student populations, then determining the services offered to them and identifying the qualitative needs of gifted children as per the population's traits, will help to create internally consistent programs. At the most minimum level, it must be understood that giftedness manifests itself by varying characteristics in diverse populations. Therefore, the education field must create programs, which reflect the talent diversity inherent in the state's culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee on Gifted and Special Edu. At the PA State board of Ed. hosts statewide roundtables in order to solicit feedback and recommendations from stakeholders in gifted education, a stipulation made by the Board, per 22 Pa. Code 16.6(c), to conduct periodic reviews of its regulations governing gifted education as part of the ongoing supervision of how Chapter 16 is interpreted and applied. Round tables are open to the public and typically has over 90 individuals participate in the discussions, including parents of gifted students, gifted educators, gifted coordinators, school psychologists, pupil services directors, special education directors, Intermediate Unit staff, and higher education faculty. "Through these proceedings, various concerns were brought to the Committee's attention concerning qualifications of gifted educators, compliance monitoring, screening and evaluation for gifted identification, gifted individualized education plan requirements, use of acceleration for delivering gifted services, caseload assignments, and a lack of dedicated state funding for gifted education. The Committee provided a report of the policy issues identified by stakeholders to all State Board members for review in January 2019." To date a review for these recommendations has not happened.

DEC. 2020-J.GRIER

Amongst the 15 item list of recommendations , the pressing items below were asked of the committee.

- The Department of Education should create guidance for definitions of acceleration and enrichment.
- The Department of Education should create guidance for comprehensive planning that promotes the use of evidence-based models to deliver services for gifted education.
- The Department of Education should create
- The Department of Education should create guidance on the implementation of the Evaluation and Reevaluation provisions at 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 14, §14.123(b) and §14.124(b) and the Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Gifted Multidisciplinary Reevaluation provisions at 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 16, §16.22(j) and §16.22(d) as they pertain to students who may be twice exceptional. The guidance should encourage school districts to follow best practice in conducting both evaluations during a simultaneous 60-calendar day period.
- The Committee recommends that each school districts post its gifted education plan, developed per 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 16, §16.4, on its website for public access.
- The Department of Education should hire an advisor dedicated to professional development for gifted education. Responsibilities assigned to this individual should include providing professional development to school district and Intermediate Unit staff as designed through a yearly professional development plan.
- All classroom teachers and school administrators receive required training in gifted education that addresses the delivery of gifted services, the psychology of the gifted, and recognizing students who potentially are gifted for identification with training provided either during preservice education, as part of the credits required to earn Level II certification, or through ongoing professional education.

From reviewing the items above it is clear that Pa. Code 16 has left room for loose interpretations and maintains no real structure for evaluation and implementation. A common theme amongst the recommendations is clarity. All stakeholders are asking for is a concrete baseline plan to follow , as well as adequate training and participation from the state board. Until these recommendations are seriously considered, the standard of gifted ed in PA will continuously decline.



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