

The Need for Ongoing and Sustained Professional Development for General Education Teachers and Gifted Education Specialists on Meeting the Needs of Gifted Learners

Prepared by the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children

Public school teachers are responsible for delivering instruction to a wide range of learners, including students with differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as varying levels of content readiness. In order to equip teachers to effectively tailor learning to students with different needs, the state of Missouri requires teacher candidates to receive exposure to differentiated instruction. However, there is no significant instruction required in the area of gifted education. Without training in how to identify and respond to students who are ready for advanced curriculum and instruction, efforts to differentiate will be educationally insufficient to meet student needs. Teacher preparation curriculum does not adequately prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of gifted and talented learners.

Missouri public school teachers typically do not receive professional development concerning the nature and needs of gifted students or modifying curriculum and instruction to address those needs. This is problematic because most gifted students spend the majority of their instructional time in the regular classroom setting. Working effectively with gifted students is a challenge, comparable to working with children with other special needs. In order to equip teachers to do this work well, it is important for teachers to understand the needs of gifted students and the unique ways they approach and make sense of information. Exposure to differentiated instruction is important but not sufficient to be effective at this task. Teachers need a conceptual understanding of the social, emotional, and academic components of giftedness, as well as recommended approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As teachers' understanding of individual differences and instructional strategies expands to meet the needs of gifted students, all students will benefit from teachers with this broadened knowledge and skill set.

It is important for school systems to provide teachers ongoing professional development addressing the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs. Professional development may include such options as staff development, university coursework, professional conferences, workshops, and web-based learning. Topics for professional development include

- the nature and needs of gifted students;
- differentiation of curriculum for advanced learners;
- the need for acceleration and effective acceleration strategies;
- evidence based instructional strategies; and
- social-emotional needs and social-emotional learning.

Furthermore, ongoing and sustained professional development for gifted certified teachers on educating gifted learners is essential. Gifted programs should include defined efforts to build their teachers' understanding of

- equitably identifying students for gifted education;

- students' social and emotional needs;
- how to offer content and instruction that is challenging, complex, differentiated, and personalized; and
- developing and evaluating levels of services provided for gifted learners.

It is vital that in-service gifted education specialists remain up to date on trends and research in the field of gifted education.

In conclusion, the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children recommends two actions:

- Each school system will establish and support a plan for ongoing professional development for all teachers about the nature and needs of gifted students and designing curriculum and instruction to meet those needs.
- Each school system will establish and support a plan for the ongoing professional development of the staff in their state-approved gifted program so that the staff progresses in their professional capabilities by providing appropriate instructional support and access to continuous growth in their pedagogical skills relating to gifted education.

For further information please visit the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Gifted Education [website](#) and the Council's [website](#).

Resources

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

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Novak, A. M., & Weber, C. L. (2018). *Best practices in professional learning and teacher preparation: methods and strategies for gifted professional development*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press Inc.

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