Lessons Learned from Program Evaluation

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Underlying Assumptions of the Process

The *NAGC Standards for Programs for the Gifted and Talented* is a set of viable guides for judging program effectiveness.

The school district should be instrumental in setting its goals for the evaluation process.

The expertise of a team of professionals provides multiple perspectives and confirming perceptions.

Multiple sources of data add credibility to the conclusions.
STANDARDS FOR PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED


Pre-k-grade 12 gifted program standards.


www.nagc.org
Differentiated curriculum for the gifted learner must span grades pre-K-12.
Regular classroom curricula and instruction must be adapted, modified, or replaced to meet the unique needs of gifted learners.
Educational opportunities for subject and grade skipping must be provided to gifted learners.
Learning opportunities for gifted learners must consist of a continuum of differentiated curriculum options, instructional approaches and resource materials.
Instructional pace must be flexible to allow for accelerated learning of gifted learners as appropriate.
Appropriately qualified personnel must direct services for the education of the gifted learner
Gifted education programming must be integrated into the general education program.
Gifted education programming must include positive working relationships with constituency and advocacy groups, as well as compliance agencies.

Requisite resources and materials must be provided to support the efforts of gifted education programming.
Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners.

Gifted education must be adequately funded.

Gifted education programming must evolve from a comprehensive and sound base.
PROGRAM DESIGN

Gifted education programming must be an integral part of the general education school day.

Flexible grouping of students must be developed in order to facilitate differentiated instruction and curriculum.

Policies specific to adapting and adding to the nature and operation of the general education program are necessary.
EVALUATION

- An evaluation must be purposeful.
- An evaluation must be efficient and economic.
- An evaluation must be conducted competently and ethically.
- The evaluation must be made available through a written report.
Gifted learners must be provided differentiated guidance efforts to meet their unique social and emotional development.

Gifted learners must be provided career guidance services especially designed for their unique needs.

Gifted learners must be provided guidance and counseling to help them reach their potential.
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

Gifted learners must be provided affective curriculum in addition to differentiated guidance and counseling services.

Underachieving gifted learners must be served rather than omitted from differentiated services.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A comprehensive staff development program must be provided for all school staff involved in the education of gifted learners.

Only qualified personnel should be involved in the education of gifted learners.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

School personnel require support for their specific efforts related to the education of gifted learners.

The educational staff must be provided with time and other support for the preparation and development of differentiated educational plans, materials and curriculum.
A comprehensive and cohesive process for student nomination must be coordinated in order to determine eligibility for gifted education services.

Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility for gifted education services must measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs in order to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strengths.
STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

A student assessment profile of individual strengths and needs must be developed to plan appropriate intervention.

All student evaluation procedures and instruments must be based on current theory and research.

Written procedures for student identification must include at the very least provisions for informed consent, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures.
The Process

- Provide school district with NAGC Standards and instructions for self-examination and identification of relevant evaluation issues and questions
  - Identifying significant audiences and interest groups
Using guides from *Evaluating Programs for the Gifted and Talented* (Callahan & Caldwell) to review submitted questions and to work with school to set priorities and clarify questions

- This area of concern is critical or central for program success
- This area of concern impacts subsequent events
- This area of concern is of importance to some relevant audience
- This area of concern is likely to be problematic
Collect data from school
- Curriculum guides
- Program brochures documents
- Evaluation questions
- Existing identification and achievement data
- Lesson Plans

Review data

Schedule additional data collection
Schedule on-site visits

Systematic classroom observation and interviews with interested groups

- parents
- students
- teachers
- administrators-central office and building level
- counselors
- school board
- other
Create questionnaires and interview protocol
Visits and data collection
Analysis of data
Report
- Commendations
- Issues, Concerns, and Problems
- Recommendations
Philosophy and Definition
Philosophy and Definition

Philosophy and definition are subsumed under Program Design standards in the NAGC Standards document, but as they are critical to successful program development we discuss separately.

Philosophy drives the programmatic and curricular decisions.

The definition of giftedness accepted and publicly espoused by the school system must be used to guide the identification and curricular decisions for program consistency and unity.
Successful gifted programs…

- Have a clearly articulated philosophy and definition that guides decision-making and resource allocation
- Have stakeholders who are aware of the philosophy and definition that undergirds the program
- Have clear continuum of services Pre-K-12
- Have philosophy statements that reflect a belief in basing decisions on current research and current thinking, challenge for all gifted and talented students, recognizing multiple talents, and being responsive to cultural diversity.
Common Pitfalls with Philosophy and Definition…

- Unclear, ambiguous, or absent philosophy of giftedness
- Definition poorly written or based on extinct or outdated literature in the field of gifted education
- Lack of community consensus on the definition of giftedness or what the program should be
- Over-reliance on the program’s history rather than continuing to revisit based on changes in the field’s understanding of giftedness
Curriculum and Instruction
When Curriculum and Instruction are appropriate…

Teachers foster student independence, self-directed learning, creativity, student-interests, and choice.

The focus of instruction goes beyond simple facts and delves into authentic, complex, multi-faceted, problem-based skills and concepts.

Students are engaged in tasks and intellectual pursuits that are meaningful and important rather than frivolous or repetitious.
Curriculum is well-organized and incorporates a variety of lesson models and instructional strategies across classrooms, grade levels, and school settings.

Teachers collect a wide array of assessment data on students' developing understandings and interests.

Classrooms balance the importance of rigorous tasks and high expectations for students with developing joy for learning.

Even in homogenously grouped classrooms of gifted students, teachers provide differentiated levels of scaffolding, support, modifications, and extensions as warranted by data.
Common Curriculum Pitfalls

- Absence of a curricular vision or curricular framework for the gifted program
- Inconsistencies in curriculum across grade levels, no scope and sequence within and across grade levels
- Inconsistencies between program philosophies and definitions and the services offered in the program
- Lack of consistent challenge for all students within a classroom and across teachers in the program.
- Inconsistencies in the fidelity to curriculum models
- Mismatch between written curricular framework and classroom practices
Outdated notions of curriculum and instruction

Enrichment tasks and products without a clear purpose or evident connection to meaningful learning

Teachers are not trained in the philosophy and practices related to the curriculum and instruction

No clear standards for evaluation of student work based on the goals and objectives of the program, or curricular goals

Expectations too low for gifted students

Unrealistic expectations for products without instruction that leads to the quality expected
Staff Development
Successful staff development...

Coordinated by a visionary leader who designs professional development according to current, gifted trends, not outdated notions of giftedness or gifted instructional practice.

A professional development plan that can be adjusted for staff attrition and maturation and that is linked to program identification and services.

Professional development that is grounded in a agreed upon scope and sequence and one that is not reliant on one shot trainings or workshops without follow up coaching, common planning, and curriculum writing time.
Successful staff development...

A clearly articulated curriculum that provides appropriate guidelines for new and returning staff and is used as a basis for staff training.

Clearly defined role and expectations for the gifted staff—tied to an evaluation process with a supervisor/evaluator who understands the teaching practices of educators of the gifted rather than evaluation by a supervisor who is untrained in evaluating staff according to principles of sound instruction for gifted learners.
Program Design
Successful program design...

Recognizes the changing student and community population and adjusts the services appropriately rather relying on a design that is more static and based on history

Emphasizes gifted services rather than a gifted program

Connects elementary, middle and high school services in a meaningful way rather than operating as separate units without clear transitions and sequence

Balances individual creative freedom with an organized, tightly linked plan to district goals and needs
Successful program design...

Allows for staff hiring input and supervision to occur at the coordinator level

Requires the coordinator to work closely with committees and individuals involved in the identification practices and perceptions of the services being offered

Includes a clearly articulated design that is communicated to all key stakeholders in the community and is defensible and invitational rather than one that is vague and perceived as secretive.
Social and Emotional Needs
Social and emotional needs are met when...

Counselors recognize the unique needs of gifted students and proactively counsel individuals and small groups rather than relying on a counseling model of intervention based on problems or remediation.

Educators recognize the delicate transitions between elementary, middle and high school and seek ways (via open houses, orientations) to introduce gifted services to children.

Educators create opportunities like mentorships, internships, and college and career counseling early.
Social and emotional needs are met when...

Educators recognize the difficulty some students face in taking risks academically or socially and provide supports to ensure success and emotional well being.
Student Identification
Successful gifted programs…

- Have a clearly articulated identification process
- Have widespread communication networks that provide disseminate information about the gifted program, the nomination process, the screening, identification, placement process, and the exiting process
- Have an initial screening pool comprised of ALL students
- Accept student nominations for services from a variety of sources and use an on-going system for nominating, screening, placement, and exit
- Use multiple assessment instruments with proven evidence of reliability and validity that are aligned with program goals and objectives and are age-appropriate
- Use assessments that are linguistically appropriate
- Have procedures in place for student exiting
- Have an up-to-date, complete database system for data management
Pitfalls in Identification

- Base the identification system on an application process
- Base student placement on an “available openings” system rather than on a “needs basis”
- Use instruments that are not aligned with established district criteria for placement and/or have insufficient psychometric evidence for the types of decisions that are being made
- Use equal weighting of all assessment data collected for the decision process
- Lack year-to-year consistency in the identification process
- Do not take advantage of resources within the district that can aid in management of data
Student Identification Number

Middle School Patterns (Schools, Teachers, Per Grade Level & Content Area)

Elementary School Patterns (Schools, Teachers, Per Grade Level)

Student Name

High School Patterns (Schools, Teachers, by Grade Level & Content Area)

Assessment Results State; District; Program (e.g., state assessment results; AP Exam Results; Identification Results; Grades)

Student Demographics (gender; race/ethnicity; F/RL; ESL; SPED; Date of Screening/Placement; Special Program Participation (Pre AP/IB; AP/IB; Honors, Colleges/Universities Accepted/Attended, etc.)
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