



THE OFFICE OF
PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluation Plan for Gifted Education Services*

September 2016 – December 2017

Prepared by Kristina Ayers Paul, Ph.D., Special Assistant for Program Evaluation

In consultation with Percell Whittaker, Ed.D., Lead Supervisor of Clinical Services and Gifted Education and Kimberly Fraser, Director of Student Services and Special Education

Evaluation Design

Purpose

The purpose of this program evaluation is to determine possible ways to enhance gifted education services to not only maintain compliance with Pennsylvania's mandate for gifted student identification and programming, but also to achieve greater alignment with the standards of programming quality promoted by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Model: A Utilization-Focused Evaluation of the Key Features of Gifted Education Services

The Utilization-Focused Evaluation (Patton, 2012) is an approach to evaluation that focuses all methodological decisions on determining what will yield the most useful information the primary intended users of the evaluation findings. In the case of this evaluation, we intend to draw out information that will help the District achieve the highest quality services possible for gifted students, not just what is required by Pennsylvania. Therefore, we will examine key components of gifted education services to determine their alignment with state policy *and* the NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards, which represents the gold standard of programming in the field of gifted education.

The Key Features of Programs for the Gifted Evaluation Model (Renzulli, 1975) is a classic evaluation model from the field of gifted education. It focuses evaluations of gifted programs

*Revised September 8, 2016 in response to the September 7, 2016 CCOB meeting

on a set of key features that we should expect to see for any gifted program, regardless of the school, state, or country within which it resides.

We have adapted the model to reflect more recent developments in the field, most notably the NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards (2010), which are now in their 2nd edition.

The six key features we will examine in this evaluation include:

- (1) Programming Philosophy and Service Goals and Objectives,
- (2) Service Delivery Model,
- (3) Identification and Ongoing Assessment,
- (4) Professional Development,
- (5) Parent/Guardian and Community Collaboration, and
- (6) Operations

Process

The evaluation will be comprised of two distinct phases, including the evaluation study itself and the evaluation use, i.e. follow-up actions that will take place as a result of the findings and recommendations. These are described below and summarized in Table 1.

The Evaluation Study

Kristina Ayers Paul, Special Assistant for Program Evaluation, will present a written result of findings and recommendations to the Board of Directors in May 2017. The report will focus on answering the following three questions:

1. **What should this key feature look like?** The report will include a written response to this question by presenting a summary of research, theory, and best practices using the NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards (2010), Pennsylvania's Code (22 Pa. Code §16), (Chapter 16), Gifted Education Guidelines (PDE, 2014), and other key sources of research and practice in the field of gifted education and talent development. For a blueprint of how each of these sources will correspond to the key features to be evaluated, please see Appendix A.
2. **What does this key feature look like in our District?** The report will include an evidence-based response to the question for each of the key features. The response will be constructed using findings from the evaluation activities, which will include a variety of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data sources listed in Table 1.
3. **What changes, if any, could or should be made to bring our services into better alignment with current research and best practices?** The report will include findings related to the alignment of the District's gifted education services with research and

best practices and recommendations for the District may move toward excellence in gifted education programming.

Evaluation Use

An Evaluation Use Panel (EUP), comprised of a representative group of stakeholders, will be commissioned with the task of using the findings and recommendations presented in the evaluation report to answer the question, "***What could this look like in the Lower Merion School District?***" and preparing a proposal for any changes that the group collectively agrees would be appropriate. The EUP will be facilitated by Kimberly Fraser, Director of Student Services, and Percell Whittaker, Lead Supervisor of Gifted Education Services, and supported by Kristina Ayers Paul. The EUP will present a proposal for changes to the Board of Directors in September 2017. In response to the Board's decisions, the program leadership will prepare a Five-Year Action Plan and present it to the Superintendent by December 2017.

Table 1**Overview of Plan for Evaluating the Lower Merion School District's Gifted Education Services Program**

Phase	Guiding Questions	Product	Timeframe	Responsibility
Phase 1: Program Evaluation	What should this Key Feature look like?	Summary of state policy, national standards, and research	Delivered to the Board May 2017	Dr. Kristina Ayers Paul, Special Assistant for Program Evaluation
	What does this Key Feature currently look like in the District?	Summary of evaluation findings	Delivered to the Board May 2017	
	What changes might the District consider making for this Key Feature?	Evidence-based recommendations	Delivered to the Board May 2017	
Phase 2: Evaluation Use	What changes or enhancements should the District consider for this Key Feature?	Proposal for programming changes and upgrades to be made to the Superintendent and Board of Directors	Delivered to Board September 2017	Evaluation Use Committee (EUC) – Representatives from key stakeholder groups
	How will the changes to this Key Feature be made?	Action plan	Delivered to Superintendent December 2017	Dr. Percell Whittaker, Supervisor of Clinical Services and Gifted Education Program & Kimberly Fraser, Director of Student Services

Key Stakeholders

Information will be collected from representative or purposefully selected samples of the following key stakeholder groups:

- Students & parents of students identified for gifted services
- Students & parents of students who qualified for gifted services but are choosing not to participate
- Parents of students evaluated but found not eligible for gifted services
- Gifted program teachers
- Special education program teachers
- Teachers of special programs (e.g. art, music, AP, IB, honors)
- General education program teachers
- Program leadership
- Building leadership
- Counseling staff
- School Psychologists who administer evaluations for gifted services

Data Collection Tools & Strategies

- Surveys, focus groups, and interviews with key stakeholder groups
- Document review of, for example:
 - public program documentation
 - public and staff websites
 - a random selection of GIEPs
 - policies and procedures documents
- Analysis of existing student data (e.g. student identification & assessment)
- Observations of programming activities

Planned and Emergent Scope of Work

A detailed scope of work will be maintained by the program evaluator and shared with program leadership. The need for additional data sources and data collection activities may emerge during the evaluation, at which point the evaluator will submit a request for approval to program leadership and the Superintendent to revise the planned scope of work.

Deliverables

1. Technical report of findings and recommendations (KAP, May 2017)
2. Executive summary of findings and recommendations (KAP, May 2017)
3. Presentation to Board of Directors by Kristina Ayers Paul (KAP, May 2017)
4. Proposal to the Board of Directors to incorporate the Evaluation Use Panel's recommended program changes (KF & PW, September 2017)
5. Five-Year Action Plan to incorporate approved changes (KF & PW, December 2017)

References & Resources

- Johnson, S. K. (Eds.) (2012). *NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards: A guide to planning and implementing high-quality services*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- National Association for Gifted Children, (2010). *Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards: A blueprint for quality gifted education programs*. Available at <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/national-standards-gifted-and-talented-education/pre-k-grade-12>
- Patton, M. Q., (2012). *Essentials of utilization-focused evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, (2014). *Gifted education guidelines*. Available at <http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Gifted%20Education/Gifted%20Program%20Guidelines.pdf>.
- Pennsylvania School Code Chapter 16 (22 Pa. Code §16). Available at <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter16/chap16toc.html>
- Plucker, J.A., & Callahan, C. M., (Eds.) (2014). *Critical issues and practices in gifted education: What the research says* (2nd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Purcell, J. H., & Eckert, R. D. (2006). *Designing services and programs for high-ability learners: A guidebook for gifted education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. (NEW edition coming out in Fall 2016)
- Renzulli, J.S. (1975). *A guidebook for evaluating programs for the gifted and talented*. Ventura, CA: Office of the Ventura County Superintendent of Schools.

Guidelines for Good Evaluation Practice

American Evaluation Association's
Guiding Principles for Evaluators
www.eval.org/d/do/594

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation's
Program Evaluation Standards (4th Ed.)
www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards-statements

Appendix A

Guiding Rules, Standards, and Best Practice Principles

Key Feature	Source of Information for answering, "What should it look like?"
1. Program Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon• PDE Gifted Education Guidelines• Program Requirement 1 (Renzulli, 1975) A documented program rationale that is sound and represents the most current knowledge of the field• Program Requirement 2 (Renzulli, 1975) Evidence of internal consistency among the philosophy, goals, objectives, and program design• Developing a Mission Statement on the Educational Needs of Gifted and Talented Students (Chapter in Purcell & Eckert, 2016)• Developing a Definition of Giftedness (Chapter in Purcell & Eckert, 2016)• Articulating Gifted Education Program Goals (Chapter in Purcell & Eckert, 2016)
2. Service Delivery Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon• PDE Gifted Education Guidelines• NAGC Programming Standard 1 (Learning and Development)• NAGC Programming Standard 3 (Curriculum Planning and Instruction)• NAGC Programming Standard 4 (Learning Environments)• NAGC Programming Standard 5.1 (Programming, Variety of Programming)• NAGC Programming Standard 5.5 (Programming, Comprehensiveness)• NAGC Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction (3.1-3.6)• Comprehensive Program Design (Chapter in Purcell & Eckert, 2016)
3. Identification and Ongoing Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon• PDE Gifted Education Guidelines• NAGC Programming Standard 2 (Assessment, all)

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| 4. Professional Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon • PDE Gifted Education Guidelines • NAGC Programming Standard 6 (Professional Development, all) |
| 5. Parent/Guardian and Community Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon • PDE Gifted Education Guidelines • NAGC Programming Standard 1.5 (Learning and Environment, Awareness of Needs) • NAGC Programming Standard 2.1.2; 2.2.6; 2.3.3; and 2.4.5 (Assessment, Identification) • NAGC Programming Standard 5.3 (Programming, Collaboration) |
| 6. Programming Operations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA Chapter 16 – alignment with or expansion upon • PDE Gifted Education Guidelines • NAGC Programming Standard 5.2 (Programming, Coordinated Services) • NAGC Programming Standard 5.4 (Programming, Resources) • NAGC Programming Standard 5.6 (Programming, Policies and Procedures) • Program Requirement 13 – Functional Adequacy of the Organization (Renzulli, 1975) |