

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Excellence is not an Act, but a Habit - Aristotle

GIFTED EDUCATION HANDBOOK



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

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Preface

This compendium of gifted education is intended to give parents information about the regulations that govern gifted education services in Pennsylvania and how these are implemented in the Fox Chapel Area School District.

The steps that the district follows to locate, evaluate, and identify students who meet the criteria and need gifted services can be found here. There are lists of frequently used terms and acronyms, a description of the criteria for gifted services in the Fox Chapel Area School District, and a list of resources for parents who wish to locate additional information and guidance related to gifted education.

The gifted education of each student is based on the need for programs and services not ordinarily provided in the regular education program. Parents are valued members of the team that helps to determine the need for services through the evaluation process and each year through the development of the Gifted Individualized Education Program.

If you have a concern about your child's educational program, you are encouraged to discuss these with your child's teacher(s) and principal.

The Fox Chapel Area School District strives to take students to their maximum levels of educational achievement and to develop the whole person in order to accomplish his or her personal best.

We welcome this opportunity to work with you.

Glossary of Terms

Chapter 16: Regulations and rules regarding gifted students in Pennsylvania.

Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE): This refers to a systematic process of testing, assessment, and other evaluative processes used by a team to develop a recommendation about whether or not a student is gifted or needs gifted education.

Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT): The GMDT consists of a team of educators, other professional individuals, and the child's parents. The GMDT reviews all formal testing of a child and all other evaluation material and must issue a written report that recommends whether the child is gifted and includes recommendations about the student's programming.

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.

Gifted Student: A student who is exceptional because the student meets the definition of "mentally gifted" and needs specially designed instruction beyond that required in regular education.

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

Glossary of Acronyms

AP	Advanced Placement
CBA	Curriculum Based Assessment
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
GIEP	Gifted Individualized Education Plan
GMDE	Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation
GMDT	Gifted Multidisciplinary Team
IDEA	Individual with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education

Gifted Education

Gifted Education in the Fox Chapel Area School District is comprised of different program options and goals and objectives depending on a student's areas of strength and need as documented in the Gifted Written Report (GWR) and the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The plan is designed to meet the educational needs of the child.

At the elementary level, students participate in a weekly pullout with gifted peers. A student may also participate in accelerated reading or math or both. A student must meet additional criteria to participate in an accelerated reading or math class. Options at the middle school for gifted students may include novel studies and/or seminars that are related to core content areas and career explorations. At the high school level, students may select from advanced placement classes, differentiated options within the core curriculum, internships, and regional competitions.

The gifted education program for each student is documented in the student's Gifted Individual Education Program (GIEP).

Gifted Education in PA: Chapter 16 of the School Code defines the rules and regulations concerning gifted education in Pennsylvania. Some sections of Chapter 16, *Special Education for Gifted Students*, are cited in this handbook in order to draw a connection between the requirements for gifted education throughout the Commonwealth, and the operation of gifted education in the Fox Chapel Area School District.

Gifted Education is defined in §16.1 as follows:

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, 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.*
- *Provided in conformity with a GIEP.*

Criteria for Eligibility

Chapter 16 provides further information about who is “mentally gifted”.

Each school district shall establish procedures to determine whether a student is mentally gifted (§16.21).

*This term **includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher OR when multiple criteria indicate gifted ability.** Determination of gifted ability will not be based on IQ score alone. Deficits in memory or processing speed, as indicated by testing, cannot be the sole basis upon which a student is determined to be ineligible for gifted special education. A person with an IQ score lower than 130 may be admitted to gifted programs when other educational criteria in the profile of a person strongly indicate gifted ability (§16.21).*

Multiple criteria indicating gifted ability include:

- 1) A year or more above grade achievement level for the normal age group in one or more subjects as measured by nationally normed and validated achievement tests able to accurately reflect gifted performance.*
- 2) An observed or measured rate of acquisition/retention of new academic content or skills that reflect gifted ability.*
- 3) 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.*
- 4) Early and measured use of high level thinking skills, academic creativity, leadership skills, intense academic interest areas, communication skills, foreign language aptitude or technology expertise.*
- 5) Documented, observed, and validated or assessed evidence that intervening factors such as English as a second language, disabilities, gender, or race bias, or socio/cultural deprivation area masking gifted abilities (§16.21).*

Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation

Chapter 16 defines the referral and evaluation process for determining if a student meets the criteria for mentally gifted and needs specially designed instruction (§16.22).

Referral

** Referral for a gifted multidisciplinary evaluation shall be made when teachers indicate that a student may be gifted and the student is not receiving an appropriate education under Chapter 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment) and one or more of the following apply:*

- (1) A request for evaluation has been made by the student's parents under subsection (c).*
- (2) 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 that exceeds that of other students in the classroom.*

Teacher Referral - In addition to the screening, at any time, a teacher can refer a student for a gifted multidisciplinary evaluation by completing the Child Find/Referral Checklist and submitting it with evidence of exemplary performance to the Pupil Services Office.

Parent Referral - A parent is able to request, in writing, a gifted multidisciplinary evaluation, one time per year. Parents may request an evaluation in writing and address that request to their building principal or the Coordinator of Special Education. If a child has received an individual IQ test after the age of 8 years, the IQ score from that test may be used in determining eligibility.

Evaluation

Chapter 16 describes the composition of the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT), the information that must be included, and the sources of the information, as well as the protection in evaluation considerations for the assessment materials (§16.22).

** Multidisciplinary evaluations shall be conducted by GMDTs [Gifted Multidisciplinary Teams]. The GMDT shall be formed on the basis of the student's needs and shall be comprised of the student's parents, 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.*

** Gifted multidisciplinary evaluations must be sufficient in scope and depth to investigate information relevant to the student's suspected giftedness, including academic functioning, learning strengths and educational needs.*

** The multidisciplinary evaluation process must include information from the parents or others*

who interact with the student on a regular basis, and may include information from the student if appropriate.

** The following protection-in-evaluation measures shall be considered when performing an evaluation of students suspected of being gifted:*

- (1) No one test or type of test may be used as the sole criterion for determining that a student is or is not gifted.*
- (2) Intelligence tests yielding an IQ score may not be used as the only measure of aptitude for students of limited English proficiency, or for students of racial-, linguistic-or ethnic-minority background.*
- (3) Tests and similar evaluation materials used in the determination of giftedness shall be:*
 - (a) Selected and administered in a manner that is free from racial and cultural bias and bias based on disability.*
 - (b) Selected and administered so that the test results accurately reflect the student's aptitude, achievement level or whatever other factors the test purports to measure.*
 - (c) Professionally validated for the specific purpose for which they are used.*
 - (d) Administered by certified school psychologists under instructions provided by the producer of the tests and sound professional practice.*
 - (e) Selected and administered to assess specific areas of educational need and ability and not merely a single general IQ.*

As a result of the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team Evaluation, the GMDT prepares a written report that brings together the information and findings from the evaluation or reevaluation concerning the student's educational needs and strengths. The report 1.) makes recommendations as to whether the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction, 2.) indicates the basis for those recommendations, and 3.) includes recommendations for the student's programming and indicates the names and positions of the members of the GMDT.

The determination of eligibility for gifted education will be made by the Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (GMDT) that includes the student's parents.

The initial evaluation must be completed and a copy of the evaluation report presented to parents no later than 60 calendar days after the agency receives written parental consent for evaluation, except that 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 subsequent fall school term may not be counted.

Gifted Multidisciplinary ReEvaluation

- (1) Gifted students shall be reevaluated before a change in educational placement is recommended for the student. In addition, gifted students may be reevaluated at any time under recommendation by the GIEP team.

- (2) Reevaluations shall be developed in accordance with the requirements concerning evaluation in Chapter 16.
- (3) Reevaluations 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.
- (4) The reevaluation timeline for gifted students will be 60 calendar days, except that 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 subsequent fall school term may not be counted.

Independent Evaluation

Parents have the right to an independent educational evaluation of their child at their expense. This evaluation must be conducted by a qualified professional who is not an employee of the school district. 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.

The independent evaluation by itself is not sufficient to determine gifted ability and need. The procedures for collecting data from a multidisciplinary team will be followed and the school district will compile a written report.

Special Education

If a student is determined to be both gifted and eligible for special education, the procedures in Chapter 14 pertaining to special education take precedence.

For students who are gifted and eligible for special education, it is not necessary to conduct separate screening and evaluations or use separate procedural safeguards processes to provide for a student's needs as both a gifted and an eligible student.

A single IEP is developed and implemented, revised and modified in accordance with Chapter 16 and Chapter 14 and addresses both the disability needs and gifted needs for that child.

Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP)

When it is determined by the GMDT that a student is eligible and in need of gifted education, the GIEP team will meet to develop a Gifted Individualized Education Plan within 30 calendar days after the GMDT's written report is issued.

Parents will be invited to participate on the team and to attend a meeting to develop the GIEP. Parents and other persons who will be attending will be notified of the meeting at least 10 calendar days in advance.

The GIEP team includes the student's parents(s), one or more of the student's teachers, a teacher of the gifted, the student if appropriate, a representative of the district, who will serve as the chairperson of the GIEP team, who is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the district, and who is authorized by the district to commit those resources, and other individuals at the discretion of either the parents or the district.

General § 16.31

- (1) A GIEP is a written plan describing the education to be provided to a gifted student. The initial GIEP must be based on and be responsive to the results of the evaluation and be developed and implemented in accordance with this chapter.*
- (2) If a gifted student moves from one school district in this Commonwealth to another, the new district shall implement the existing GIEP to the extent possible or provide the services and programs specified in an interim GIEP agreed to by the parents until a new GIEP is developed and implemented in accordance with this section and § 16.32 and 16.33 (relating to GIEP and support services) or until the completion of due process proceedings under § 16.61—16.65 (relating to procedural safeguards).*
- (3) Every student receiving gifted education prior to July 1, 2008, shall continue to receive gifted education until the student meets one of the following conditions:*
 - (a) The student graduates from high school.*
 - (b) The student is no longer of school age.*
 - (c) A GIEP team determines that the student no longer needs gifted education.*

GIEP §16.32

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

- (1) A statement of the student's present levels of educational performance.*
- (2) A statement of annual goals and short-term learning outcomes that are responsive to the learning needs identified in the evaluation report.*
- (3) A statement of the specially designed instruction and support services to be provided to the student. For a student with disability identified as eligible under 34 CFR 300.8 (relating to child with a disability), this would include accommodations and modifications in accordance with 34 CFR 300.320(a)(4) (relating to definitions of individualized education program).*
- (4) Projected dates for initiation, anticipated frequency, location and anticipated duration of gifted education.*
- (5) Appropriate objective criteria, assessment procedures and timelines for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether the goals and learning outcomes are being achieved.*
- (6) The names and positions of GIEP team participants and the date of the meeting.*

Other information about the GIEP

A copy of the GIEP must be provided to the parents, along with a notice of parental rights under

§ 16.61—16.65 (relating to procedural safeguards).

The school district must notify teachers of their responsibilities under the student's GIEP when they work with a student who has been identified as gifted and in need of specially designed instruction.

The following timelines govern the preparation and implementation of GIEPs;

- (1) A GIEP must be developed within 30 calendar days after issuance of a GMDT's written report.
- (2) The GIEP of each student 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 days before the last day of scheduled classes in accordance with § 16.62(5) (relating to consent).
- (3) GIEP team meetings must be convened at least annually, or more frequently if conditions warrant.
- (4) A GIEP team meeting must also be convened at the request of a GIEP team member, the parent, the student, or the school district.

Support Services

The GIEP team, during the development, review or revision of a GIEP, must determine whether the student needs support services if the service is an integral part of an educational objective in the GIEP or the service is needed to ensure that the student benefits from or gains access to a gifted education program.

Educational Placement

Following the development of the GIEP, the GIEP team makes a determination about placement based on the student's identified needs. The placement must provide specially designed instruction, ensure that the student can benefit meaningfully from the rate, level, and manner of instruction, provide opportunities for acceleration, enrichment or both, depending on the student's needs. These opportunities go beyond the general education curriculum.

Refer to the section under the *Gifted Education* section at the beginning of the handbook for opportunities that go beyond the general education curriculum.

Parental placement in private schools § 16.42

Nothing in Chapter 16 limits the parents' right to have their gifted child educated at private schools completely at private expense.

The home education program of a gifted child shall be governed by sections 1327 and 1327.1 of the School Code (24 P. S. § 13-1327 and 13-1327.1).

Procedural Safeguards

Chapter 16 specifies when a district must give parents written notice about events or actions.

Notice § 16.61

- (1) *A school district shall document the provision of written notice to the parents of a gifted student at least 10 school days prior to one or more of the following events:*
 - (a) *The school district proposes to conduct a gifted multidisciplinary evaluation or*
 - (b) *The school district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the student, or proposes or refuses to make any significant changes in the GIEP.*
- (2) *A change in the identification, evaluation, educational placement or GIEP of a gifted student may not be made during the pendency of an administrative or judicial proceeding unless agreed to by the parties to the proceeding.*
 - (a) *An outside evaluation submitted by the parents shall be considered.*

Consent § 16.62

The district shall document that written parental consent is obtained prior to:

- (1) *Conducting an initial multidisciplinary evaluation.*
- (2) *Initially placing a gifted student in a gifted program.*
- (3) *Disclosing to unauthorized persons information identifiable to a gifted student.*
- (4) *When completed, the GIEP provided for in § 16.32 (relating to GIEP) shall be presented to the parents, along with a notice of recommended assignment signed by the school district superintendent provided for in § 16.61 (relating to notice) and a notice of parental right to an impartial due process hearing under § 16.63 (relating to impartial due process hearing). The notice shall be presented to the parents in person at the conclusion of the GIEP conference or by certified mail within 5-calendar days after the completion of the GIEP conference.*
- (5) *The parents shall have 10-calendar days to respond to a notice of recommended assignment sent by mail or 5 calendar days to respond to a notice presented in person at the conclusion of a GIEP conference. If the parents receive the notice in person and approve the recommended assignment within 5-calendar days, the school district may not implement the GIEP for at least 5-calendar days, to give the parents an opportunity to notify the district within the 5-day period of a decision to revoke the previous approval of the recommended assignment.*

Dispute Resolution Systems

If you have a concern about your child's educational program, you may wish to contact your child's teachers, principal, or district administrators. This type of communication is often helpful in resolving concerns.

Information about dispute resolution can be found in the *Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Students* on the web at <http://www.pagiftededucation.info/documents/ParentalRights.pdf>

Resources

Parent Assistance
Bureau of Special Education 717-786-6361
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Legal Assistance
Pennsylvania Bar Association 1-800-932-0311
Box 186
Harrisburg, PA 17108

Mediation Services
Pennsylvania Office of Dispute Resolution 1-800-222-3353

Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education (PAGE)
PAGE Helpline 1-888-736-6443
PAGE Website www.giftedpage.org

Fox Chapel Area PAGE
<http://www.giftedfoxes.org>