Lower Merion SD

Gifted Education Plan Assurances (Chapter 16) | 2025 - 2028

Profile

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Gifted Education Plan Assurance

1. Describe your district's Child Find public notice procedures conducted annually to inform the public of the gifted education services AND programs offered (newspaper, student handbooks, school website, etc.).

The Lower Merion School District employs a systematic approach to identifying and providing supports and services to students in need of gifted education specially designed instruction. Steps are taken annually to inform the public of the gifted education services and programs offered. An Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs, Services for Gifted Students, and Services for Protected Handicapped Students is made available to the public through the District's website and notifications. Informational sessions and trainings are offered for parents and guardians throughout the school year. The Lower Merion School District collaborates closely with parent organizations, including the Committee for Special Education (CSE) and Interschool Council (ISC) to host informational sessions, guest speakers, and opportunities for training.

2. Describe your district's screening process for locating students who are thought to be gifted and may need specially designed instruction. Use district specific details including the data sources used in the process as well as the titles for those staff who have an active role in screening. If the district uses a matrix/rubric, include the matrix in this section.

Screening is the systematic determination of whether or not a student should be evaluated for gifted education services. Multiple sources of data inform this process, and most of which already exist, such as curriculum-based assessments and achievement tests. Other educational factors, such as observations of critical thinking and academic creativity in student work samples, and the presence of intervening factors, such as limited English proficiency or a disability, which may mask giftedness, are considered during this process as well. Staff members and/or parents/guardians may request a screening or full evaluation for gifted education when it is suspected that they are a student who may be gifted. While screening is overwhelmingly a review of already existing information, a new piece of data that informs the screening process is the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test- Third Edition (NNAT3). All students in second grade are screened for gifted education, and thereafter, upon request. In addition to universal screening in the second grade, all students have the opportunity to participate in gifted screening within their school at any point throughout the school year when requested by a staff member or parent/guardian. For all screenings, multiple sources of information, including, but not limited to, cognitive assessment, achievement assessments, curriculum-based assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, and anecdotal observations, inform the process. Generally, students are referred for evaluation for gifted education when the following are present: - NNAT3 percentile rank, which compares their performance to a national sample of students of the same age, falls in the superior to very superior range (i.e., 95th percentile and above); - performance on curriculum-based assessments is consistently advanced; - achievement test results indicate a year or more above grade level achievement; and work samples consistently demonstrate high-level critical thinking and creativity Screening data is reviewed by the school-based Achievement Team. The purpose of the review is to determine if a student's performance over time strongly indicates a need for evaluation for gifted supports and services. If the Achievement Team indicates a need, a Gifted

Written Report will be conducted by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (GMDT). Criteria on the assessments referred to above are flexible when intervening factors such as English as a second language, disability, gender or race bias or socio/cultural deprivation may be masking gifted abilities. The Achievement Team gives full consideration to possible intervening factors along with the data review described above.

3. Describe your district specific process for determining ELIGIBILITY (through MULTIPLE CRITERIA) and NEED (based on ACADEMIC STRENGTH) for potentially mentally gifted students (EVALUATION). Use district specific details including the data sources used in the process as well as the titles for those staff who have an active role in the evaluation process. If the district uses a matrix/rubric for evaluation that is different from the one described in Question 2, include the different matrix in this section.

Referral for a gifted evaluation is made when the student is suspected by teachers or parents/guardians of being gifted and in need of services. When a student is recommended for a gifted evaluation, the Gifted Multi-Disciplinary Team (GMDT) evaluates the data collected, and determines eligibility for gifted support services The GMDT includes the student's parents/guardians, a certified school psychologist, one or more of the student's current teachers, and someone familiar with the student's cultural background. Prior to conducting an initial gifted evaluation, the District provides written notice to parents/guardians to seek their consent to evaluate through a Permission to Evaluate Consent form (PTE). Information relevant to the student's suspected giftedness, including cognitive and academic functioning, learning strengths and educational needs are included within the gifted multidisciplinary evaluation. The cognitive and academic assessments utilized in this evaluation are individually administered, nationally normed, and standardized. Additionally, the evaluation includes input from individuals who interact with the student on a regular basis, including parents/guardians and the student when appropriate. No single assessment measure or type of assessment measure is used as the sole criterion for determining gifted eligibility. Intelligence tests yielding an IQ score are not used as the only measure of aptitude for students of limited English proficiency, or for students of racial-, linguistic- or ethnic-minority background. Assessment measures used as part of the gifted evaluation are standardized, free from racial and cultural bias and bias based on disability and administered by a certified school psychologist. Through the evaluation process, the GMDT determines whether there are intervening factors masking gifted abilities and takes this into consideration when making recommendations. The GMDT prepares a written report that brings together the information and findings from the evaluation summarizing the student's educational needs and strengths and indicates if the student is gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. A student is determined mentally gifted if the criteria established by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the District are met. The term "mentally gifted" includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher or when multiple criteria indicate gifted ability. Multiple criteria include: - Achievement measures that are individually administered, nationally normed, and standardized to determine achievement level that is a year or more above grade achievement level for the normal age group in one or more subject areas; - Chuska Scales to assess rates of acquisition and retention of new academic content or skills that reflect gifted ability; - Qualitative teacher input and local curriculum based assessments to identify demonstrated achievement, performance or expertise in one or more academic areas as evidenced by excellence of products, portfolio or research; - Qualitative teacher and parent/guardian input and the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS-2) to assess high level thinking

skills, academic creativity, leadership skills, intense academic interest areas, communications skills, foreign language aptitude, or technology expertise. - A review of the student's educational records (including but not limited to any previous district evaluations, curriculum-based assessments, and assessment of English language proficiency via WIDA), teacher input, and parent/guardian input to determine potential intervening factors, such as English as a second language, disabilities, gender or race bias, or socio/cultural deprivation that may be masking gifted abilities. The evaluation is completed and presented to parents/guardians no later than 60 calendar days after the District receives written parental consent for evaluation.

4. Describe the gifted programs* that are offered to provide opportunities for acceleration, enrichment, or both. *The word "programs" refers to the CONTINUUM OF SERVICES, not one particular option. Describe what acceleration means and how it is applied in each of the grade spans (EL, MS,HS). Describe what enrichment means and how it is applied in EL,MS,HS. (i.e. there are 20 forms of acceleration- which ones are offered in the district and at which grade spans are they offered).

If an evaluation determines a student is mentally gifted and in need of specially designed instruction, then a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) is developed to meet that student's identified areas of strength. The GIEP is created by a team, including family/legal guardian(s) of the child, the child's teacher(s), a designated representative from the District and any other person who is requested to be present by either the family/legal guardian(s) or the District. The GIEP identifies present levels of academic achievement, annual goals, specially designed instruction and supports required by the student in developing individual strengths. The content and design of each student's GIEP depends on the individual's strength areas identified for enrichment, acceleration or a combination of both. Supports and services for students identified as gifted align to Pennsylvania standards and encompass a high level of cognitive and metacognitive concepts and processes. These may be provided both in and out of the general education setting, depending on the degree of need. Instruction for gifted students deepens and broadens their thinking. Broad themes, appropriate to several disciplines, are used to help students connect ideas among and between various disciplines and to apply them in meaningful ways. Learning environments incorporate cognitive and metacognitive experiences to support the development of innovation, exploration, self-monitoring, creativity, decision-making, openness to new ideas, and academic risk taking. The diversity and uniqueness of individuals and cultures is honored and integrated into substantive curricular content. At the elementary level, gifted education is provided through pull-out services for direct instruction. Gifted support teachers collaborate with general education teachers to support differentiation and enrichment for all students. The Lower Merion School District recognizes its obligation to provide all students with a rigorous and challenging education. For most of our students, that obligation is met with an array of services and instruction that occur within the regular education curriculum and gifted education. However, the District also recognizes that some students may require Acceleration. Acceleration is the practice of presenting curriculum content earlier or at a faster pace than otherwise represented in grade level standards. Whole Grade Acceleration is the movement of a student from the current grade level placement to the next grade level. Through specific acceleration guidelines outlined in Administrative Regulations 215, a student can be considered for Whole Grade Acceleration through meeting specific assessment criteria. Subject Matter Acceleration is the

movement of a student from the current grade level subject placement to an advanced subject placement. The student will remain with their peers of the same age and grade for most of the school day. Subject Matter Acceleration occurs in several ways including, but not limited to, curriculum compacting, alternative instruction, or instruction in that subject at the next grade level. Through specific acceleration guidelines outlined in Administrative Regulations 215, a student can be considered for Subject Matter Acceleration through meeting specific assessment criteria. Enrichment is the extension of grade level instruction to greater depth or breadth or a combination of both through the use of alternative or supplemental materials as delivered by the regular education teacher or the gifted support teacher. At the middle level, gifted education is provided through pull-out services for direct instruction. Gifted support teachers collaborate with general education teachers to support differentiation and enrichment for all students. The Lower Merion School District recognizes its obligation to provide all students with a rigorous and challenging education. For most of our students, that obligation is met with an array of services and instruction that occur within the regular education curriculum and gifted education. However, the District also recognizes that some students may require Acceleration. Acceleration is the practice of presenting curriculum content earlier or at a faster pace than otherwise represented in grade level standards. Whole Grade Acceleration is the movement of a student from the current grade level placement to the next grade level. Through specific acceleration guidelines outlined in Administrative Regulations 215, a student can be considered for Whole Grade Acceleration through meeting specific assessment criteria. Subject Matter Acceleration is the movement of a student from the current grade level subject placement to an advanced subject placement. The student will remain with their peers of the same age and grade for most of the school day. Subject Matter Acceleration occurs in a number of ways including, but not limited to, curriculum compacting, alternative instruction, or instruction in that subject at the next grade level. Through specific acceleration guidelines outlined in Administrative Regulations 215, a student can be considered for Subject Matter Acceleration through meeting specific assessment criteria. Enrichment is the extension of grade level instruction to greater depth or breadth or a combination of both through the use of alternative or supplemental materials as delivered by the regular education teacher or the gifted support teacher. At the high school level, gifted education is provided through Academic Seminar. Gifted support teachers collaborate with general education teachers to support differentiation and enrichment for all students. The Lower Merion School District recognizes its obligation to provide all students with a rigorous and challenging education. For most of our students, that obligation is met with an array of services and instruction that occur within the regular education curriculum and gifted education. At the high school level, there are several advanced level courses offered to students including Honors level courses, Advanced Placement (AP), and the District's International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

5. Look at the district's most recent PIMS October 1 snapshot in field 80. How many students are identified in each area GY (gifted with or without a 504 and receiving services on a GIEP); GS (dually exceptional/twice exceptional and receiving services through an IDEA IEP); GX (gifted and does not require specially designed instruction). Provide the numbers for each category in PIMS. Are all the district's gifted students accounted for in PIMS. If not, how are they different and how will you address the discrepancy?

As of October 1, 2024, 985 students receive gifted support services, with 118 of these students also receiving special education supports

and services. There are no students identified as gifted and not in need of specially designed instruction. All of the District's gifted students are accounted for within PIMS.

6. Review the district data for gifted identification proportionality. Is the district identification proportionately reaching the underrepresented populations? If the answer is yes, how did you address the issue. If the answer is no, how will you address the issue.

To support with proportionately reaching underrepresented populations, the District universally screens all second graders using the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test- Third Edition (NNAT3). These tests evaluate a child's problem-solving and visual-spatial reasoning skills using questions featuring abstract shapes and designs, rather than assessing their school-based knowledge. The NNAT3 is the gold standard for unbiased scoring. It disregards primary language, socioeconomic status, educational history, or color/vision impairment. This is achieved by using minimal language and written directions, not relying on a child's reading, writing, or language skills. Multiple sources of data inform the screening process, and most of which already exist, such as curriculum-based assessments and achievement tests. Other educational factors, such as observations of critical thinking and academic creativity in student work samples, and the presence of intervening factors, such as limited English proficiency or a disability, which may mask giftedness, are considered during this process as well. Staff members and/or parents/guardians may request a screening or full evaluation for gifted education when it is suspected that they are a student who may be gifted. In addition to universal screening in the second grade, all students can participate in gifted screening within their school at any point throughout the school year when requested by a staff member or parent/guardian. For all screenings, multiple sources of information, including, but not limited to, cognitive assessment, achievement assessments, curriculum-based assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, and anecdotal observations, inform the process.

7. 22 Pa. Code § 16.5 (related to personnel) requires that a school district and intermediate unit shall provide, under section 1205.1 of the School Code (24 P.S. § 12-1205.1), in-service training for gifted and regular teachers, principals, administrators, and support staff persons responsible for gifted education. Describe how the district is addressing this mandate, including information related to how and when general education teachers are trained and held accountable for delivering gifted services.

The district will provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators to understand the unique needs of the gifted learner. The training will focus on the need for enrichment and acceleration as well as a gifted program that allows for meaningful collaboration of gifted students and their peers. The sessions will also educate professionals about anxiety, perfectionism, and other characteristics that can be challenging for gifted learners. Sessions are held virtually and are recorded and posted on the Student Services webpage for access throughout the year as new staff is hired. New gifted teachers are formally trained during multiple professional development sessions. These sessions focus on Chapter 16, writing GIEPs, and lesson planning for pull out and seminar classes. The Gifted Coordinator runs monthly reports for annual GIEP due dates to check that all reports and individualized plans are compliant.

Training for general education teachers	There are no separate expenditures within the current budget for this area as training is provided by District staff.
Staff costs	All gifted support teachers are LMSD employees and the cost for those employees is embedded within the overall district's budget
Training for gifted support staff	Professional development is provided by District administration and in collaboration with the Chester County Intermediate Unit's Gifted Consortium. The budgeted amount for the current school year is $4,625
Materials used for project-based learning	The budgeted amount for the current school year is $22,750 allotted for curricular and technology resources to support with the education of students requiring gifted services. Students receiving gifted support services may also receive enrichment and acceleration within the general education curriculum, which is not reflected within this figure.
Transportation	Students who receive gifted support have equal access to district activities, athletics, and field trips. This is not a separate budget item.
Field Trips	Students who receive gifted support have equal access to district activities, athletics, and field trips. This is not a separate budget item.

Signatures and Quality Assurance

Chief School Administrator	Date