



K-12 Gifted Program Quality Review

April 29, 30 and May 1, 2013

Facilitated by:



BUCKS COUNTY INTERMEDIATE UNIT #22

Our Children... Their Future... Bucks County IU

May 2013

To the Council Rock School District:

The K-12 Gifted Program Quality Review Team wishes to thank and commend those District staff members and teachers who participated in this Council Rock School District review process. We greatly appreciate the positive and professional attitude displayed by school staff and administration.

The visiting team found the administration, teachers, staff, students and parents to be most cooperative and willing to discuss all aspects of Council Rock's gifted programs. Graciousness, openness and hospitality were evident throughout the three-day visit, making our jobs much easier and allowing us to collect useful information.

Over the course of 238 individual and group interviews and classroom observations conducted in every school in the district, including four group interviews with more than 160 parents, the team collected information in a variety of areas and provided detailed answers to specific questions, along with overall program strengths, needs and recommendations. Team members identified program needs and made practical recommendations by applying their experience in the field to the on site data collected, realizing that local conditions will determine local action.

Team members were pleased to have been a key part of this program improvement process. We wish you continued success in what is probably the most significant activity for today and tomorrow – educating our children.

The Evaluation Team

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	4
Overall Strengths	5
K-12 Gifted Program Quality Review Report	
<i>Question 1: Screening, Identification and Placement of Gifted Students</i>	6
Questions and Findings	
Needs and Recommendations	
<i>Question 2: Meeting the Identified and Assessed Needs of Gifted Students</i>	9
Questions and Findings	
Needs and Recommendations	
<i>Question 3: Communication and Coordination of GIEP Information</i>	14
Questions and Findings	
Needs and Recommendations	
<i>Question 4: Staff Orientation and Training for Teachers of Gifted Students</i>	16
Questions and Findings	
Needs and Recommendations	
<i>Question 5: Goals Objectives, Philosophy and Vision</i>	20
Questions and Findings	
Needs and Recommendations	

**Council Rock School District
K-12 Gifted Program Quality Review
April 29, 30 and May 1, 2013**

Prepared by the Bucks County Schools Intermediate Unit #22

The Intermediate Unit Quality Review Process provides a thorough examination of school programs and services by an experienced team of educators and specialists. Through this process, the Intermediate Unit and Bucks County school districts provide continuity and direction for each review. The participating districts currently support the process through released time of their staff to participate. The Bucks County Programs and Services Advisory Council has been vital in scheduling and providing leadership for this process. Additional information is available from the Programs and Services Division of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.

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Overall Strengths

- The Council Rock School District leadership team deserves praise for initiating and participating in a comprehensive review of all aspects of its programming for the gifted, K-12. The visiting team recognizes this review as a key and important step toward continued programming improvement for students who are gifted, and for district compliance with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code. The Council Rock School District also deserves acknowledgement for the comprehensive steps it took in preparation for the Program Quality Review process by gathering and analyzing survey data from parents, students, staff and administrators. This information provided important insights to the visiting team, and will be a resource for the school district's development of action steps to address the needs identified in this report.
- From our many interviews with teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and students, and from our observations of instruction in each of the elementary, middle, and high schools, it is clearly evident that the Council Rock School District strives to make real the high standards set by the school district mission statement.
- The teachers of the gifted deserve special recognition for their dedication, enthusiasm and expertise in engaging students.
- The Council Rock School District board and administration are commended for providing adequate staffing to meet the caseload requirements of Chapter 16 in the elementary schools.
- Parents are invested and committed to quality education for the gifted. They value many of the school district's existing learning provisions for challenging their children, and are supportive of increased efforts to differentiate instruction.
- The Philosophy course at the high school level receives high praise and commendation from both students and parents for the unique and substantive academic challenge and open-ended thinking it provides.
- Students overwhelmingly value and appreciate their learning and challenge in the many humanities-based programs, and certainly appear highly motivated and mature in their thinking.
- The high schools provide opportunity for challenge and rigor through a wide range of advanced placement, honors, and advanced level courses in varied subject areas.
- Screening of all first grade students initiates the process for finding those students who may be identified as gifted. This is a noteworthy effort to meet the screening and placement requirements of Chapter 16: Special Education for the Gifted Regulations.

Question #1: To what extent are screening, assessment, identification, and placement procedures for the gifted current and appropriate?

Findings:

The Council Rock School District has established procedures for identifying gifted students across the District through universal screenings administered in the first grade. Together, with information from additional sources, the recently updated CogAT 7 Screener is used as part of this universal screening process.

Furthermore, the gifted support teacher provides classroom lessons focused on logic, problem solving, analytical reasoning, and deductive reasoning throughout the first grade year. The gifted support teacher observes student use of these skills, documents them, and then uses the information in discussions with members of the school-based team. This observational data is one additional step to help identify and find those students who appear to need further screening. However the District's Gifted Screening Rubric does not include this information.

Although universal screening for the gifted takes place during the first grade year, there appears to be no such screening or formal attempt to identify students as gifted during subsequent school years. After the universal screenings that occur during the first grade year, referrals for the gifted identification and new placements are initiated primarily by parents or teachers.

Knowledge about the screening procedures and how to initiate these are varied among parents, teachers and staff, and administrators. Some parents stated they are unaware of screening process procedures, and expressed the need to have readily available information, in lay terms, about the district's screening and identification procedures. Although information about Chapter 16 is available on the district website, detailed information about screening procedures is not included. Additionally, one must navigate through several pages before locating this information. This lack of clear and readily available information about the district's screening and identification procedures was also expressed in interviews with general education teachers in several elementary school buildings. In the survey, twenty-one per cent of staff indicates that they do not understand the screening process.

The school district uses multiple measures, including standardized assessments of ability and achievement and internally developed checklists for parents and teachers. These measures reflect criteria, which are organized in a matrix used to assess the level of student ability and performance, and to provide data to identify a child as gifted and in need of specially designed instruction.

A student's need for specially designed instruction is further discussed in detail by a school-based team, which may include a school psychologist, school counselor, teacher of the gifted, general education teacher, and/or building principal. The team found no conclusive evidence that social-emotional needs of individual students are consistently considered during the evaluation process.

Need #1:

To increase awareness of screening procedures among parents and teachers and administrators

Recommendations:

1. Revise the "Gifted Program Overview" pamphlet to include more detailed information about the district's referral, screening, and identification procedures for placement of and programming for gifted students. Make pamphlets available in all school buildings, as well as on the district and school websites. Also, provide this information to all parents at new student registrations and at back-to-school events, and parent-teacher conferences.
2. Make information on the website more readily accessible and easy to find. Clearly outline screening procedures. Create a "Parent" tab that features characteristics of the gifted, including links to relevant websites.
3. Provide training and information to teachers and school staff in general on a regular basis about the school district's procedures regarding screening and identification for the gifted. This should be done across buildings and grade levels to ensure consistency and equity in finding and providing these students with special services.

Need #2: To systematically identify gifted students after 1st grade.

Recommendations:

1. Consider screening at the higher grade levels. Doing so will help to identify students who may have moved into the district, or find those students whose skills develop at a different rate than their peers.
2. On a recurring basis, provide counselors, regular education teachers, and gifted support teachers with opportunities to learn about and discuss characteristics of the gifted learner and the district's gifted placement referral procedures to meet the needs of these students.

Need #3: To address factors that may be masking giftedness (e.g. ESL, Speech/Language Impairments, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Emotional Disturbance, Specific Learning Disability, Orthopedic Impairment).

Recommendation:

1. Use a non-verbal measure of intelligence during the screening/evaluation process when indicated.

Need #4: To further consider multiple criteria as part of the evaluation process

Recommendations:

1. Include the longitudinal data collected during first grade in the Gifted Screening Rubric. This will help further clarify the students' need for evaluation.
2. The school district currently uses internally generated parent and teacher checklists as part of both the screening and evaluation rubrics. Consider the use of a standardized rating scale, such as the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS), as part of the evaluation rubric. This phase of the evaluation process should include additional information from the parent and teacher, and not simply a restatement of the information provided during the screening.
3. Consider the social-emotional factors of the students during the evaluation process through a developmental history form. Gather additional information regarding social-emotional functioning when parent responses reveal symptoms that may affect educational performance and/or eligibility for gifted services.
4. When warranted, the Gifted Written Report (GWR) should include recommendations for Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) to support the social-emotional and behavioral development of a student.

Need #5: To continue to ensure that District procedures (i.e., screening, assessment, identification, placement) fully align with the requirements of Chapter 16.

Recommendations:

1. Plan GIEP meetings to include all mandated team members (parent, teacher of the gifted, one or more general education teachers, District representative/LEA), unless excused by parent through written notice. When appropriate, the student should participate in the development of the GIEP.
2. Clearly identify the members of the GMDT in each school building.

Question #2: To what extent does the design and delivery of the district's programming for the gifted meet the identified and assessed needs of each gifted student?

Findings

In general, the design and delivery of the district's programming is not individualized or structured to meet identified and assessed needs of each gifted student, as evidenced through GIEP's. For the most part, a specific, social studies focused, program is the delivery vehicle for both curriculum and instruction for all gifted students. This is the model used at all grade levels. These humanities-based courses seem to be a one-size fits all approach, rather than one reflective of individual present education performance levels and GIEP outcomes. To a great extent, this model works in providing challenge and enrichment in the humanities class, yet its focus on social studies content is often at the exclusion of GIEP differentiation, opportunities for acceleration, and challenge in the areas of mathematics, science and literacy. In addition, GIEPs rarely address regular, ongoing support for the social and emotional needs of the gifted learner.

According to the district survey results, 84% of professional staff report that "differentiated instruction is provided to assist each gifted student attain their educational goals," and in several interviews, teachers also said that they provide for differentiation in their classrooms. However, only 58% of professional staff responding to the survey indicate that "gifted students are offered opportunities for differentiated instruction in all subject areas." Furthermore, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent this differentiation is directed to the gifted through high-levels of both acceleration and/or enrichment. Parents and students report that too often specially designed instruction similar to that occurring in the humanities classes does not transcend into the regular education curriculum or classrooms. Survey results, parent and student interview responses, and classroom observations reveal the need for increased challenge and individual differentiation in all classrooms. Our findings also indicate that student performance profile data from the GIEPs are often not shared with the regular education teachers, nor is this data used to inform and differentiate learning -- and make the necessary GIEP implementation connection beyond the humanities classroom.

The middle school level Humanities courses do not appear to be consistently differentiated from the honors and social studies classes, nor is the program consistent among schools and grade levels. The middle school Humanities program seems not to have an overarching purpose or vision that defines it as unique, nor is it framed around substantive principles or curriculum concepts related to the needs of the gifted. These courses are driven by content coverage, low-level instructional expectations, and successive crafts-based projects, rather than meeting the academic levels and the needs specified in student GIEPs. It appears that teachers are assigned to teach middle school Humanities classes with little consideration given to their expertise and knowledge about the special learning needs of the gifted or of the Chapter 16 requirements.

The many and varied curricular offerings at the high school level serve to meet the strengths and needs of the gifted across subjects. The school board and district leadership provide a wide variety of AP courses, and even continue to offer these classes when a limited number of students enroll.

In meetings with more than 160 parents of the gifted, many parents expressed satisfaction with their children's education in the elementary school; however, they lamented the inconsistency, lack of challenge, and "cookie cutter" approach their children experienced when they entered middle school. In their survey responses, numerous parents requested that their child's GIEP be used to increase instructional challenge beyond the Humanities class. One parent noted: "Since there is no longer only one or two Humanities Teachers at the Middle and High School levels, the teachers need REAL training specific to teaching Humanities students. There is a HUGE difference among these teachers and their understanding of how to teach gifted students."

Students report that they do not know how or why they are gifted and are not regularly involved in the development and implementation of the GIEP.

Need #1: To increase academic challenge in mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels.

Recommendations:

1. The school district should review the manner and extent of student performance and achievement data it will collect in order to provide a more robust profile for GIEP implementation, including information about the child's advanced mathematics abilities and needs, where appropriate. Academic challenge in mathematics may be addressed through the Humanities Program, the regular classroom, and the elementary math enrichment offering, or in the middle school advanced math courses.
2. Develop procedures, protocols, and guidelines that define and describe when opportunities for mathematics acceleration will occur. These guidelines should include who will be involved in the decision-making, a description of assessments and criteria used for decision-making, and the range of acceleration options available to meet the advanced student's needs. It is important to note and understand that acceleration for the gifted does not always mean only grade skipping. One invaluable tool to use in the development of these guidelines is the Iowa Acceleration Scale, 3rd edition.
3. Ensure that teachers in all subject areas know and understand the 8 Common Core standards for mathematical practice (<http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Practice>), and that teachers incorporate

these standards in their lesson design and instruction, not only in mathematics, but also in science, English language arts, social studies, and other subject areas. Related resources include *Using the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics With Gifted and Advanced Learners*, Johnsen and Sheffield, 2012; and <http://www.nagc.org/CommonCoreStateStandards.aspx>. Another resource is the *Next Generation Science Standards' "Scientific and Engineering Practice Standards,"* of the National Research Council, 2013.

Need #2: To increase the use of student assessment data to implement instructional differentiation

Recommendations:

1. Develop present levels of educational performance (PLEP) that reflect a comprehensive and current profile of each student's strengths and advanced abilities. These present levels must include: "...multiple measures, among which may be ability and assessment test scores, group and individual achievement measures, grades, progress on goals, instructional levels, aptitudes, interests, specialized skills, products, and evidence of excellence in other than academic areas. These present levels must be updated annually and progress toward the annual goals and short-term learning outcomes determined." (*PA Department of Education Gifted Guidelines*, March 2010)
2. Use this PLEP data to design GIEPs that are customized and tailored to address individual student strengths. GIEPS should be less "cookie-cutter", and should not contain goals and outcomes that are the same for each student. As stated in the *Gifted Guidelines*, "annual goals and short-term learning outcomes should be child specific and measurable based on the child's assessed learning needs."
3. In order for specially designed instruction to occur in both the Humanities and regular education classrooms, it is crucial that the PLEP student performance data be used in planning challenging and differentiated instruction across a range of instructional settings.
4. Use a balanced system of assessment to monitor student progress on annual goals and short-term learning outcomes. This may include:
 - Diagnostic, formative, benchmark, and summative assessments
 - Student interest inventories
 - Key assessments that are necessary for effecting gifted programming for individualized educational planning.

- Develop a student input form to aid in the development of the GIEP.

Need #3: To increase academic challenge at the middle school level.

Recommendations:

1. Take steps to restructure the humanities program at the middle school in order to make it more aligned to interdisciplinary concepts and outcomes, as was the original intent of this content-based program. Use the excellent, high-level thinking, Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework, or some other research based differentiated middle school curriculum model, to accomplish this. Build into this model restructuring options that provide some degree of flexibility and allow for student GIEP goals and outcomes to extend beyond those presently based only on social studies curriculum. In other words, address a student's present levels of educational performance (PLEP). Furthermore, the middle school Humanities program should differ from the regular education honors social studies courses in content, pacing, depth of knowledge and use of high-level performances and real life assessments.
2. Consideration should be given to developing a structure or framework that allows the middle school humanities teachers to increase ownership and act as resource persons for extending GIEP challenge into other content areas or classrooms, when appropriate. These resource teachers should have expertise about the unique learning needs of the gifted, and knowledge about a wide range of differentiated instructional strategies for challenging gifted students. The role of these resource teachers may need to change to enable them to collaborate with other teachers, counselors, and teams to develop model and tiered lessons, arrange for flexible groupings in regular education classrooms, or to provide resources to teachers for in-depth enrichment or advanced pacing.
3. To provide increased academic challenge to gifted students, grade level teams and school and district leaders should examine to what extent the following are happening in classrooms:
 - Are the content and curriculum substantive, presented in a conceptual, rather than a strictly factual manner, and do they allow for rich extensions and connections to other learning and skills?
 - Are students asked to demonstrate their learning through intellectually demanding assessments and performances, ones that call for complex, creative thinking and problem solving – and not simply projects and tests.

- Do instruction and assignments provide for students of high ability, or those who have already mastered course content understandings, to move at a faster and different pace, and allow for in-depth topic examination and investigation?

Heidi Hayes Jacobs' curriculum mapping strategies provide a comprehensive approach to this task. (<http://www.curriculum21.com/pd/curriculum-mapping/>)

Question #3: To what extent and how do we communicate and coordinate GIEP information to all teachers, parents, students, and administrators?

Findings

The role of the GIEP as a key component for describing the learning needs of the gifted student and instructional differentiation seems to be understood only in a limited fashion by regular and gifted education teachers, counselors, parents, and even students themselves. A review of several sample GIEPs and interviews with a large number of parents and teachers makes evident that the GIEP information about students and their present levels of educational performance appears to go no further than the written GIEP document itself. In other words, the GIEP is often an end in itself, rather than a tool for planning a student's individualized instruction.

As a practical matter, the LEA, regular education teacher, teacher of the gifted, parent, and student are not always invited to attend the GIEP meeting, as required by Chapter 16 regulations.

Neither the documents provided nor our interviews demonstrated evidence of a formal, documented, universal protocol for communicating with all stakeholders about GIEPs. Expectations about when and how the teachers of the gifted, case managers, and psychologists communicate to other teachers and parents about GIEP goals and outcomes are unclear. Regular education teachers often voiced a desire for more information about the gifted students in their classroom, what specifically characterizes their giftedness, and to what extent is the instruction taking place in the Humanities program connected to their instruction.

Case managers at the middle and high school note that they have little or no time to collect pertinent and changing present education level information about their students. This is information that would be useful for collaborating with gifted students to develop GIEPs that realistically reflect the individual learners' strengths. This would also assist in sharing information related to GIEP implementation with both the Humanities and regular education teachers. Students express a desire for a consistent case manager at the middle and high school levels.

Need #1: Professional Staff Development - To train all professional staff to consistently communicate knowledge of the gifted learner as it relates to Chapter 16 Regulations

Recommendation:

Provide staff development that includes the following:

- Social and emotional needs of the gifted learner

- Articulation of current gifted SS curriculum district wide
- Writing a legally defensible GIEP that serves as a current “picture” of the student that is in accordance with Chapter 16 regulations
- Identifying and effectively engaging the twice exceptional learner
- Utilizing E-School to access the GIEP

Need #2: Coordinated Communication - To establish a universal protocol for communication among stakeholders

Recommendations:

1. Develop an articulated K-12 gifted program mission statement, goals, guidelines and objectives.
2. Enhance the district wide website and publications to ensure communication about all aspects of the school district’s programming for the gifted.
3. Assign students a consistent case manager in middle and high school.
4. Establish a district wide K-12 protocol for engaging all required participants in the writing and implementation of the GIEP.
5. Establish a district wide procedure for communicating progress on GIEP goals and outcomes.

Question #4: How are the staff oriented to the learning needs of the gifted and provided with appropriate training and instructional support to meet those needs?

Findings

There is an inconsistent understanding of the needs of gifted students among professional staff, and multiple stakeholders reported a need to train teachers across the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted students. The staff development necessary to provide for consistent delivery of gifted courses designed to meet the specific needs of the gifted learner is not evident, and a district-wide plan for professional development for meeting the needs of gifted students, including social/emotional needs and dually-identified student needs, is lacking, due to competing interests for limited staff development opportunities.

Elementary teachers of the gifted meet on a monthly basis for collaboration and professional development. Although informal collaboration may occur, there is no clear structure or requirement for gifted teachers to collaborate with general education teachers to design specific instruction to meet the needs of the gifted learner, and collaboration between gifted and regular education teachers becomes less frequent as students grow older.

At the middle school level, staffing and scheduling constraints seem to drive delivery of service, which has sometimes led to inadequately trained teachers serving the gifted population.

Although a familiarity with the term differentiation was recognized among the teaching staff, the on-site review team's observations provided mixed evidence that differentiation was occurring. Staff have limited knowledge of the concepts and practices of enrichment or acceleration and how they can be implemented.

Teachers have asked that training be provided in the following areas:

- Who are the gifted
- How to challenge the gifted in the regular education classroom
- How to write a defensible GIEP
- How to work with twice exceptional children
- Acceleration
- Compacting
- Enrichment

Need #1: To train all staff on the characteristics and needs of the gifted and how to meet those needs in the regular education classroom across subject areas.

Recommendations:

1. Examine the district-wide staff development program to consider means to provide training on the needs of gifted students on a multi-year schedule, so that new and experienced teachers alike develop their expertise and regularly revisit and clarify their roles and responsibilities.
2. Provide multiple opportunities, including asynchronous opportunities such as professional learning communities, book studies such as “Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom” by Susan Winebrenner, or online coursework, for teachers to be trained on the characteristics and needs of gifted students.
3. Plan for professional development about the Chapter 16 Gifted Education PDE regulations and Chapter 4 Guidelines, as the school district reviews its present staff development offerings and plans for increased professional development and support. Chapter 16 regulations require that each school district provide in-service training to gifted support and regular classroom teachers, principals, administrators and support staff persons responsible for gifted education. Chapter 4 Strategic Planning Guidelines specify that school districts “must include a description of their efforts for professional development and continuing education of all school district staff, which would include teachers of mentally gifted.” (PDE Guidelines, 2010)
4. Identify and select trainers who are knowledgeable and have a high level of expertise about the learning characteristics of the gifted and know how to design best practice instruction to challenge these students.
5. Examine how to use the talents and know-how of Council Rock’s experienced teachers of the gifted as resource persons for in-service workshops, such as the learning styles and needs of the gifted child; implementing GIEPs collaboratively in regular classrooms; and how to differentiate instruction related to core content and standards. These experienced and knowledgeable teachers of the gifted should also be called on to model lessons that address both enrichment and acceleration. Provide time for them to plan and deliver these lessons with other teachers as a team effort.
6. Rely on established and successful frameworks and resources for staff development and best practices, including those available from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education (PAGE), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Learning Forward (the international nonprofit association of learning educators), and Understanding by Design (UBD).

7. Develop and implement a module in the new teacher induction program that provides a common foundation for new teachers to support and contribute to gifted education in their schools.

Need #2: To train teachers of the gifted to be educational leaders and resources.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and provide a sequence of trainings for teachers of the gifted to address the following areas:
 - Chapter 16 regulations
 - Understanding of the gifted child
 - Intervening factors masking giftedness
 - Development of effective GIEPs
 - Delivery of effective services to meet the individualized needs of each gifted student
 - Comprehensive knowledge of resources to serve gifted students.
2. Encourage teachers of the gifted to attend conferences or workshops outside the district that are specific to serving gifted students.
3. Support the educational leadership role of the teacher of the gifted, which may extend to a peer-coaching model, at the district and administrative level. Consider ways to extend the role of the humanities teachers in order for them to provide increased gifted education support to regular education teachers and teams. These experienced and knowledgeable teachers of the gifted should also be called on to model lessons that address both enrichment and acceleration. Examine scheduling options that may permit them to plan and deliver these lessons collaboratively with other teachers.
4. Provide staff development to all teachers about the characteristics of the gifted student, their unique learning styles, understandings about the myths and realities of these students, and a brief overview of examples of high-level differentiation instruction.
5. Use Faculty Meetings as one of several opportunities to provide targeted and meaningful staff development on gifted education. A noteworthy first step in staff development for all regular education teachers is an introductory session (perhaps during a monthly faculty meeting) about “Who are the Gifted: Myths and Realities.” The booklet “Understanding and Challenging the Gifted: An Introduction for Teachers” is an excellent resource for this purpose. It is

available at http://www.psea.org/general.aspx?ID=482&coll_id=30 or
<http://www.giftedpage.org/teachers-handbook/>

Need #3: To train regular education teachers to design instruction that meets the needs of gifted students across the curriculum.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the professional development that is already provided on differentiation to include strategies specific to meeting the needs of gifted students.
2. Provide professional development to staff regarding what is enrichment and acceleration and how it can be implemented.

Question #5: To what extent are there defined vision, purpose, structure, and underlying goals that drive service delivery for the gifted?

Findings

The School District has developed a brief brochure titled “Council Rock Gifted Program Overview.” This vision or overview states that the District “meets the needs of gifted students by enriching curriculum to challenge the intellect, stimulate the imagination, and broaden experiences.” This overview also notes that the District’s gifted program is a supplement to the regular education program.

As stated, the goals of the program are to:

- Encourage higher level thinking skills
- Enhance creativity
- Promote positive attitudes toward self and others
- Provide learning experiences beyond the regular classroom

A brief description about program implementation in grades 1-12 is also listed, with specific course titles only for the program at the middle and high school levels.

The Council Rock Mathematics Enrichment Program brochure, describes another option available to gifted students, and states that the purpose of this program is to: “provide horizontal enrichment for identified mathematically talented students in grades 4, 5, and 6 in the areas of problem solving and mathematical investigation.”

Evidence from interviews with administrators, parents, teachers of the gifted, and others indicates that there is little awareness of either of these documents, and only a limited sense about how these vision statements define or frame differentiated instruction for the gifted. They do not seem to serve as the driving force for program articulation, GIEP development, or as a vehicle for helping parents and staff in general to know how programming for the gifted works, and what is its overall purpose.

Both overview documents emphasize a purpose that focuses on supplementary, horizontal and enrichment activities only. There is limited or no recognition in these goal descriptions of the Chapter 16 requirements that make clear that a range of opportunities for acceleration or enrichment should be in place for meeting student GIEP outcomes.

At the moment there is great interest and receptivity to improving the quality of the District’s programming for the gifted. Administrators, curriculum leaders, humanities teachers, many regular classroom teachers, and certainly parents, voice readiness to attend to the needs of the gifted. There also appears to be both a desire and need for a clear description for programming for the gifted, its underlying purpose and outcomes, and how these relate to the current version of Chapter 16.

To some extent, the present humanities based curriculum (grades 2-12) does provide for a degree of coherence and is loosely connected around social studies based content and related extension activities. Service delivery and the extent of challenge offered through this model vary widely at different grade levels, and from teacher to teacher. Parents and teachers often remarked that they are not clear about the outcomes of these humanities programs, and how they connect to an overarching vision for addressing a variety of students' learning needs.

Need #1: To develop a defined vision, purpose, structure, and underlying goals that drive the service delivery for the gifted.

Recommendations:

1. Use the school district's recently developed comprehensive plan, together with Chapter 16 regulations, and the related PDE Gifted Guidelines (March 2010), as a basis for development of a gifted education plan, as required by Chapter 16 and the soon to be published revisions to Chapter 4. These revisions will require each school district to "develop and implement a gifted education plan every 6 years as required by § 16.4...."
2. In this process, consider the extent to which the limited and brief statement of purpose and goals in the "Gifted Program Overview" brochure might be expanded and updated.
3. The gifted education plan should include:
 - The process for identifying children who are gifted and in need of specially designed instruction (Required by Chapter 16.4)
 - The gifted special education programs offered (Required by Chapter 16.4)
 - Criteria for selecting, employing, and assigning teachers of the gifted
 - A curriculum that is articulated horizontally and vertically and grounded in the Common Core State Standards.
 - Procedures for screening, identification, and GIEP development and implementation in the regular and humanities classrooms
 - How GIEP needs can be met through a continuum of programming options that extend beyond the present content-based humanities program.
 - The means and procedures for maintaining communication about programming for the gifted with parents and staff on a regular basis
4. Relate the Gifted Education Plan to the roles and responsibilities of all GIEP team members, so that the vision, purpose and goals are enacted in the education of gifted students.

5. Once the Gifted Education Plan is completed and approved by the school district leadership and board of school directors, disseminate the defined vision, purpose, structure, and underlying goals to all stakeholders, including students, parents, regular education teachers, and curriculum specialists.