

Recommendations of the Special and Gifted Education Committee

The Special and Gifted Education Committee (Committee) previously opened a periodic review of the regulations at 22 Pa. Code Chapter 16 that govern gifted education in the Commonwealth. In response to stakeholder feedback collected at statewide roundtables that were convened to inform that review, the Committee issued recommendations in July of 2023 that were intended to improve the delivery of gifted education services. At that same time, the Committee also called for the formation of an external advisory committee of school psychologists for the purpose of gathering additional perspective on issues related to gifted identification measures from the professionals who are responsible for evaluating students for giftedness.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (Department) convened a School Psychologist Advisory Committee in April of 2024. As directed by the Committee, the School Psychologist Advisory Committee was asked to consider: whether Chapter 16 should be amended to lower the established IQ score for determining whether a student is mentally gifted from the current established score of 130 to 125; whether the multidisciplinary criteria for gifted evaluation should allow for the identification of students for gifted education services based on evaluations in non-academic strength areas; whether results from group-administered achievement tests should be used as a measure for gifted evaluations; whether the criteria for gifted identification should provide for the use of a standardized confidence interval as part of a multidisciplinary evaluation in order to recognize the stability of intellect tested over time while also accounting for testing variance on any given day; whether there are other criteria that appropriately should be added to the existing multidisciplinary evaluation process; and whether the existing criteria for multidisciplinary evaluation should be refined.

The work of the School Psychologist Advisory Committee was informed by a review of other states' policies regarding giftedness, a review of relevant legal cases, and a literature and experiential review of assessment and screening practices. Feedback from the School Psychologist Advisory Committee was presented to the Committee at a public meeting on November 13, 2025. The Committee provided an opportunity for members of the public to offer comments on issues related to gifted identification at that same meeting and subsequently shared the Advisory Committee's input with all members of the State Board of Education.

Considering feedback from the School Psychologist Advisory Committee, along with additional stakeholder input gathered at the beginning of the Chapter 16 review process, the Committee recommends that Department take the following actions to address and improve consistency in practice related to the evaluation and identification of students who are mentally gifted.

- Chapter 16 establishes that determination of whether a student is mentally gifted is not based on IQ score alone and includes consideration of whether a student has an IQ of 130 or higher or when multiple criteria delineated in Chapter 16 and in Department guidelines indicate gifted ability. Stakeholder feedback provided to the Committee suggested that establishing resources to clarify these multiple criteria will improve consistency in gifted identification practices by supporting districts in utilizing a holistic approach to gifted identification that takes into account a comprehensive picture of a student's abilities.

As such, the Committee recommends that the Department develop a resource guide and training to support school districts in utilizing relevant and multiple criteria in evaluating students for giftedness. The resources developed by the Department should define what constitutes multiple criteria, provide guidance on how to apply these criteria in determining giftedness, and identify data already available to school districts that may be considered as part of the evaluation process. These resources further should include guidance for school districts on IQ score usage as part of the gifted evaluation process to ensure consistency in practice in how school districts consider this criterion in determining a student's eligibility for gifted services.

- Multidisciplinary evaluations for giftedness are conducted by a Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT). Chapter 16 requires the GMDT to prepare a written report that includes information and findings from an evaluation or reevaluation regarding a student's educational needs and strengths, as well as recommendations as to whether the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. The written report must indicate the basis for those recommendations and also must include recommendations for the student's programming. To improve clarity and consistency in the evaluation process, the Department should create an annotated version of the written report that must be completed by the GMDT that provides clear

instructions for the content of each section of the report. The annotated document should address use of the report for both initial evaluations and reevaluations.

- The Department should create a statewide resource guide to provide guidance to school districts in other aspects of gifted screening and evaluation. The statewide resource guide should include guidance on appropriate assessment tools for both screening and evaluation and should address the appropriate use of selected assessment tools. The statewide resource guide further should provide guidance to GMDT teams on the establishment of cut scores with considerations for confidence intervals as part of the multidisciplinary evaluation process. Training in these resources should be provided through the state's network of Intermediate Units.
- The Department shall continue to convene the School Psychologist Advisory Committee to provide consultation to the agency in acting on these recommendations.
- The Department shall make a progress report to the State Board of Education on implementation of these recommendations in January 2027.