

Background Document for Development of an Accelerated Curriculum for Public School Students in New Jersey

Introduction

The rise of distance education has made it easier to provide appropriate instruction to children who have some unusual educational needs. This group is diverse, both ethnically and socioeconomically. It includes the gifted and talented children who need an accelerated curriculum as an instructional adaptation for their giftedness. It also includes children who need to catch up to their age-mates after having fallen behind in school for whatever reason, such as health problems or family problems. It could also serve children who have moved to New Jersey from some other state or country, where the educational standards do not align with New Jersey standards. Northern New Jersey Mensa has a particular duty to serving the Young Mensans. However, if we can help school districts modify their curricula to accommodate Young Mensans, such a modified curriculum could be used by other children, including those who need to catch up to grade level and those who simply want to work hard and achieve great results.

This document serves as a background for the development of such curriculum modifications. It outlines the role of the United States federal government, the New Jersey State government, and various nongovernmental organizations in serving the educational needs of gifted and talented children.

Federal Government

According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), districts may use [Title I](#) funds to identify and serve gifted and talented students. In addition, districts may use [Title II](#) professional development funds to provide training on gifted education-specific instructional practices, such as enrichment, acceleration, and curriculum compacting.

New Jersey

State Law

On January 13, 2020, Governor Murphy signed the “[Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act](#)” codifying school district responsibilities in educating gifted and talented students as referenced in [N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1](#). The law went into effect for the 2020-2021 school year.

The law states that school districts must establish a process using multiple measures to identify students as gifted and talented. (Note that this is different from identifying the children who are gifted and talented.) Gifted and talented students require modification to their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities. The [New Jersey Department of Education \(NJDOE\) Office of Standards](#) refers to standards developed by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) to

assist school districts in examining the quality of their programs and services for gifted learners in grades Pre-K to 12.

The regulations regarding education for gifted and talented students have been codified in [New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:8](#):

- According to 6A:8-1.3 D: “Gifted and talented students” means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities... “Instructional adaptation” means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling students with disabilities, ELLs [English Language Learners], or students in alternative education programs or who are gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and/or demonstrate knowledge and application of the NJSLS [New Jersey Student Learning Standards].
- 6A:8-3.1 specifies that: District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the NJSLS and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for ELLs, for students enrolled in alternative education programs, and for students who are gifted and talented.
- 6A:8-3.1 also specifies that District boards of education shall be responsible for identifying gifted and talented students and shall provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.
 - i. District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures.
 - ii. District boards of education shall provide appropriate kindergarten-through-grade-12 (K-12) educational services for gifted and talented students.
 - iii. District boards of education shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment.
 - iv. District boards of education shall take into consideration the Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students. It also specifies that District boards of education shall be responsible for the review and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction based upon changes in knowledge, technology, assessment results, and modifications to the NJSLS, according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-2: Modifications for special education students, for ELLs in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15, for students at risk of school failure, and for gifted students.

New Jersey Department of Education

The New Jersey Department of Education has a Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee ([SGTEAC](#)), in partnership with the NJ Association for Gifted Children. As a result, sub-committees were established in the following areas:

- Strengthening Gifted Education Law Implementation
- Professional Development for Administrators, Teachers, Preservice Teachers
- Identification
- Programming Options and Services
- Intersectionality of Cognitive and Affective Needs.

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Sub-committee members include GT teachers, administrators, principals, superintendents, and other experts throughout the State. The purpose of SGTEAC is to:

- Assist the department in developing and disseminating resources that will guide local efforts with implementing fair and balanced selection processes for the identification of gifted and talented students
- Understand the intersection between Social and Emotional Learning and the needs of gifted students
- Build awareness around programmatic options for gifted and twice-exceptional students
- Identify equity issues pertaining to gifted education
- Integrate professional development and certification
- Provide input to the NJDOE regarding the implementation of other provisions in the Act

Nonprofit Organizations

The following organizations are listed in alphabetical order, not in order of importance.

Davidson Institute

The [Davidson Institute](#) for Talent Development is a Nevada non-profit corporation that is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 tax-exempt public charity. Its stated mission is to support the intellectual and social development of profoundly gifted students age 18 and under, through a variety of programs.

HEROES

Higher Education Resources and Opportunities for Exceptional Scholars ([HEROES](#)) runs a microschool (3 days a week) for gifted and talented, high ability, and twice-exceptional students.

Mensa

Mensa is the world's largest and oldest high-IQ society. Northern New Jersey Mensa is a chapter of American Mensa, which is part of Mensa International. Membership in Mensa is open to people who have scored in the top two percentiles of validated tests of intelligence.

- Mensa offers many programs for [gifted youth](#)
- [Mensa for Kids](#) provides educational resources for parents and teachers of gifted children
- [Young Mensan Magazine](#) is a free quarterly magazine to help Young Mensans connect and share their interests.
- [Bright Minds Ally](#) is a quarterly digital newsletter published by American Mensa for busy high school counselors who need cost-free resources to guide gifted students.
- The [Schooling Special Interest Group](#) is a gathering place for Mensan educators from preschool through college, adult education, and beyond, to share resources and support.
- The [Homeschooling Mensans Special Interest Group](#) is open to Mensans who homeschool their own gifted children, or anyone interested in homeschooling gifted children

New Jersey Association for Gifted Children

The [New Jersey Association for Gifted Children](#) is a support and advocacy organization for gifted children. They have the following upcoming events:

- October 10, 2023: [New Jersey Gifted Sharefest - Event Registration \(njagc.org\)](#)

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- April 12, 2024: [Conference 2024 - NJ Association for Gifted Children \(njagc.org\)](https://njagc.org)

Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted

Following the suicide of a gifted student in Michigan, the late Dr. James T. Webb founded [SENG](https://www.seng.org) in 1981 to offer the gifted community support and guidance through education, research, and connection.

Academic Institutions

Acceleration Institute at the Belin-Blank Center

The [Acceleration Institute](https://www.accelerationinstitute.org), operated by the [Belin-Blank Center of the University of Iowa College of Education](https://www.belin-blank.org), is dedicated to the study of curricular acceleration for academically talented children.

Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth

A world leader in gifted education the [Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth](https://www.jh.edu/center-for-talented-youth) provides various services and resources, including on-campus and online courses. They also sponsor the [Bright Now](https://www.brightnow.org) podcast.

National Center for Research on Gifted Education, University of Connecticut

This center is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education PR/Award #R305C200012 AND #R305C140018. The [National Center for Research on Gifted Education](https://www.ncreg.org) is seeking school districts interested in expanding their use of academic acceleration as a way to meet the needs of advanced learners.

Publishers

The following are publishers of curriculum materials that might be useful for gifted students. Inclusion on this list is not a product endorsement. Nor does exclusion from the list imply anything about the quality or suitability of a publisher's products. Note that some of these publishers are for-profit businesses, while others are not-for-profit.

Anton

Anton is a free learning app and website (anton.app) for preschool to middle school for all subjects: English language arts, math, science, social studies, languages and music.

Bridges 2e Media

Bridges 2e Media publishes a website ([2eNews.com](https://www.2enews.com)) as well as a semiannual print magazine, Variations2e — Not All Great Minds Think Alike.

Brilliant.org

Brilliant.org, also known as Brilliant, is a website and associated community that features problems and courses in mathematics, physics, quantitative finance, and computer science.

Duolingo

Duolingo is a popular language learning app that is also releasing mathematics learning apps.

Edmentum

Edmentum offers courseware for K-12 schools, community colleges, four-year universities, and correctional institutions.

Free Spirit Publishing

[Free Spirit Publishing](#) provides a range of textbooks and other materials for gifted students.

IXL

IXL is an immersive K-12 learning experience that provides comprehensive, standards-aligned content for math, language arts, science, and social studies.

Khan Academy

Khan Academy is a not-for-profit whose stated mission is to offer a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere.

Persona Learning

Personal Learning provides robust learning platforms that include content authoring, courses, communities, portfolios, learning objectives, outcomes, e-commerce and meaningful learner progress and analytics in order to meet the unique needs of eLearning for K12, higher education, workforce and corporate programs.

Prufrock Press

An imprint of Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group), [Prufrock Press](#) publishes textbooks and other educational materials directed at gifted students.

Wowzers

Wowzers offers an online mathematics learning tool that is aligned with Common Core curriculum content for 3rd to 8th grade

Challenges

- **Giftedness is rare:** By definition, people who are unusually gifted are unusual. Mensa admits people who score in the top 2 percentiles of IQ (1 out of 50 persons). Thus, the gifted students make up only a tiny portion of the student body of any given school.
- **Giftedness may be unrecognized in some groups:** A [report](#) submitted to the NJ State Board of Education in 2023 suggested that giftedness may be underrecognized in children of some demographic groups.
- **The educational system is fragmented:** In the public schools system, there are 697 local educational agencies in New Jersey, including 593 operating school districts, 85 charter schools, 3 Renaissance schools, and 16 non-operating school districts. These agencies run a total of 2,511 schools. There are 1,365 private schools in New Jersey, serving 210,462 students.