

Gifted Handbook



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| District's Philosophy of Gifted Education | 4 |
| Universal Screening, Referrals, and Evaluation Process | |
| Tier 1: Universal Screening and Referrals | 5 |
| Tier 2: Targeted Screening | 5-6 |
| Student Transfers | 7 |
| Parent Referrals | 7 |
| Tier 3: Comprehensive Gifted Evaluation | 8-9 |
| STSD Gifted Eligibility Determination | |
| Eligibility | 10 |
| Intervening Factors Masking Giftedness | 10 |
| Dual Exceptionalities | 10 |
| The Gifted Individual Education Plan (GIEP) and GIEP Team Meeting | 11-12 |
| GIEP Components and Examples | 13-14 |
| Get the Most from GIEP Meetings | 15-16 |
| Salisbury Township School District Gifted Support Services | |
| Elementary (K-5) | 17 |
| Middle School (6 – 8) | 17 |
| High School (9 – 12) | 18 |
| Mathematics Enrichment/Acceleration | |
| Differentiation/Enrichment by Classroom Teacher | 19 |
| Math Acceleration | 19 |
| Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Students | 20 |
| Parent Assistance | 20 |
| Legal Assistance | 20 |

| | |
|--|-------|
| Free Mediation Service | 20 |
| Section I: Prior Written Notice of Action/Refusal to Act | 21 |
| Section II: When Prior Written Parental Consent Must be Obtained | 22 |
| Section III: Parental Refusal to Give Consent | 22 |
| Section IV: Independent Educational Evaluation | 22 |
| Section V: Dispute Resolution Systems | 22-25 |
| Section VI: Student's Status During Proceedings | 25 |
| Section VII: Applicable Laws and Regulations | 25 |
| Due Process Hearing Request | 26-27 |
| Glossary of Terms | 28-33 |

PHILOSOPHY OF GIFTED EDUCATION

Salisbury Township School District's philosophy of gifted education is to enhance the achievement of the District's Gifted learners by identifying talents, promoting exploration of interest, facilitating deeper study across disciplines, using transformative educational practices, and/or producing/sharing our learning with the local and global communities. We strive to engage students in three distinct ways, as appropriate for each individual student:

1. With each other in self-contained seminar to explore and inspire each other's uniqueness and higher-order thinking
2. With the diversity and richness of the general education class whereby learning is scaffolded with appropriate differentiation and embellishments
3. In the most natural of settings

Service delivery differs across grade levels, responding to age level expectations, unique opportunities, and student characteristics. When a child has been identified as gifted and in need of special education, the student's Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) will be incorporated into his/her Individualized Education Plan (IEP), as required by law.

A parent's knowledge of his/her child is both long-term and broad-based. This unique perspective equips parents to serve as their children's ongoing educational advocates. To effectively fill this role, a parent's perceptions must be addressed with information on available services as well as an understanding of the function of a GIEP.

The GIEP meeting is a forum for discussion of a student's educational needs. The GIEP is meant to be a working document as parent input is an important part of its development. Our hope is that the information contained in this booklet will help parents acquire: a) an understanding of the GIEP process; and b) the confidence to become an active participant.

TIER 1: UNIVERSAL SCREENING AND REFERRALS

UNIVERSAL SCREENING

Salisbury Township School District maintains an on-going system to locate, identify, and evaluate students who may be eligible for gifted services under 22 Pa Code Chapter 16. All students will be screened by the end of their 2nd grade year to identify those students who may be gifted.

Teachers shall also be provided with information regarding gifted eligibility and shall be responsible for identifying those students in their class(es) who may meet the requirements for gifted eligibility under Chapter 16. Where a teacher believes that a particular student may be gifted, as defined by Chapter 16, the teacher shall immediately refer that student to the targeted screening team, identifying the specific reasons for the referral. The teacher should use the Multiple Criteria Form for this purpose.

A Gifted Screening Team shall be assembled annually to facilitate a structured review of student data in order to identify students who may be eligible for Gifted services.

TIER 2: TARGETED SCREENING

TARGETED SCREENING

Where a student has been referred through the universal screening process, the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT) shall conduct a more targeted review/screening of the student to determine whether an evaluation may be appropriate. The GMDT may seek additional input from the student's regular education teacher(s), guidance counselor, building administrator, school psychologist, and/or any other individual who may have knowledge of the student's cognitive abilities and/or academic performance in order to make a determination regarding whether to proceed to an evaluation. The student's parents may also be consulted at this phase.

At this phase, the following additional information may be reviewed/collected:

- Review of multiple criteria data, which will include, but is not limited to PSSA scores, current and past grades, StoryTown profile, STAR results, Study Island Benchmarks, Scholastic Reading Inventory, Dibels NEXT (6th Grade only), teacher observations, and other anecdotal information (TIER 2 Multiple Criteria).
- Staff from the gifted department will administer brief testing of intellectual ability in order to consider the predictive validity of a full evaluation based on its outcome.

Where a student is referred for targeted screening but is not moved on to a full evaluation, the GMDT shall perform a targeted review of the student's file one year after the original determination not to evaluate was made in order to ensure that no evaluation continues to be necessary.

Where the GMDT determines that a full evaluation is appropriate/required, the school psychologist shall be responsible for providing a Permission to Evaluate to the student's parents within ten (10) days of the decision to evaluate.

STUDENT TRANSFERS

If a student transfers into the Salisbury Township School District with a GIEP from within the state of Pennsylvania, that GIEP will be reviewed and implemented in the District until such time that the District is able to determine whether an evaluation should be conducted. The District is not obligated to automatically adopt the eligibility findings of another district, although it may do so. The District is responsible for ensuring that the information from the prior school including the eligibility determination, gifted placement, and gifted programming are subject to District review and, if necessary, revision or revocation.

If a student transfers into the Salisbury Township School District with a GIEP or other gifted program, plan, and/or gifted eligibility determination from out of state, a Permission to Evaluate will be presented to the parent as soon as possible upon the student's arrival. If the parent consents, then a gifted evaluation will be completed and a gifted written report will be issued. If the student qualifies, a GIEP will be developed to address the student's strengths. Due to the fact that gifted eligibility is established via state law not federal law, gifted eligibility and/or programming from other states may not meet the legal requirements set forth under Pennsylvania law.

PARENT REFERRALS

Parent Request

A parent may also request an evaluation at any time. This request must be in writing and should state the reason(s) why the parent feels the student is exceptional and may be in need of gifted education. A written request should be given to the main office of your child's school. This will be forwarded to the building school psychologist. When a request is received by a school psychologist, he/she will then convene the school team and contact the parent.

The School Psychologist will respond to the parent within 10 days of the request to schedule a conference (in person or by phone). The school team will consider the following options in moving forward with a parent request:

- 1) Do not evaluate and issue NORA
- 2) Initiate TIER 2 screening procedures; or
- 3) Initiate comprehensive gifted evaluation and issue GPTE

The **Permission to Evaluate** for Gifted eligibility (GPTE) will be made readily available per parent request.***

TIER 3: COMPREHENSIVE GIFTED EVALUATION

COMPREHENSIVE GIFTED EVALUATION

Based on results from the systematic screening, candidates who advance for continued investigation will be referred for a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE). A Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT), as defined below, will conduct the evaluation and will require further input from the student's teachers and parents in the form of rating scales and narrative feedback (TIER 3 Teacher Input Form; TIER 3 Parent Input Form). GMDT will also review the student's health history.

A Gifted Permission to Evaluate (GPTE), along with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards, will be presented to the parents of the referred student as soon as possible after the decision is made to evaluate the student.

The receipt of a signed GPTE will initiate a comprehensive gifted evaluation, which will result in a Gifted Written Report (GWR).

The final GWR document answers two questions:

1. Is the student gifted under Chapter 16 definition?
2. Does the student demonstrate the need for specially designed instruction?

The Gifted Multidisciplinary Team: A GMDT completes the GMDE. The team members involved in the GMDT must include: the student's parents if they choose to participate, a certified school psychologist, persons familiar with the student's educational experience and performance, one or more of the student's current teachers, persons trained in the appropriate evaluation techniques, and when possible, persons familiar with the student's cultural background. A single member of the GMDT may meet two or more of the qualifications specified in this subsection.

Other individuals who are either knowledgeable in the area of giftedness or who are knowledgeable about the student may also be included. Such ancillary team members may include: the Director of Special Education, the Supervisor of Special Education, the gifted support teacher, former teachers of the student candidate, guidance counselor, or other school personnel. When warranted, a person who is familiar with or understands the potential effects of the student's cultural or language background on the results of the evaluation may also be included.

The Timeline: The GWR shall be completed and a copy of the evaluation report presented to the parents no later than 60 calendar days after the school receives the Permission to Evaluate form signed by the parent(s). The calendar days from the day after the last day of the spring school term, up to and including the day before the first day of the fall school term, will not be counted.

The Process Details: The school psychologist will administer a measure of general intelligence ability, and an individual achievement test to assess the student's reading, writing, and math skills in a 1:1 setting. Curriculum-based assessments may also be administered. Tests, evaluations, and materials used to determine eligibility must be:

- selected and administered in a manner that is free from racial and cultural bias and bias based on disability;
- administered in the native language or mode of communication of the child unless it is clearly not feasible to do so;
- selected and administered so that the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude, achievement level or whatever other factor the test purports to measure, rather than the student's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, except if those skills are the factors which the test purports to measure;
- professionally validated for the specific purpose for which they are used;
- administered by certified professional employee(s) under the instructions provided by the producer of the tests and sound professional practice; and
- selected and administered to assess specific areas of educational need and ability and not merely a single general intelligence quotient (IQ).

STSD GIFTED ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Eligibility: Consistent with the law, the Salisbury Township School District criteria for Chapter 16 Gifted eligibility are as follows:

1. A student who attains a standard score of 130 or higher on a norm-referenced assessment of cognitive ability (Full Scale Intelligent Quotient or General Ability Index score) will be recommended to receive gifted support services.
2. Consistent with the law, a student with an IQ of less than 130 may also be considered eligible to receive gifted support services if they demonstrate other multiple criteria that indicate gifted ability. The multiple criteria include:
 - a. Academic achievement two or more standard deviations above the mean for the student's age or grade on nationally normed achievement tests. Subject results shall yield academic instruction levels in all academic subject areas.
 - b. An observed or measured rate of acquisition/retention of new academic content or skills that reflect gifted ability.
 - c. Demonstrated achievement, performance or expertise in one or more academic areas as evidenced by excellence of products, portfolio or research, as well as criterion-referenced team judgment.
 - d. Early and measured use of high level thinking skills, academic creativity, leadership skills, intense academic interest areas, communications skills, foreign language aptitude or technology expertise.

Intervening Factors Masking Giftedness: The team will consider whether documented, observed, validated, or assessed evidence that intervening factors such as English as a second language, learning disability, physical impairment, emotional disability, gender or race bias, or socio-cultural deprivation are masking gifted abilities.

Dual Exceptionalities: If a student is both gifted and eligible for special education, the procedures in Chapter 14 shall take precedence. The student's needs established under gifted status will be addressed in the procedures required in Chapter 14, including a single IEP. For students who are thought to be both gifted and disabled, a complete educational evaluation will be completed.

Based on the outcome of the GMDE, the GMDT will determine if the student is:

- 1) Mentally gifted; and, if so,
- 2) Whether the student is in need of specially-designed gifted instruction.

A student is in need of gifted services if his or her educational needs cannot be met through differentiated instruction within the general education classroom.

If the student is found to be both eligible and in need of gifted programming a the Gifted Individualized Educational Plan (GIEP) Team will create a GIEP to address the student's unique learning needs.

GIFTED INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (GIEP)

The Gifted Individual Education Plan (GIEP) and GIEP Team Meeting

- A GIEP is a written individualized education plan created for a child and his/her unique learning needs as identified during the evaluation or re-evaluation process. The GIEP document sets forth a commitment of resources in writing. It becomes a management tool and an evaluation device to ensure that each child found to be exceptional is provided with a free appropriate public education.
- The purpose of the GIEP team meeting is to prepare and record the GIEP document. This meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel and enabling them as valued participants while determining what the child's needs are, what services will be provided to meet those needs, and what the anticipated outcomes may be. It is the cornerstone of the special education process and the key to the services the child receives.
- PA law (22 Pa Code Chapter 16) requires that the GIEP be developed at a GIEP team meeting and be reviewed at least annually.
- Parents are legally entitled to be members of the GIEP Team.
- The GIEP Team shall include the student's parents, if they choose to participate, student (if parents choose to have the student participate), district representative, and one or more of the child's current teachers.
- The GIEP Team meeting must be scheduled at a time and place convenient for both the parents and school personnel.
- Written notification of the purpose, time and location of the conference and other attendees must be sent to the parent. Parents may request that other school personnel be invited. The notice must be in the language used at home and must be sent early enough so that there is an opportunity to make arrangements to attend the conference.
- Parents must be notified of all their rights. (Parental Safeguards)
- Parents must receive a written copy of the GMDE report at least 10 days prior to the GIEP conference. If parents disagree with the recommendations of the GMDE report, they have 10 school days to submit their reasons for disagreement. The report shall make recommendations as to whether the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction, the bases for those recommendations, and the names/positions of the GMDT members.
- If a child moves from one school district to another, within Pennsylvania, the current GIEP is still in effect and generally must be followed by the new school district unless the parent(s), surrogate(s) or guardian(s) and/or the district agree to a change.

- The GIEP should be based on the most recent evaluation for the child, allowing your child to make reasonable progress, guide the staff in providing services, and document the services the school district is committed to provide.
- At any time the parent or teacher may reconvene the GIEP team to discuss the continued appropriateness of the GIEP. Parents may contact the classroom teacher or principal to revisit the GIEP.
- The assessment method for each objective should be stated on the GIEP.

GIEP COMPONENTS AND EXAMPLES

Names and Positions of Participants

To document participation, not necessarily agreement

Parents
Student (if deemed appropriate by parents)
Gifted Support Teacher
General Education Teacher(s)
District Representative
Other Team Members as appropriate

Present Levels of Educational Performances

From most recent evaluation and other assessments.

Summary of Performance in current program
Academic/Cognitive Strengths
Achievement Results
Progress on Goals
Aptitudes, interests, specialized skills, products and evidence of effectiveness in other academic areas
Grades/Classroom Performance as Indicated by Subject Area Teachers

Annual Goals

Reasonable calculated goals to yield educational benefit in one year's time.

"Jean will develop independent research skills in economics."

"Jean will explore an enriched mathematics curriculum."

"Jean will develop critical reading skills."

Short Term Learning Outcomes

Steps that lead to goal.

"Jean will learn about the stock market simulation. She will complete a buying/selling project during a 10 week period of time.

Level or standard for mastery.

-She will produce a written analysis and chart of stock activity.

Measurement procedure for evaluation

Specific tools/rubrics used to measure mathematics, critical reading skills and research skills and grammar progress.

Timelines for completion of evaluation

-Weekly monitoring

Specially Designed Instruction

Adaptations to the general curriculum, instructional methods, environment, or materials in order to tailor varied approaches to content, process and products.

Compacted Curriculum
Individualized Pacing
Mentorships
Distance Learning
Enrichment, Acceleration
Special Competitions, Projects

Support Services

Service without which the GIEP cannot be carried out. Necessary for student to benefit from/have access to gifted education program.

Career Guidance
Flexible Grouping
Technology Education

Projected Dates

Initiation and duration of GIEP

Annual Review

GET THE MOST FROM GIEP MEETINGS

1. Write down your ideas/questions before the meeting and feel free to take notes and ask questions throughout the meeting.
2. Share your observations about your child (e.g. his/her educational and physical development history, interests/aspirations, etc.). You may want to bring work samples.
3. Talk to your child prior to the meeting. Ask him/her for input and if age appropriate, include the child in the planning meeting.
4. If you don't understand something – ASK – educational/psychological jargon can be confusing.
5. It is a parent's option to hold the GMDE and the GIEP the same day by signing a waiver – or you may want to schedule these meetings on 2 separate days.
6. Creatively explore options as part of the GIEP planning.
7. Remember, the GIEP is a working plan – it can be revised and amended at any time.
8. Your signature at the front of the GIEP indicates your participation (not your agreement). You will identify whether or not you agree with a GIEP on another document, called a Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA). The development of a GIEP should be a team effort, and you are a valued part of the team. If you are satisfied with your child's proposed program, say so – if you are dissatisfied or uncertain, express your concerns. Your input as a parent provides unique input and is very valuable.
9. If you have questions, feel free to ask the District team members to clarify how your child's program will fit into his/her existing schedule, particularly at the secondary level. Will he/she miss clubs, study hall, come in before or after school, etc.?
10. There may be times when you feel that your child's schedule is demanding and challenging enough, and that additional Gifted programming may be overwhelming or simply too much. This is sometimes the case with high school students who are taking advanced placement and other high-level classes. In such cases, it may be appropriate for the team to recommend that the student not have a GIEP for that year. Where that happens, your child still meets the intellectual qualifications for Gifted services – he or she is simply not in need of services at that time. The GIEP team can be reconvened at any point to review that decision and a GIEP will once again be considered for the following year when the student's course load is different.

11. Check with your child frequently regarding the implementation of the GIEP and his/her progress. If you have concerns, contact the teacher and/or building principal immediately.

12. If you are having concerns or believe your child's GIEP is not being followed:

- Write down your concerns.
- Call your child's teacher or building principal to share your concern(s).
- If informal contact has not resolved the issue, contact the building principal (in writing) to request a GIEP team meeting.

For a complete description of your parental rights see the Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Students.

Ideally, every effort should be made to resolve the issue(s) at the building level. If this is not successful, contact the District Administration Office at 610-797-2062. For a complete description of your parental rights see the attached Notice of parental Rights for Gifted.

DISTRICT GIFTED SUPPORT SERVICES

Elementary (Grades K-5)

The elementary Gifted Support Services are available to all students from Kindergarten to Grade Five. Each school is serviced by a teacher trained to provide academic assistance for students through collaboratively designed strategies with classroom teachers, parents/guardians, and the students themselves.

The initial emphasis of our program focuses on the Language Arts and Mathematics areas of the curriculum and is individualized to fit the specific needs of each child through his/her GIEP. Monitoring of our program and the need for accountability will be accomplished through the use of collaborative consultation, timelines, action plans, specific GIEPs (Gifted Individualized Educational Programs), portfolios (if prescribed), and trimester reports to parents. Evaluation of our program will be ongoing and specifically decided in a collaborative manner by the teachers, parents, and students involved with each GIEP.

The use of flexible grouping within classrooms and grade levels, as well as across grade levels, will be available for use with specific students. Gifted support teachers will always be available as consultants to our classroom teachers and parents as plans are made to meet the needs of each student.

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

Where the GIEP team has determined that it is individually appropriate for the student, based upon the student's individual strengths and needs, middle school students have the opportunity to participate in gifted seminar. The course's focus is individualized self-discovery through the Challenge Based Learning approach supporting students areas of giftedness; an engaging multidisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. Students will work with peers, teachers, and experts in their community to solve real-world problems.

In regular education classes, the curriculum is highly adaptable to Gifted learners. Where the GIEP team determines that it is individually appropriate, content-based enrichment activities and/or projects are available for every unit and can be provided pursuant to a student's GIEP. Many of these options are described within their GIEPs. Additionally, accelerated math classes are available (if eligible) to students in 7th and 8th grade. Acceleration will be provided through a student's GIEP if it is not available to regular education students. Where accelerated classes are available to all students who meet the requirements, the classes will be provided through the student's regular education curriculum, not his/her GIEP, which may contain additional enrichment and/or programming.

High School (Grades 9-12)

Our high school uses a seminar approach to facilitate individual investigation into personal interests through Challenge Based Learning as applied to universal themes and the global community. This seminar is available for students whose GIEP teams have determined it would be an appropriate and beneficial Gifted programming option. As with all of the District's research-based, specially-designed Gifted program options, the seminar is highly individualized to meet the specific needs of the students. Students may work in collaboration or on their own under the guidance of the gifted support teacher and other community mentors with whom they are networked. Additional break-out centers and reflection blog work is part of this weighted course.

Additionally, students may be accelerated through participation in advanced level courses. Honors and Advanced Placement course are available in various disciplines. Students may also choose to work with school administration.

MATHEMATICS ENRICHMENT/ACCELERATION

Salisbury Area School District Gifted Support offers a continuum of services to provide for individual differences and the optimal development of each gifted learner. The level and specific types of services that will be utilized for each student will be determined by the student's GIEP team and set forth within the GIEP. Academic planning is essential to gifted students and is the primary task of the GIEP team. Educational planning at Salisbury includes a full range of instructional best practices in order to match the level, pace and complexity of the curriculum with the needs of the student. The comprehensive continuum may include the following elements:

- Differentiation – Defined by Tomlinson (1995), differentiated instruction is “the consistent use of a variety of instructional approaches to modify content, process, and/or products in response to the learning readiness and interest of academically diverse students.” Differentiated instruction is typically a regular education teaching practice, but depending upon the nature, extent, and pre-designed aspects of the differentiation to suit the specific needs of a particular Gifted learner, it can sometimes be included in a student's GIEP as specially-designed instruction.
- Enrichment – Enrichment is the provision of additional or modified material to deepen and extend learning. This may be delivered within the classroom or through a pull out program.
- Acceleration – Acceleration is an academic intervention that moves students through an educational program at a rate faster or at an age that is younger than typical (Belin and Blank).

NOTICE OF PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

This notice describes your right and the procedures that safeguard your rights as found in Chapter 16 of the State Board of Education's Regulations (22 PA Code). These regulations require school districts to provide gifted education services to students who have been identified as gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. These services must be described in a Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP).

The information contained in this Notice is important to you and your child. Please take time to review it. If you need clarification, you can seek help from personnel in your school district. You also have the right to be informed of organizations that are established to assist parents in understanding their rights under these laws. A list of some of these resources follows.

Parent Assistance

Bureau of Curriculum and Academic Services
717-787-8913
333 Market Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Legal Assistance

Pennsylvania Bar Association
800-932-0311
Box 186
Harrisburg, PA 17108

Free Mediation Service (PAGE)

Pennsylvania Office of Dispute Resolution PAGE Helpline
215-616-0470
3026 Potshop Road
Norristown, PA 19403
www.penngifted.org/

If you have a concern about your child's educational program, you may wish to contact your child's teachers, building principal, or district administrators. This type of communication is often helpful in resolving concerns. You also have the right to initiate due process procedures as described in Section V of this notice.

Section I: Prior Written Notice of Action/Refusal to Act

A. When Provided:

A school district must provide parents with written notice 10 school days prior to one or more of the following events:

- The school district proposes to conduct an initial Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE) or re-evaluation of the student. Notices given under these circumstances are either the Permission to Evaluate or the Notice of Intent to Re-evaluate.
- The school district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification evaluation or educational placement of the student. Notice given under these circumstances is the Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA).
- The school district proposes or refuses to make any significant changes in the student's Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP). Notice given under these circumstances is the Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA).

B. Contents of Notice:

Prior written notices must be written in language understandable to the general public. If necessary, the content of notices must be communicated orally in the native language or directly so that parents understand the content of the notice.

Prior written notices must contain:

- A description of the action proposed or refused by the school district, an explanation of why the school district proposes or refuses to take the action, and a description of any options the school district considered and the reasons why those options were rejected.
- A description of each evaluation procedure, type of test, record or report the school district used as a basis for the district's action.
- A description of other factors relevant to the school district's action.
- A full explanation of the parental rights or procedural safeguards available to the parents or the student, including the right to an impartial hearing.
- The address and telephone numbers of organizations that are available to assist the parents.
- The timelines involved in conducting an evaluation, developing a gifted individualized education program (GIEP), and initiating a hearing.
- A statement informing parents that an outside evaluation submitted by the parents must be considered.

Section II: When Prior Written Parental Consent Must be Obtained

Parental consent must be obtained by the school district prior to:

- Conducting an initial Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE) of a student
- Initially placing a gifted student in a gifted program
- Disclosing to unauthorized persons information identifiable to gifted student

Section III: Parental Refusal to Give Consent

A school district may request (in writing) a hearing to proceed with an initial evaluation or an initial educational placement when the district has not been able to obtain consent from the parents of a student who is thought to be gifted.

A school district may also request (in writing) a hearing when a parent disagrees with the identification, evaluation, or proposed educational placement or educational services for a student who is gifted.

Section IV: Independent Educational Evaluation

Parents have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation of their child.

An independent evaluation is an evaluation by a qualified professional who is not an employee of the school district responsible for the child. The results of the independent evaluation must be considered by the school district in any decision made with respect to the provision of a gifted education.

Section V: Dispute Resolution Systems

When parents disagree with the school district's proposal they have the following formal systems available to them for dispute resolution:

Mediation

Mediation is a process in which parents and agencies involved in a dispute regarding special education for gifted students agree to obtain the assistance of an impartial mediator in attempting to reach a mutually agreeable settlement.

- Discussions occurring during the mediation session are confidential and no part of the mediation conference is to be recorded.
- The mediator may not be called as a witness in future proceedings.
- During a mediation conference the mediator will meet with the parties together in a joint session and individually in private sessions.
- The designated agency involved in the dispute must send a representative who has the authority to commit resources to the resolution agreed upon.
- Any agreement reached by the parties during the mediation process must be

converted into writing and placed in the student's educational record.

- The written mediation agreement is not a confidential document, shall be incorporated into the student's GIEP, and is binding on the parties.
- The mediation agreement shall be enforceable by the Department of Education.
- The GIEP team shall be convened within 10 school days following the mediation agreement to incorporate the mediation agreement into the GIEP where necessary.
- When the mediation conference results in a resolution of the dispute, each party shall receive an executed copy of the agreement at the conclusion of the mediation conference.
- Mediation may not be used to deny or delay a party's right to an impartial due-process hearing.

Impartial Due Process Hearings

- Parents may request an impartial due process hearing in writing concerning the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of or the provision of a gifted education to a student who is gifted or who is thought to be gifted if the parents disagree with the school district's identification, evaluation, or placement or the provision of gifted education to the student.
- A school district may request in writing a hearing to proceed with an initial evaluation or an initial educational placement when the district has not been able to obtain consent from the parents or in regard to a matter in number one above.
- The hearing will be conducted by and held in the local school district at a place reasonably convenient to the parents. At the request of the parents the hearing may be held in the evening.
- The hearing will be an oral personal hearing and will be open to the public unless the parents request a closed hearing 5 days in advance of the hearing. If the hearing is open the decision issued in the case will be available to the public. If the hearing is closed the decision will be treated as a record of the student and will not be available to the public.
- The decision of the hearing officer will include findings of fact, a discussion, and conclusions of law. Although technical rules of evidence will not be followed, the decision will be based solely upon the substantial evidence presented during the course of the hearing.
- The hearing officer will have the authority to order that additional evidence be presented.

- A written transcript of the hearing will, upon request, be made and provided to the parents at no cost.
- Parents may be represented by legal counsel and accompanied and advised by individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to students who are gifted.
- A parent or parent's representative will have access to educational records, including tests or reports upon which the proposed action is based.
- A party may prohibit the introduction of evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed to that party at least 5 calendar days before the hearing.
- A party has the right to present evidence and testimony, including expert medical, psychological or education testimony.
- The decision of the impartial hearing officer may be appealed to a panel of three appellate hearing officers. The panel's decision may be appealed further to a court of competent jurisdiction.
- The Secretary may contract for coordination services in support of hearings conducted by local school districts. The coordination services will be provided on behalf of the school districts and may include arrangements for stenographic services, arrangements for hearing officer services, scheduling of hearings and other functions in support of procedural consistency and the rights of the parties to hearings.
- If a school district chooses not to utilize the coordination services, it may conduct hearings independent of the services if its procedures similarly provide for procedural consistency and ensure the rights of the parties. In the absence of its own procedures, a school district that receives a request for an impartial due process must forward, without delay, the request to the agency providing coordination services.
- A hearing officer may not be an employee or agent of a school district in which the parents or student resides, or of an agency which is responsible for the education or care of the student. A hearing officer must promptly inform the parties of a personal or professional relationship the officer has or has had with any of the parties.
- The following timelines apply to due process hearings:
 - The hearing must be held with 30 calendar days after a parent's or school district's initial request for a hearing.
 - The hearing officer's decision must be issued within 45 calendar days after the parent's or school district's request for a hearing.

- Each school district must keep a list of the persons who serve as hearing officers. The list must include the qualifications of each hearing officer. School districts must provide parents with information as to the availability of the list and must make copies of it available upon request.

Section VI: Student's Status During Proceedings

Unless the parents and school district agree otherwise, the student must remain in his or her present educational placement during the pendency of any administrative or judicial proceeding.

Section VII: Applicable Laws and Regulations

22 PA Code, Chapter 16: Special Education for Gifted Students.

DUE PROCESS HEARING REQUEST

This request for a due process hearing must be forwarded to the Office of Dispute Resolution immediately after receipt of the request from the parents if the school district chooses to use the coordination services. **It is important that both sides of this form be fully completed. Maintain a copy of this form for your records.**

Student' Name _____ Date of Birth _____

School District _____

School District Contact Person _____

Title _____

Address _____

Phone # _____ Fax # _____

School District Attorney/Representative _____

Title _____ Phone # _____ Fax # _____

Address _____

Parent(s) _____

Address _____

Phone # Mother (work) _____ Father (work) _____

(Home #) _____ Fax # (if available) _____

Parents' Attorney/Representative _____

Title _____ Phone # _____ Fax # _____

Address _____

The hearing will be held at a timeline

Is a language other than English spoken in the home?
If yes, please identify the language

The school district is to provide for the needs of all individuals involved with disabilities.

This hearing will be held at the following address:

Please enclose a map and/or directions for the Hearing Officer.

Date Form Completed _____

SEND THIS FORM TO:

Carol G Prouser, Coordinator
Office of Dispute Resolution
6340 Flank Drive, Suite 600
Harrisburg, PA 17122

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ability Grouping – Arranging students by need, interest, or ability to meet various instructional purposes. These groups are specific to the educational goal to be achieved and can be flexibly formed and reformed as needed.

Above-Level Testing - Also called out-of-level testing – Administering a test level that is designed for an older student. For example, a 5th grader might take chapter tests from the 6th or even 7th grade math book to demonstrate knowledge.

Acceleration – Access to higher level learning activities and skill development than normally provided in regular education to students of the same age. The pacing, complexity, and depth of planned coursework are modified as indicated by individual needs. Acceleration may include: planned course compacting/telescoping, subject acceleration, specially designed instruction, credit by examination or performance, interdisciplinary planned courses, distance learning courses, independent, or self-directed study.

Achievement Test – An objective examination that measures educationally relevant skills or knowledge about academic subjects.

Adaptations - Using the curriculum and adjusting it to meet the needs of the student.

Assessment - Assignment of value. Academically, this usually means grades. In psychology, it means comparing the tested measures of a student's mentally characteristics (e.g. Intelligence, personality, self-esteem) to a norm, or average.

Advancement Placement Courses - Planned courses of study in which secondary regular education students may gain college credit and/or advanced college placement. These courses are normally available only at the 11th and 12th grade level. Credit is earned by successfully meeting criteria established by higher-order education institutions on a nationally given and scored advanced placement examination.

Authentic Assessment - A student evaluation technique using student products or performance instead of traditional standardized tests. It allows for greater focus on student individuality and creativity in the learning process.

Ceiling Effect – If a student correctly answers all or almost all of the items on the test, and the test is too easy for the student, the student has reached the “ceiling” of the test. The test does not measure the student's abilities. It is important to give a student a test that is difficult enough.

Chapter 4 – State Board of Education regulations for academic standards and assessments.

Chapter 14 – State Board of regulations for special education of student with

disabilities and based on Federal Mandates and IDEA '97.

Chapter 16 – State Board of Education regulations for special education for gifted students.

Cluster Grouping – Ability grouping within a heterogeneous classroom. This is not “tracking”.

Compacting – Eliminating repetition, minimizing drill, and accelerating instruction in basic skills so that gifted students can move to more challenging material.

Content – The specific information that is to be covered in the unit or course of instruction.

Continuous Progress – Students receive appropriate instruction daily and move ahead as they master content and skills.

Cooperative Learning Groups – Grouping students with varying ability levels often reflecting the full range of student achievement and aptitude to complete a common task and/or project. The purpose of such learning to prepare students to live in a democratic society; to help them understand group membership and group dynamics; and to allow them to practice both leadership and follower skills.

Curriculum-based Assessment – Assessment that is tied directly to the curriculum. It may be teacher developed, or a teacher may use the information that is provided by the textbook publisher.

Diagnostic Test – An intensive, in-depth evaluation process to determine the specific learning need of individual students.

Differentiation – An organized, yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning to meet students where they are and help them to achieve maximum growth as learners.

Distance Learning – Distance learning format provides for communication by teacher to student via video technology, synchronously (at the same time), from one to many delivery points.

Educational Placement – The overall educational environment in which gifted education is provided to a gifted student.

Enrichment for Gifted Students – In-depth learning experiences that provide interaction with new ideas, skills and topics not ordinarily included in planned courses of study for the regular student of the same age. These experiences are based upon individual student strengths, interests, and needs.

Flexible Pacing – Provisions that place students at an appropriate instructional level and allows them to move forward in the curriculum as they achieve mastery of content and skills.

GIEP (Gifted Individualized Education Program) – A yearly written plan for the appropriate education of a gifted student. It includes a statement of the student's present levels of educational performance, a statement of annual goals and short-term learning outcomes, and a statement of specially designed instruction and support services.

GMDE (Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation) – A systematic process of testing, assessment, other evaluative processes, and information that describes a student's academic functioning, learning strengths, learning problems, and educational needs and used by a team to develop a recommendation about whether or not a student is gifted or needs gifted education.

Gifted Education – (Under Chapter 16 of PA School Code) is specially designed instruction to meet the needs of a gifted student that is conducted in an instructional setting, provided in an instructional or skill area provided at no cost to the parents, provided under the authority of a school district, directly, by referral or by contract, provided by an agency, individualized to meet the educational needs of the student, reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress, and provided in conformity with a GIEP.

Gifted Student – A student who has 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. This term includes a student who has an IQ of 130 or higher and when multiple criteria indicate gifted ability. A student who is exceptional under section 1731 of the School Code (24 P.S. &13-137) because the student meets the definition of “mentally gifted” and needs specially designed instruction beyond that required in Chapter 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment). This term applies only to students who are of “school age” as defined under 11.12 (relating to school age).

Group Investigation – Students working in small groups on multi-step projects such as: Future Problem Solving, History Day, Odyssey of the Mind.

Heterogeneous/Homogeneous Grouping – Grouping heterogeneously generally occurs by chronological age level. Homogeneous grouping is based on common criteria such as the student's interests, special needs or academic abilities. Neither type of grouping should be used 100% of the time.

Higher Level Questioning Strategies – Questions and activities using analysis, synthesis, evaluation of critical thinking skills.

Honors Course -A secondary level planned course designed to be advanced in content, process and product and usually requiring regular education students to meet prerequisite criteria before course entry. These classes are designed for those who intend to proceed to higher education. They should be available for,

but not limited to, identified gifted students.

Inclusion – Refers to the commitment to educate each student to the maximum extent appropriate in the school and classroom the student would otherwise attend. It requires only that the student will benefit from such a placement.

Independent Study – Allowing students to follow individual or self-selected areas of interest by designing and implementing their own study plans. Close monitoring by teachers is an essential component and usually a learning contract is made between the student and the teacher that states activities and monitoring schedules. This can be an appropriate program option for the gifted at any level provided a teacher or qualified adult is regularly scheduled to meet with the student, provide access to instruction/advice, and supervise the accomplishment of milestones and goal completion. Also called Guided Independent Study, Self Directed Study.

Individualized Instruction - Content, and pacing of instruction geared toward the student's unique learning styles, abilities, needs and goals.

Informal Test – A non-standard test that is often teacher-constructed that is designed to give an approximate index of a student's level of ability.

Instructional Setting – A classroom or other setting in which students are receiving education.

Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) - A measure of intellectual aptitude at a given point in time based on comparison of children of the same chronological age. It is one of the many ways to measure a student's academic potential.

Interdisciplinary Units – Instruction tied together by a key concept or idea. Information and activities are integrated from a variety of disciplines. Courses that study a broad topic or concept by gathering and relating information and ideas from multiple subject areas and discipline. Making connections or new relationships among the subject areas/disciplines enhances student understanding of the depth and complexity of the topic(s). Unless individualized for the gifted, this regular education offering that can reduce subject overlap and duplicative student work while relating and integrating knowledge and skill.

Interest Centers or Interest Groups – A means of providing students with meaningful study when basic assignments are completed.

Learning Contract – Student and teacher jointly develop a plan for the accomplishment of learning goal(s), which both sign and adhere to. Often involves streamlining of regular class work.

Learning Environment – The environment where learning is taking place including physical location and/or student grouping.

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.

Mentorships/Internships – Matching a student on a one-to-one basis with an adult member of the community who can provide expertise and or advice in a field of study or other community endeavor. Both mentor and student have predetermined goals and outcomes. This process is especially effective where portfolio/performance assessment is in place.

Modifications – Changing the objectives within the curriculum to meet the needs of the student.

Norm-Referenced or Standardized Test – A test used to determine a student's status with respect to the performance of other students on that test. A "norm" group is the large number of examinees who have taken a particular test and whose scores form the basis of the norms. Such a test may be based on nations, state or local norms. At every level of educational test usage, it is necessary to match the scope of the test with the purpose that test is supposed to perform.

On-Line Learning – A form of distance learning that uses computer-networking technology to provide interaction of a teacher to learner and learner to teacher asynchronously (at different times), in a multipoint delivery mode.

Pace – The speed at which content is presented and instruction delivered. Pacing which match the student's rate of learning is optimal. Because gifted students are usually able to learn faster, they often prefer accelerated pacing.

Planned Course – The common knowledge and skills in a subject area to be learned by all regular education students of a particular age/grade/level as determined and approved by a local school district within the state mandate.

Planned Course (curriculum) Compacting/Telescoping - Elimination of content that the student has already mastered allowing a faster paced learning progression based on the student's rate of acquisition/retention of new materials and skills.

Portfolio Assessment - A collection of student products used to measure student progression and achievement. Such assessment allows for the demonstration of a wide variety of abilities and talents that do not lend themselves to traditional measures. Content of the portfolio should provide a profile of the gifted learner and the quality of the work they produce.

Pre-Test – A test given before instruction to determine current level of performance is a specific skill area. A student who correctly answers 93% of the material on the pre-test has demonstrated mastery of the concepts covered by the test.

Process – How the student will acquire the content information.

Product – How the student will demonstrate their understanding of the content.

Regular Classroom - A specific instructional grouping within the regular education environment.

Regular Education Environment – The regular classroom and the other instructional settings in which a student without a need for gifted education receives instructional programs and the full range of supportive services normally provided to these children.

Screening and Evaluation Process – The systematic determination of whether or not a student is gifted or needs gifted education.

Skills Inventory – Use of various instruments to determine the student's abilities in areas such as leadership, creativity, communication, etc.

Specially Designed Instruction – Adaptations or modifications to the general curriculum, instruction, instructional environments, methods materials, or a specialized curriculum for the students who are gifted.

Standardized Test – A form of measurement that has been normed against a specific population.

Support Services – Services as required under *16.33 (relating to support services) to assist a gifted student to benefit from gifted education. Examples of the term include: psychological services, parent counseling and education, counseling services, and/or transportation to and from gifted programs to classroom in buildings operated by the district.

Tiered Instruction – Use of varied level of activities to ensure that student's explore ideas at a level that builds on their prior knowledge and prompts continued growth within the same unit, lesson, or theme or instruction.

Tracking – Fixed groups that are rigidly maintained over time, often kindergarten through 12th grade. This term is not a synonym for grouping that is flexible and changeable, task to task. No child should be “locked into” an ongoing total education program.