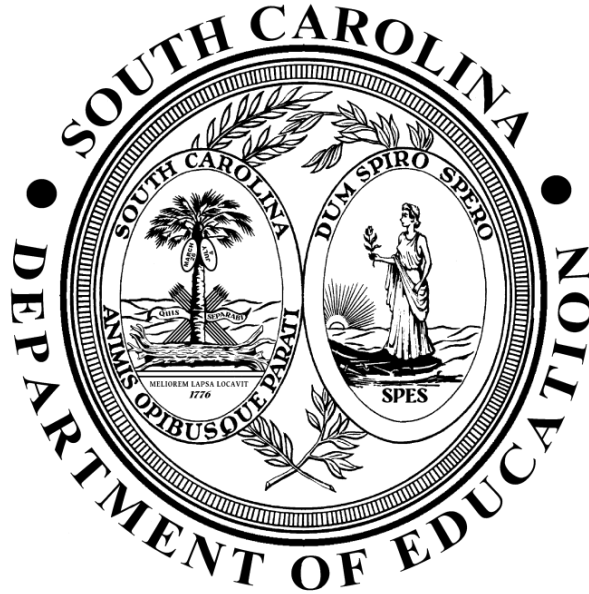


**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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## Gifted and Talented Education Overview

South Carolina State Board of Education

June 1, 2017

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## **The Legislative Mandate**

### SECTION 59-29-170. Programs for talented students.

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.

HISTORY: 1984 Act No. 512, Part II, Section 9, Division II, Subdivision A, SubPart 4, Section 2; 1985 Act No. 201, Part II, Section 9C; 1986 Act No. 540, Part II, Section 18; 1998 Act No. 400, Section 15.

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

## **Gifted and Talented Education Overview**

*“Schools serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius...and set the hearts of their youth on flame.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### *Introduction*

Gifted and talented (GT) students in both academic and artistic domains possess learning characteristics and needs that differ from those of their chronological peers. With traits that fall into three clusters (precocity, intensity, and complexity), gifted and talented students typically learn faster, desire greater depth of content, and concentrate on tasks longer based on interest or strength (Tassel-Baska & Brown, 2007). These differences call for challenging, real-world educational opportunities that provide essential resources and support for learning growth.

Because of the distinctive learning needs of gifted and talented students, South Carolina has passed legislation and created a regulation to guide practitioners on how to provide specialized programming. The *South Carolina Best Practices Manual in Gifted Education* is designed to support the effective implementation of this regulation by providing both practical and theoretical information, resources, and guidance to educators in schools and districts. This resource provides a foundational background that includes how South Carolina defines gifted and talented; common misconceptions surrounding gifted and talented; legislative and historical backgrounds; how students are identified; and how teaching and learning for gifted and talented students can best be approached.

## **Definition, Mission, and Principles for South Carolina Gifted and Talented Education**

### *Definition*

“Gifted and talented students are those who are identified in grades 1-12 as demonstrating high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas and therefore require educational programming beyond that normally provided by the general school programming in order to achieve their potential” (Gifted and Talented, 2013, 43-220.I.A.1).

### *Mission*

The mission of educational programs for gifted and talented children and youth is to realize the potential of gifted and talented students through the design, delivery, and assessment of academic and/or arts curricula that match these students’ unique intellectual and/or artistic potential while maintaining support for their social and emotional development.

### *Principles*

- 1) Gifted and talented students have the right to progress in learning, acquire new knowledge and skills, and access educational programming grounded in the recognition of their individual potential, differences, unique learning styles, and needs.
- 2) Curricula for gifted and talented learners must be based on and exceed South Carolina academic standards, be grounded in evidenced-based practices in gifted and talented

education, and must allow for a confluence of acceleration and enrichment, as well as the integration of real-world issues.

- 3) The instructional environment for gifted and talented learners encourages and nurtures inquiry, originality, creativity, and flexibility. This environment integrates effectively by supporting the gifted and talented student's social and emotional development.
- 4) Students identified in both the academic and artistic domains deserve equal access to both areas of study at levels appropriate to their needs.

## **Approaching Gifted and Talented Education: Common Misconceptions**

Many common misconceptions exist that hinder full development and growth for the gifted and talented student. Based on a list of frequently held misunderstandings published by [The National Association for Gifted Children](#) (2009), the following myths are put forth as necessary for consideration when addressing a gifted and talented student's ability to grow and learn daily.

### *Child Centered*

Many people believe that students who are gifted and talented succeed under traditional measures – they perform well on tests, make excellent grades, are emotionally well-adjusted, and thrive in school settings.

The reality is that many GT students do well in school and perform at high levels, but some do not. Students may underperform for a wide range of reasons. For example, some students, called twice-exceptional or 2e, are both GT identified and have a disability. These students' abilities are uneven, and students may appear to be average because their disability acts as a mask (Olenchak & Reis, 2002). Along with twice-exceptional, some students demonstrate underachievement. These GT students' grades and performances do not match their actual abilities (Siegle & McCoach, 2005). Finally, while many gifted and talented students are socially well-adjusted, emotionally mature, and highly motivated, other gifted and talented students differ in their character development, emotional maturity, perfectionistic tendencies, and individuality (Colangelo, 2003).

### *Teaching Centered*

A common misunderstanding widely held is that gifted and talented students do not need specialized programs – they can be taught alongside regular students with generally accepted differentiation techniques, act as mentors or tutors to non-gifted students, or, if left alone, will teach themselves and excel regardless of circumstance.

One would never send an Olympic-level athlete into competition without a dedicated and knowledgeable coach, as well as a specially designed program of training to prepare the athlete. Like extraordinary athletes, gifted and talented students must have specialized teachers who deeply understand both content and the nature of GT learners. Research suggests that gifted and talented elementary students have already mastered 35-50% of the curriculum at the beginning of the school year; therefore, much of their time is spent waiting instead of learning (Ross, 1993, p. 10; Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 1993). Six out of ten teachers surveyed (Farkas & Duffet, 2008) reported that they have not had consistent or up-to-date training in how to teach

academically advanced students, and seven of ten teachers agreed that the brightest students in their classes are bored and unchallenged. In addition, students who are average or below average performers are primarily challenged when matched with peers who are at or slightly above them academically. The students who are average or below average often get frustrated when matched with high performers who are far beyond academically. It is not simply that gifted students need more challenge in their classes; numerous studies show that gifted programming that goes beyond merely increasing the challenge in the classroom has a positive impact on these students' future accomplishments and achievements (Kell, Lubinski, & Benbow, 2013; Campbell & Walberg, 2011).

### *Program Centered*

Some view gifted and talented programs as elitist and contend that these programs require resources above and beyond that which traditional schools and districts can reasonably be expected to offer.

The reality is that gifted and talented students are not better than other students; rather, their learning needs are different from other students, and as such, require different academic and/or artistic curriculum. South Carolina has provided funding for gifted and talented education consistently since its inception.

## **Conceptual, Historical, and Legislative Foundations**

### *Conceptual Foundations*

In the U.S., between the 1870s and the 1920s, a number of progressive schools from California to the Midwest (Missouri) and the Northeast (Massachusetts) applied those concepts to provide opportunities for GT students via specialized and accelerated curricula (Davis, Rimm, & Seigle, 2011).

The first U.S. federal definition for GT was: "Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society" (Marland, 1972). The South Carolina definition of gifted and talented is aligned with the federal guidelines, while emphasizing high performance ability or potential in academic and/or artistic areas.

Over the past 20 years, several conceptual models have been proposed to provide theoretical and/or practice-driven approaches to GT education. For example, Renzulli's three-ring model uses a Venn diagram to focus on the intersection of above average ability(ies) with motivational skills (persistence, resiliency, grit) and creativity abilities/skills (Renzulli, 1986). Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences attempted to expand the limitation of IQ-driven scores to include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal "intelligences" (Gardner, 1993). Gardner also considered the possibilities of spiritual, moral, existential, and naturalistic "intelligences."

Howard Gardner's work has also had a great impact on the artistically gifted and talented community. Gardner's theories join other artistic specific research, including that of Enid Zimmerman, who, since the 1980s, has consistently published works for the artistically gifted and talented, including topics pertaining to identification, gender issues, curricula, and assessment. Expansion on the ideas of artistic identification processes can be found in the works of Joanne Haroutounian (1995), who acknowledged the complexity of artistic identification and offered a recognition for "artistic thinking skills," including "perceptual discrimination, metaperception, creative interpretation, and dynamic of performance." Haroutounian and other similar researchers pull away from standardized artistic identification models and instead promote the combination of observation, performance, process, training, and potential as key indicators in the identification and development of the artistically gifted and talented student (Haroutounian, 1995).

Some of the more recent research supporting the artistically gifted and talented domain can be found in the works of Scott Barry Kauffman, a neuroscientist who focuses on the slightly larger concept of creativity, and Michele and Robert Root-Bernstein, whose book *Sparks of Genius: The Thirteen Thinking Tools of the World's Most Creative People* explores the artistic habits of some of the world's most creative individuals. Much of the work of these scientists explores the not so distant relationship between the artistic and academic domains, and in turn provides evidence for students to be served and strongly supported when identified in both areas.

In July 2014, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) issued a position statement on arts education and gifted and talented students. It defines the arts as "music, visual arts, creative writing, theatre, and dance" and asserts that "arts education and specialized training are necessary to nurture children with advanced abilities in one or more artistic domains." NAGC further supports discipline specific opportunities and authentic arts integration as a means of supporting both artistic and academically gifted and talented students (NAGC, 2014).

The above models, research, and theories provide useful and rich constructs for a wide range of GT curricular and counseling practices. In the context of current SC law for GT, Gagne's "Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talented" (2003) provides a useful link between theory and practice. In Gagne's model, the gifts are "seeds" of excellence and achievement, a set of natural abilities that need to be fully developed into a set of competencies such as academic, technical, artistic, etc. This developmental pathway requires the integration of curricular (intellectually challenging programs), environmental (mentoring, intra- and inter-personal support and community building), and character development practices (persistence, work ethic, and integrity), enabling intellectual and personal growth of the highest and most humane caliber. The Gagne model is also congruent with recent trends in GT education, such as those promoted by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC, 2009), which place talent development at the core of future practices.

#### *National Historical and Legislative Background*

The U.S. Department of Education's report, *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (Ross, 1993), highlighted a "quiet crisis" in the United States: the squandering of the talent of the country's most able students. The report offered several recommendations, including the need for more challenging and high level learning for talented, diverse students, as

well as the need to improve teacher development in high level curricula (Davis, Rimm, & Seigle, 2011).

The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act, the only federal program dedicated specifically to gifted and talented students, was first passed in Congress in 1988 as part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. It was reauthorized in 2014 as part of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (NAGC, 2014). The federal government does not provide gifted education funding directly to states and school districts; instead, since 2014, the federal government has annually invested from \$5 million to \$12 million in research, with a focus on closing the achievement gap of under-represented groups of gifted students (NAGC, 2014). Two national gifted research centers, both at the university of Connecticut, have been funded through the Javits Act. First, the National Research Center for Gifted and Talented (NRCGT) under Joseph Renzulli's direction, conducted and published research between 1990 and 2013 (<http://nrcgt.uconn.edu>). The second, the National Center for Research on Gifted Education (<http://ncrge.uconn.edu>) was funded in 2015 and is directed by Del Siegle.

Some national organizations that support gifted education include The National Association for Gifted Children ([www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)), the Council of Exceptional Children: The Association for the Gifted (<http://cectag.com>), and Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted ([www.senggifted.org](http://www.senggifted.org)).

#### *South Carolina Historical and Legislative Background* 1970s.

Formalized efforts to support gifted and talented education in South Carolina can be traced back to 1978 with the founding of the South Carolina Consortium for Gifted Education (SCCGE), and affiliate of the National Association for Gifted Education. Comprised of educators, gifted education specialists, and members of the higher education community, SCCGE has continuously worked closely with the South Carolina Department of Education to provide leadership, advocacy, professional development, and research dissemination (Swanson, 2007). Prior to the formal organization, districts decided how to best identify and serve gifted students. In the early 1970s, there was a federal grant which partnered South Carolina with other states to develop GT programs. Several districts participated in this grant effort, but many districts were already finding ways to serve GT students.

#### 1980s.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, ushering states into a new era of educational reform. South Carolina, under the leadership of Governor Richard Riley, and in collaboration with legislative, community, business, and education stakeholders, responded to this national movement at the state level with the passage of the Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984. The EIA was intended to reach all students, including those of lower economic status, minority populations, the middle class, and higher economic status leaving the public system in favor of private schooling. EIA supports proposed that gifted education was “an innovation that would raise the educational bar for all” (Swanson & Lord, 2013) and used the act as a platform to mandate gifted education in South Carolina (Education Improvement Act of 1984). Under the EIA, gifted and talented education included both academic and artistic dimensions.



With the mandate came the need for regulation development. The South Carolina Board of Education crafted gifted and talented Regulation 43-220 which requires school districts to plan and provide programs and services for the educational development of gifted and talented students. State regulation provides the rules for schools and districts to follow based on the South Carolina Law on Gifted and Talented Education (Education Improvement Act of 1984). Regulation 43-220 was revised in 1999, 2004, and most recently in 2013.

#### 1990s.

In the 1990s it became evident that the model for identification was not serving the full range of needs for South Carolina; therefore, a task force was created to address the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented education. Eventually, a full review from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) led to a legal agreement that supported “procedural changes in identification and screening.” The state began a move away from a weighted system and toward Grade 2 census testing for academic identification (Swanson & Lord, 2013). The result was the revised State Board of Education Regulation 43-220 of 1999. These regulations also formally operationalized gifted and talented endorsements for teachers.

#### 2000s.

In 2001, *The South Carolina Best Practices for Gifted Education* was published by the South Carolina Department of Education, followed by the development of *Academically Gifted and Talented Curriculum and Instruction* in 2004. An addition to *The South Carolina Best Practices for Gifted Education* was issued in 2007, which focused on the referral, screening, and assessment processes for artistically gifted and talented students. Since the mid-2000s, teacher training opportunities through the state’s higher education community have expanded, and more variation in gifted programming has become evident. In 2012, the South Carolina Department of Education provided its first summer institute for the Nature and Needs of Artistically Gifted and Talented students. With a state mandate, the Grade 2 census testing model, a firm review of minority rights through the OCR, and a recommended identification system for artistically gifted students all firmly in place, the number of students eligible for services in South Carolina has expanded exponentially (Swanson & Lord, 2013).

### **South Carolina’s Governor’s Schools**

South Carolina has demonstrated its commitment to gifted and talented education through the creation of two Governor’s Schools dedicated to serving the two defined areas of giftedness: academic and artistic. Both schools are publicly funded residential high schools that serve identified juniors and seniors from across the state. Both programs offer statewide outreach initiatives that when combined reach thousands of additional students and teachers annually. In addition, both Governor’s Schools are consistently ranked in the top percentile of performance nationwide, and both schools serve as national models for public residential high schools for gifted and talented students.

The South Carolina Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics (GSSM), located in Hartsville, South Carolina, graduated its first class in 1990. Based on an advanced level-college model, the school originally served 130 students and was housed on the campus of Coker

College. In 2003, the school moved to its own, state-of-the-art facility, and by 2013 had reached its capacity of 288 students. GSSM students benefit from small class sizes (an average 10:1 teacher/student ratio) and are immersed in a “flexible, dynamic curriculum” that supports critical thinking, problem solving, engineering practices, and scientific research. More recently, GSSM added a virtual engineering program, Accelerate, which is offered throughout the state to district partners, with an enrollment goal of 300 students (GSSM, 2017).

The South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities (SCGSAH) was founded by Dr. Virginia Uldrick as a five-week summer residential program on the campus of Furman University in 1980. Its success led to the development of a full residential high school in 1999 with its first class graduating in 2001. The school, built to emulate a Tuscan village, is in downtown Greenville and follows a master-apprentice model. This pre-professional training program offers advanced curricula in creative writing, dance, drama, music, and visual arts. Students also receive a nationally recognized innovative and intense academic curriculum, fostering artistic connections across disciplines, while meeting all requirements necessary for a South Carolina high school diploma. Although focused on a pre-professional arts training model, the school is consistently named as one of America’s most challenging high schools for academic rigor; in 2014, the school was recognized for its work in narrowing the achievement gap for low income artistically gifted and talented students (SCGSAH, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Since the passage of the Education Improvement Act in 1984 and the development of Gifted and Talented Regulation 43-220 (2013), South Carolina has maintained a statewide commitment to providing specialized programs for academically and/or artistically gifted and talented students. The *South Carolina Best Practices Manual for Gifted Education* provides a foundation of support by combining research, theory, and practice. It seeks to support the stakeholders committed to identifying, educating, and supporting the next generation of our state’s most highly capable young artists, scholars, and citizens.

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