**Tamaqua Area School District**

**Gifted Plan**

**2016**

**Mission**

The mission of the gifted program of the Tamaqua Area School District is to develop and challenge those students who give evidence of high performance capability as defined by state law and to provide a strong academic foundation, which challenges students to realize their fullest potential and encourages them to become engaged, thoughtful citizens.

**Gifted Philosophy**

The Tamaqua Area School District is committed to providing opportunities which promote the growth of skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for identified gifted students to reach their potential and fulfill their future roles in our changing and global society. Inherent in that commitment is the recognition of the unique abilities, talents, interests, and needs of intellectually gifted students which require special educational considerations. Educating the gifted student is the shared responsibility of all educators, the student's parents and the student.

**Gifted Guidelines from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, May 2014**

Programs for gifted children fit into the array of special programs available for all exceptional children. These programs reflect individual differences, equal educational opportunity and desire for the optimal development of each child. Programs that are based on sound philosophical, theoretical and empirical foundations are those most likely to benefit gifted students.

The guiding principles for planning and implementing programs for the gifted include the following:

The local school district is primarily responsible for identifying all “children with exceptionalities” who are “children of school age who have a disability or who are gifted and who, by reason thereof, need specially designed instruction exceptional children and developing educational programs to meet their needs.” (24 P.S. §13-1371(1))

Pennsylvania School Law includes gifted students as “children with exceptionalities,” who need specially designed instruction. Like all exceptional children, the gifted student possesses special characteristics that significantly affect the student’s ability to learn. In order to provide a meaningful benefit, the gifted student’s curriculum must be appropriately modified on an individual basis.

Enable the provision of appropriate specially designed instruction based on the student’s need and ability. (22 Pa. Code § 16.41 (b) (2))

The emphasis in special programs for these students should be on the stimulation of the cognitive processes of creativity, originality, problem solving and complexity (increasing content depth and sophistication).

The student is thought to be gifted because the school district’s screening of the student indicates high potential consistent with the definition of mentally gifted or a performance level, which exceeds that of other students in the regular classroom. (22 Pa. Code §16.22)

In Pennsylvania, being mentally gifted is defined having as “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 GIEP team shall base educational placement decisions on the gifted student’s needs to enable the provision of appropriate specially designed instruction based on the student’s need and ability and to ensure that the student is able to benefit meaningfully from the rate, level and manner of instruction. (22 Pa. Code §16.41)

The term mentally gifted includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher or other factors (listed below) that indicate gifted ability. Gifted ability cannot be based on IQ score alone. If the IQ score is lower than 130, a child may be admitted to gifted programs when other conditions strongly indicate gifted ability.

The other factors to be considered include:

     • Achievement test scores that are a year or more above level

     • Observed or measured acquisition/retention rates that reflect gifted ability (how quickly a child learns new concepts or information, and how long he or she remembers it)

     • Achievement, performance or expertise in one or more academic areas that demonstrate a high level of accomplishment

     • Higher level thinking skills

     • Documented evidence that intervening factors are masking gifted ability

A Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) is a written plan describing the education to be provided to a gifted student. The initial GIEP must be based on and responsive to the results of the evaluation and be developed and implemented in accordance with this chapter (22 Pa. Code §16.22 and §16.32)

The Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Present Levels of Performance must be sufficient in depth and breadth (scope) to provide the framework for a comprehensive gifted individualized education plan. Student assessment and performance data should be reflected in the development of the Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP).

Provide opportunities to participate in acceleration or enrichment, or both, as appropriate for the student’s needs. These opportunities must go beyond the program that the student would receive as part of a general education. (22 Pa. Code §16.41)

An effective approach would include all of the following:

* Acceleration, in which instruction is matched to the competence level of the student, when the student is achieving at least one full year above his current grade level.
* Enrichment, in which opportunities for the investigation of appropriate materials are given.
* Individualization, in which instruction is matched specifically to the student’s achievement, abilities, and interests.

Districts may use administrative and instructional strategies and techniques in the provision of gifted education which do not require, but which may include, categorical grouping of students. (22 Pa. Code §16.41)

Research studies indicate that ability grouping, coupled with acceleration and enrichment, provide maximum instructional benefit to gifted students. Incorporating homogeneous grouping of the gifted offers the gifted students opportunities to broaden and deepen their knowledge through interaction with their intellectual peers.

**How Does the School District Identify Gifted Students?**

Students referred for gifted are screened using the KBIT (Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test) 2nd edition. If the student scores a 125 or above, the school psychologist will issue a Permission to Evaluate for Gifted. The district also notifies the parent in writing of their right to request further evaluation if the student scores less than 125. A team of individuals, including parents and school personnel, will contribute information to this evaluation. A Pennsylvania certified school psychologist will provide individual assessment results. All teachers are alert to the characteristics of gifted children and they may refer children for screening at any time. Parents may also request an evaluation of their child at any time in writing.

**Gifted Written Report (GWR)**

The Gifted Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation is a multiple criteria evaluation process for identifying gifted students. All of the information will be compiled into a Gifted Written Report (GWR) highlighting the student’s educational strengths and needs. A parent may present written information for consideration. The GWR will include a determination as to whether the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. The GWR must include the reasons for the recommendations and list the names and positions of everyone who was part of the team. If the student is found to be eligible, the school will convene a GIEP team, including parents, to review the recommendations in the report and to develop a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP).

**Gifted Multi-Disciplinary Reevaluation**

Gifted students must be reevaluated before a change in educational placement is recommended. Gifted students may be reevaluated at any time under recommendations by the GIEP team. All reevaluations must be developed in accordance with the requirements concerning evaluations in Chapter 16. The reevaluation must include a review of the student’s GIEP, a determination of which instructional activities have been successful and recommendations for the revision of the GIEP. The reevaluation must be completed within 60 calendar days, excluding summer vacation, from the date the school district receives the parent’s written permission on the Permission to Reevaluate form.

**Important Components in a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP)**

The GIEP is based on the unique needs of the gifted student and enables the gifted student to participate in acceleration or enrichment programs, or both, as appropriate, and to receive services according to the student’s intellectual and academic abilities and needs.

Parents will be invited to participate on the team and to attend the GIEP team meeting. Parents and others who will be attending will be notified of the meeting at least 10 calendar days in advance. The GIEP team includes the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s), one or more regular education teachers, the gifted teacher, the student (if appropriate), and an administrator who will represent the Learning Education Agency (LEA).

The GIEP of each gifted student is based on the GMDT’s written report and contains the following:

* **Present Levels of Educational Performance:** Establish the extent of gifted potential, academic functioning levels and performance levels. Information would include the child's intellectual/academic assessments, grades, aptitudes and abilities, strengths, interests, and needs.
* **Annual Goals:** Are developed from the present levels of educational performance and are reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress within one year's time.
* **Short-term Learning Outcomes:** Designate the actions and activities that will help the child reach the annual goals, evaluation criteria to determine when the child has achieved the annual goals, and the timelines for achieving the goals.
* **Specially Designed Instruction:** Identifies the adaptations or modifications to the general curriculum.
* **Support Services**: Specify services that support students in achieving their GIEP goals, including college and career guidance, individual counseling, transportation, technology education, and flexible grouping.
* **Dates:** Indicate when the services will begin and their anticipated duration, based on one year of the services.

**Timelines**

The following timelines, as outlined in Chapter 16, pertain to GIEPs:

* The GMDE must be completed within 60 calendar days after receiving written parental permission for an initial evaluation.
* The GIEP must be developed within 30 calendar days from the date/issuance of the GWR to parents.
* The GIEP must be implemented no more than 10 school days after it is signed or at the start of the following school year (if completed less than 30 calendar days before the last day of scheduled classes (16.62 (5)).
* The GIEP team must convene at least annually, or more frequently if conditions warrant. This meeting must take place at least one day before the previous year’s GIEP meeting date.
* A GIEP team meeting must also convene if requested by a GIEP team member, the parent, the student or the school district.
* A copy of the GIEP must be provided to the parents, along with the Notice of Parental Rights.

**Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA)**

Upon completion of the GIEP, the parent/guardian will receive a Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA) and a Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Children. The NORA will indicate the educational placement for the student and requires parent/guardian approval before the school district will begin implementation of the GIEP. The Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Children describes parental rights and procedures that safeguard these rights.

**Parental Rights**

At all times, a parent has certain rights with all gifted education services received by their child. These rights include:

* The right to be notified about a child’s program and progress, and any changes that take place
* The right to approve or reject programs and testing
* The right to privacy and confidentiality
* The right to make a formal complaint

**Special Education and Gifted: Dual Identification**

If a student is determined to qualify for both gifted and special education services, the procedures in Chapter 14 pertaining to special education take precedence. For a student who has a current GIEP and is eligible for special education services, it is not necessary to conduct separate screening and evaluations or use separate procedural safeguards processes to provide for a student’s needs as a student in need of both a gifted and special education services. For a student who currently receives special education services and is thought to be in need of gifted education services as well, the procedures in Chapter 14 pertaining to a reevaluation will be followed. A single IEP is developed under Chapter 14 and implemented, revised and modified accordance with Chapter 16 and Chapter 14 regulations and addresses both the disability needs and gifted needs for that student.

**Gifted Program**

In the Tamaqua Area School District, Gifted support is provided K-12 for eligible students through the GIEP. A Gifted support teacher works at every grade level, along with other school personnel, to implement each child’s GIEP.

The Gifted Support teacher works with the students’ teachers to challenge the students in the general education classroom setting. The Support teacher also provides enrichment and accelerated programs to enable the students to make continuous progress in school.

Students must work in their area of giftedness, which is math or reading or both. Juniors or seniors may work outside of gifted area as a career option.

Elementary Level

The students will work in their area of giftedness, which will be identified in their GIEP.

The program will also consist of a pull-out program which will encourage creative and critical thinking skills, personal and academic goals, and teaching advance content in a number of academic areas.

The emphasis of the program is on the learning processes, which will enable each gifted student to reach their academic potential. The program consists of heterogeneous grouping, differentiation and collaboration with the Gifted Support teacher and classroom teachers, and a pull-out service where the gifted teacher meets with each grade level group on a weekly basis.

Middle and High School Levels

At the middle school and high school levels, eligible students work with the Gifted support teacher and classroom teachers to meet individualized needs as articulated in their GIEPs. The goals may be addressed in a variety of ways. Options include, but are not limited to, differentiated instruction in the regular classroom, the provision of alternate assignments, self-directed enrich in the curriculum, participation in small-group, topical seminars, accelerated learning opportunities and participation in specialized events such as academic competitions and contests.

From time to time, the district may offer field trips for students in the Gifted Program. Approval for such experiences will be subject to cost, availability, content, and appropriateness.

**Professional Development**

Gifted learners are entitled to be served by professionals who have specialized preparation in gifted education and expertise in appropriate differentiated content and instructional methods, who are involved in ongoing professional development, and who possess exemplary personal and professional traits. Tamaqua Area School District provides support, training and time for the Gifted teacher to provide appropriate services for the gifted student. In-service training for the entire staff will occur on an as needed basis and focus more on the big picture, especially, topics that apply across the board. The Tamaqua Area School District participates as a member of the Schuylkill IU 29 Gifted Network Forum.

For more information or questions regarding the Tamaqua Area School District’s Gifted Program, please contact:

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