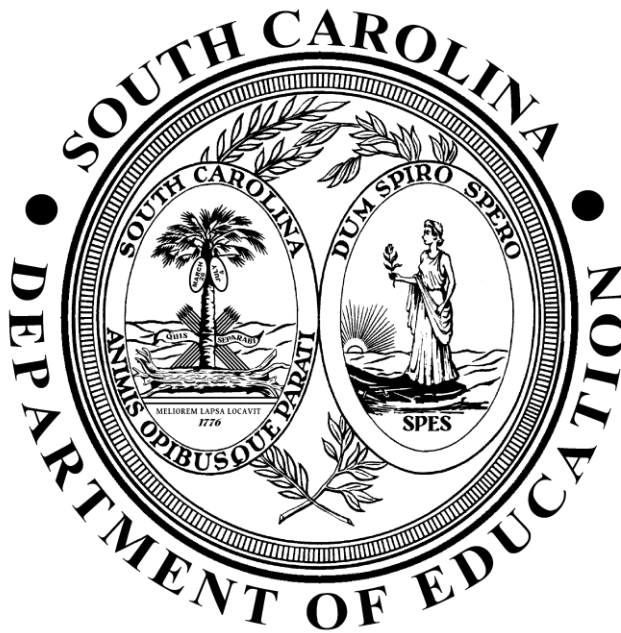


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION



**Gifted and Talented Best Practices Guidelines:
Support Services**

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-170
and State Board of Education Regulation 43-220

June 2018

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Introduction

All students should have access to support services, but gifted and talented students by their nature have unique needs requiring specialized services. This document examines the following types of services or resources: school guidance, academic support (including academic competitions), technology, parent education, and national and state organizations.

The Legislative Mandate

Requirements outlined in these guidelines are provided pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-29-170 (Programs for Talented Students), which can be accessed at

<http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/title59.php>.

Not later than August 15, 1987, gifted and talented students at the elementary and secondary levels must be provided programs during the regular school year or during summer school to develop their unique talents in the manner the State Board of Education must specify and to the extent state funds are provided. The Education Oversight Committee shall study the implementation of this section and report its findings to the General Assembly by July 1, 1986. By August 15, 1984, the State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing the criteria for student eligibility in Gifted and Talented Programs. The funds appropriated for Gifted and Talented Programs under the Education Improvement Act of 1984 must be allocated to the school districts of the State on the basis that the number of gifted and talented students served in each district bears to the total of all those students in the State. However, districts unable to identify more than forty students using the selection criteria established by regulations of the State Board of Education shall receive fifteen thousand dollars annually. Provided, further, school districts shall serve gifted and talented students according to the following order of priority: (1) grades 3-12 academically identified gifted and talented students not included in the state-funded Advanced Placement Program for eleventh and twelfth grade students; (2) after all students eligible under priority one are served, students in grades 3-12 identified in one of the following visual and performing arts areas: dance, drama, music, and visual arts must be served; and (3) after all students eligible under priorities one and two are served, students in grades 1 and 2 identified as academically or artistically gifted and talented must be served. All categories of students identified and served shall be funded at a weight of .30 for the base student cost as provided in Chapter 20 of this title. Where funds are insufficient to serve all students in a given category, the district may determine which students within the category shall be served. Provided, further, no district shall be prohibited from using local funds to serve additional students above those for whom state funds are provided.

Developmental Counseling

Developmental counseling plays an important role in fulfilling a number of standards defined by the National Association for Gifted Students (2010, NAGC). Developmental counseling program should foster both the cognitive and affective growth of gifted and talented students as outlined in [NAGC Standard One: Learning and Development](#). One of the primary goals of the counselor should be to ensure that identified students, particularly those in underserved populations, have the support needed to remain in the gifted and talented program as outlined in [NAGC Standard Two: Assessment](#). An effective school guidance program must identify and implement strategies to help gifted and talented students meet success in their differentiated curriculum as outlined in [NAGC Standard Three: Curriculum Planning and Instruction](#).

Developmental counseling should include individual and group counseling sessions as outlined in [NAGC Standard Four: Learning Environments](#). During individual sessions, gifted and talented students can learn to understand their strengths and weaknesses as decision-makers and to take responsibility for their lives. In group sessions with gifted students, the counselor can address topics of common concern to gifted and talented students.

[NAGC Standard Five: Programming](#) outlines the importance of access to high level affective programming for gifted and talented students. Taking the components of a comprehensive school counseling program and the additional challenges faced by gifted and talented students into consideration, Dr. Stephanie Ferguson, Director of the Program for the Exceptionally Gifted at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia (2011), includes the following elements in an affective curriculum for gifted students:

- individualized value systems;
- attitudes, beliefs, and values;
- interests and appreciations;
- persistence, independence, and self-concept;
- feelings, emotions, and awareness of self and others;
- interpersonal relations;
- Humanitarianism;
- curiosity, risk-taking, complexity, and imagination; and
- character and leadership.

Dr. Ferguson states, “With factors such as these linked to gifted education, the affective domain should be given a priority in school curricula. With current emphasis placed upon standardized testing and content standard accountability, the need to seamlessly incorporate strategies aimed at balancing the cognitive and affective for a balanced educational product seems greater than ever.”

College and Career Counseling

In keeping with the vision of NAGC standards, college and career counseling is essential to developing the gifted child’s personal competence, academic planning ability, and vocational

and career awareness. Involving all stakeholders, as early as elementary school, in this process is critical to providing the support needed for gifted students college and career pathways.

Career Counseling

As with developmental counseling, school counselors must have an understanding of the unique nature and needs of gifted and talented students in order to provide effective career guidance. An often overlooked problem for multi-talented students is choosing which of their interests to pursue vocationally and which to keep as avocational. While some gifted and talented children know from an early age “what they want to be when they grow up,” others may delay their career decisions. Counselors need to understand and honor this situation while helping students explore varied career opportunities and options. When working with gifted students, it is important to recognize their unique developmental characteristics. The assumption that gifted and talented students do not need career counseling is not accurate. In actuality, these students may need exposure to career counseling as early as elementary school.

Beginning in middle school, an effective career counseling program may assist gifted and talented students by:

- Preparing them for many options;
- Providing them with information about careers in which they would have the opportunity to synthesize interests from many fields;
- Allowing them to delay decision-making until college;
- Giving them real-life experiences in some of their interest fields;
- Discussing the possibility of sequential or concurrent careers;
- Helping them determine which of their interests they could maintain as avocations;
- Suggesting the possibility of creating new careers; and
- Exploring life themes as a basis for career choice.

Today’s students will have several careers and many different kinds of jobs during their lives. Therefore, students must be given information about how their strengths and interests relate to various fields of endeavor and numerous careers. Real-life experiences can help gifted and talented students gain perspective on their career possibilities. Examples of such experiences include internship opportunities, mentoring or shadowing, and service learning projects or volunteer work.

- Internships: Internships enable students to spend time with professionals at the work site and in areas in which students have interests. Students keep logs of their field experiences, complete related assignments, and may be able to receive high school credit for their participation in the programs.
- Mentoring and Shadowing: A mentoring program can provide a student with the opportunity to work with and learn from a practicing professional. This best practice is supported by NAGC Standards 1.4.1 and 4.1.2 that advocate use of mentors to provide opportunities for self-exploration, development and pursuit of

interests. Shadowing experiences can serve a similar function. The latter may be especially helpful to students who have a wide variety of interests and aptitudes.

- Service Learning Projects and Volunteer Work: Students can also gain real-life experiences through service learning projects and volunteer work in the community. Counselors can assist students with these opportunities by finding qualified adults or service organizations in the community, helping students plan and organize the experiences, and ensuring that students take time to reflect on their experiences.

College Counseling

College counseling for gifted and talented students must begin in middle school. School counselors should steer students toward appropriate classes that will prepare them for Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate coursework in high school. Parents and guardians of gifted and talented students must understand the importance and implications of coursework selection in the middle school.

Gifted and talented students should take the most challenging courses possible to prepare them for the rigors of high school studies, the ACT/SAT, and admission to the college of their choice. Such middle school choices establish the foundation for student success in high school and beyond.

Beginning in middle school, counselors should make gifted and talented students aware of the many factors that highly competitive colleges and universities examine when considering candidates for admission. In addition to grade point averages, class rank, and ACT/SAT scores, college admission criteria usually include experiences such as extracurricular activities, community service, and leadership positions. Also of increasing importance are character traits communicated through essays and interviews.

Early in high school, gifted and talented students and their parents should be given information on college requirements for admission along with scholarship opportunities. Students should know where to obtain college catalogs and how to access college websites. Taking the PSAT/PreACT and/or SAT/ACT annually in high school enables the student to provide information to colleges and may help the student to improve his/her scores. The gifted and talented student may learn from this practice that many colleges actively recruit academically gifted and talented students based on their performance.

Technology can help counselors guide students along the sometimes confusing path to higher education. Many high schools have college and career centers equipped with the latest software to enable students to analyze career choices, compare college programs and costs, seek scholarships, and prepare polished applications. Students also have a wealth of online assistance they can utilize independently. For example, College Board's [Big Future](#) website offers a student friendly, interactive college selection guide that greatly assists students in narrowing their focus. These services provided through technology offer a competitive edge to ensure students have the best guidance available in the college admissions and scholarship process.

Issues for Intervention

Due to the unique needs of the gifted and talented learner, many students require a variety of modes of support. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) programming standards help to guide the successful support. Issues listed below highlight some of the important considerations regarding support of gifted students.

Underachievement

Underachievement is a discrepancy between potential and performance. Some of the more prominent characteristics of gifted and talented underachievers are low self-esteem, low motivation, little goal valuation, or negative attitudes toward school. These problems may also exist in the home.

Guidance counselors can support underachieving gifted students by encouraging them to pursue out of school interests, academic planning, psychosocial counseling, and time management classes. They can also emphasize responsibility and respect for education, and assist students with peer relationships. Teachers and counselors can help underachieving students see the relationship between effort and outcome. They can also facilitate communication between home and school. Counselors can make parents aware of community resources, such as family counseling centers that may provide additional assistance.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism can create great difficulties for some gifted and talented students. Perfectionism among the gifted and talented may result from receiving “all A’s” and continued praise from both teachers and parents. As children internalize extreme praise over a period of years, they tend to depend on this external reward system for self-fulfillment, and they exert strong pressure on themselves to perform at a level that elicits such praise.

In addition to self-pressure, many students become victims of parent, peer, and societal pressure to achieve at higher levels. The gifted and talented student may develop unrealistic expectations of perfection in all areas of performance and, when this cannot be maintained, feel like a failure. This can result in a life filled with worry, self-imposed guilt, the tendency to overwork, or the avoidance of risk. Perfectionism is a heavy burden that, in its extreme, may cause illness or may even be associated with suicide.

Students must come to realize that perfection is impossible. They need to understand the difference between “doing your best” and “overdoing it,” between a reasonable pursuit of excellence and compulsive perfectionism. Gifted and talented students must learn that it is okay to be wrong; we learn from our mistakes. Gifted and talented students must be able to take chances and laugh at themselves.

Learning to balance schoolwork, social obligations, family activities, and recreation is a life-long struggle for the perfectionist. It is the responsibility of school counselors and teachers to help

gifted and talented students learn to balance all parts of their lives. Group counseling sessions—where gifted and talented students can discuss the issues of perfectionism—are appropriate. In the classroom, teachers should strive to create a safe environment where students can learn without fear of failure and practice risk-taking behaviors.

Often, perfectionism is more apparent in the home than at school. Parents may see the child staying up late at night or giving up recreational activities to perfect an assignment, as well as quarreling with siblings who disturb him/her. At school, the end result (i.e., the “perfect assignment”) may be all that is noticed. The school counselor should encourage parents to report signs of excessive perfectionism in their child. In addition, counselors and teachers should look for signs of too little sleep and exquisite detail in homework assignments.

Academic and Artistic Support Services

A myriad of academic and artistic support programs and experiences are available to encourage gifted and talented students to reach their potential. Those opportunities include academic assistance programs, advanced coursework, school extension programs, academic recognition programs, programs offered through community organizations, and academic competitions.

Academic Assistance Programs

Some gifted and talented students may demonstrate a need for additional support in basic skill achievement. These students must receive academic assistance through appropriate programs and services. Such support could include tutoring and special classes.

Advanced Coursework

- Dual enrollment, the practice of enrolling in a college or university while enrolled in high school to earn high school and college credit simultaneously
- The College Board Advanced Placement Program (high school AP courses)
- The International Baccalaureate Program (prescribed programs of study for elementary, middle, and high school)
- The Governor’s School for Arts and Humanities (residential program in Greenville, SC, for grades 11 and 12 and special summer programs)
- The Governor’s School for Math and Science (residential program in Hartsville, SC, for grades 11 and 12 and special summer programs)
- District magnet programs

School Extension Programs

- Saturday Academies (enrichment and preparatory programs)
- Seminars
- Summer enrichment and preparatory programs
- Extended day experiences

Academic Recognition Programs

- South Carolina Junior Scholars Program
- Duke University Talent Identification Program
- Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth programs and other similar programs at colleges and universities
- National honor societies
- Beta Clubs
- Local school and community programs

Opportunities Offered Through Community Organizations

- Business partnerships, apprenticeships, and mentoring programs
- Civic clubs (e.g., Scouts, 4-H Club, Boys and Girls Clubs)
- Civic organization projects (e.g., Junior League, Optimists)
- Volunteer opportunities
- Religious activities
- Community resources (e.g., guest speakers and teachers)

Academic Competitions

- [American Computer Science League Contest](#)
- [Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans](#)
- [Duke Tip Programs](#) (grades 4–12)
- [First Lego League Robotics.](#)
- [Future Problem Solving](#)
- [International Physics Competitions.](#)
- [Mathematical Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools](#)
- [MathCounts](#)
- [Model United Nations](#)
- [National Chess Championships](#)
- [National Geography Bee](#)
- [National History Day](#)
- [Science Olympiad](#)
- [Odyssey of the Mind](#)
- [Rotary Youth Leadership Awards](#)
- [South Carolina Alliance for Minority Participants \(SCAMP\)](#)
- [Stock Market Game](#) (grades 4–12)
- [WordMasters Challenge](#) (grades 3–8)
- [Young Inventors Program](#) (grades 9–12)
- Local, regional, and national science fairs

Technology Support Services

The rapidly expanding field of technology offers a range of support services and educational enrichment to gifted and talented students, administrators, teachers, and parents. As technology changes, it is important that all stakeholders stay abreast of the opportunities available through the thoughtful and careful use of technology.

Technology for Students

Online learning is an excellent way to offer advanced courses in which only a few students seek to enroll. This is a particularly attractive option for students in smaller schools and districts. Middle and high school students alike can benefit greatly from online coursework. [Virtual SC](#) is a state-sponsored free online learning program which offers courses for students in grades 6–12. Honors and AP courses are available through VirtualSC.

Other opportunities for online learning and enrichment are available through a variety of resources. The South Carolina Consortium for Gifted Education ([SCCGE](#)) maintains a list of resources that may be beneficial to students and educators.

Many districts utilize a variety of online learning platforms to supplement and enrich classroom education. Districts will communicate all necessary information regarding availability and accessibility as needed.

Technology for Administrators, Teachers, and Parents

The [SCCGE](#) maintains a list of online resources that provide a wealth of opportunities for gifted learners, administrators, teachers, and parents. Students, teachers, and parents should take advantage of the resources including information regarding Duke Tip, NAGC On-Demand Learning, and up-to-date research from leaders in gifted education including the College of William and Mary Center for the Gifted and the Davidson Institute for Talent Development.

Parent Education Delivery Models

Parents are the most significant influence on the lives of their children. The NAGC provides excellent information for parents to help support the needs of gifted learners. Frequently asked questions, a glossary of terms, characteristics of gifted learners, information on motivation and tips to help a gifted learner succeed can all be found in the [Parents Resource Section](#) of the NAGC website. Additionally, the NAGC has published a selection of [Parent Tip Sheets](#) which help to explain challenging topics such as acceleration, advocacy, and assessment.

Parents appreciate information on the characteristics and needs of gifted and talented children, as well as advice on problems or issues such as underachievement, carelessness, time management, and career/college choice. Also crucial for parents is information regarding the educational offerings provided by the school, through both the gifted and talented program and the general education program.

Districts can utilize various delivery models for parent education. Districts are encouraged to provide parent orientation sessions for newly identified students to showcase their gifted and talented programs, explain the identification process, and provide parenting guidance.

Throughout the school year, additional parent education services may be offered (e.g., parenting sessions on particular topics; videos to demonstrate effective parenting practices, such as questioning and discussion techniques; a lending library for parents, with books and journals on gifted and talented education and parenting, as well as information on accessing relevant websites).

Gifted and talented programs must also use written communication effectively with parents to provide notice regarding identification procedures. Information regarding identification, screening, and process for the identification of gifted learners must be communicated to all parents. Additionally, parents of children qualified for the gifted and talented program must receive written policies and procedures, including the program's mission, curriculum goals, evaluation of student achievement, and evaluation of program effectiveness. Most gifted and talented programs go beyond this basic level of parent communication through the newsletters, brochures, e-mail and/or websites.

References

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