

Services for Secondary Students Who Are Gifted

Introduction

The Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services has received numerous questions regarding services for secondary students who are gifted, including requests for information regarding secondary gifted services when secondary students who are gifted participate successfully in general education options. This technical assistance paper was developed to update school personnel on the requirements for gifted services for secondary students who are gifted.

Questions and Answers

Service Options

1. Are services required at the secondary level for students who meet eligibility criteria for gifted services?

Yes. Sections 1001.42(4)(l) and 1003.57, Florida Statutes, require that school districts provide an appropriate program of special instruction, facilities, and services for exceptional students. Additionally, all school districts' "Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students" documents state that students are eligible for gifted services from kindergarten through grade 12.

2. If the regular education course offerings are meeting the needs of all secondary students who are gifted, must the district still offer or make available secondary gifted services?

Yes. Gifted services that meet the individual needs of the student as determined by the educational plan (EP) team must be available at the secondary level. While some gifted students may have their needs met through the general curriculum (honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment, etc.), gifted services must be available and considered for all students eligible for these services. Districts must consider the needs of the individual student first and then consider the options for meeting those needs.

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BUREAU OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

3. What are the options for meeting the needs of gifted students at the secondary level?

Students who are gifted may be provided exceptional student education (ESE) services through a variety of options including but not limited to modifications of content, processes, or products through a differentiated curriculum, curriculum compacting, acceleration, and/or enrichment. These services may occur in a general education class or gifted class. Gifted students may also require services in the areas of social skills development, underachievement, perfectionism, or counseling.

In addition to receiving gifted services, students who are gifted may opt for the three-year, 18 credit college preparatory program or career preparatory program as specified in Section 1003.43, Florida Statutes.

4. Is consultation an appropriate service for secondary students who are gifted?

Yes. Consultation must include regular face-to-face meetings between general education teachers and a gifted teacher to plan, implement, and monitor instructional alternatives designed to ensure that the student who is gifted is making successful academic progress. All teachers providing support to students via consultation with the student's general education teachers are required to maintain a record of the teachers, courses, and students to whom they are providing services. Although teachers providing consultation are not necessarily providing any direct services to students who are gifted, they are required to have the gifted endorsement.

It is not considered a gifted service for a teacher to conduct meetings or seminars with a group of students monthly (or less frequently) to discuss college planning, career counseling, etc. This information should be part of the general high school program available to any student through the guidance counselors.

5. Is it appropriate to offer only one service delivery model (such as consultation) at the secondary level?

No. As with any student who is gifted at any level, EP teams for secondary students who are gifted must have the flexibility to identify appropriate services based on the student's present level of performance and needs.

6. What gifted courses are available for secondary students who are gifted?

The *Course Code Directory and Instructional Personnel Assignments* document lists courses that are available for secondary students who are gifted. These courses are Skills for Students Who Are Gifted, Externship for Students Who Are Gifted, Research Methodology for Students Who Are Gifted, and Studies for Students Who Are Gifted. It is also appropriate to restructure basic content area courses as gifted program offerings that meet the needs of gifted students who require services beyond the general curriculum. State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.0312, FAC, identifies the specific requirements for course modifications. However, school districts are not required to offer gifted *courses*, per se. Districts must provide gifted *services* appropriate to the student's needs.

7. Can a district offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB), or other similar courses to a class of gifted students as a gifted course offering?

Yes. For most students, including those identified as gifted, these courses are sufficiently rigorous. In a situation where a group of gifted students requires a curriculum that is beyond the AP or IB course curriculum, the course would be a district-developed course and must be taught by a teacher qualified to teach the AP or IB course who also has the gifted endorsement. Furthermore, for the AP or IB course to be considered a gifted course, the district must ensure that there is evidence that the teacher provides instruction or learning experiences that are beyond the general AP or IB curriculum. Students who are not identified as gifted may participate in this course, but the AP or IB teacher must maintain documentation of the gifted services.

8. Can secondary students who are gifted participate in the Florida Virtual School?

Yes. The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) provides instruction to students in secondary level courses that may not be available in their home school and to students who prefer to take selected courses on-line rather than at their local school. Students may register for a single course or for a full program of study. Courses can be adapted to meet individual student needs. These adaptations may include adding depth, breadth, complexity, or abstractness to the course curriculum and/or adjusting the pace with which the material is presented. The FLVS teacher can work directly with the student to create the needed adaptations, or if this is part of a student's gifted services, the FLVS teacher can work with a gifted endorsed teacher from the student's home school or district. As part of the enrollment process, students must receive the signature of their local school counselor for their desired FLVS course(s). FLVS relies on the expertise of school counselors in helping to determine if the student's enrollment into the on-line course is academically appropriate for the student. It is important to note that the FTE for the course(s) the student is taking goes to the Florida Virtual School rather than the student's home school district.

Additional information about the Florida Virtual School is available by phone at 407-317-3326, on line at www.flvs.net, or via e-mail at info@flvs.net.

Dismissal/Readmission

9. If secondary students who are gifted have their needs met through other program options, must these students be dismissed from the gifted program?

No. If the EP team determines that a student no longer requires gifted services beyond the general curriculum, the district may dismiss the student or retain the student as eligible for gifted services. However, if the EP team determines that the student no longer requires gifted services but does not dismiss the student, a current EP must be maintained that indicates that the student's needs are met through the general curriculum.

10. How should the district address the needs of a student who may require gifted services one semester but not another?

It may be determined through the development of the EP that a student's needs for a specific period of time (e.g., one semester) are met through honors or Advanced Placement courses instead of through enrollment in a gifted course or other gifted services. The EP may provide flexibility for the student to receive gifted services on an intermittent basis if that arrangement meets the student's needs as determined by the EP team. If movement in and out of gifted services is addressed on the EP, it would not be necessary to dismiss the student from receiving services or to rewrite the EP each semester. However, the FTE submitted must be accurate for the survey period.

11. What is the procedure for readmission to the gifted program once a secondary gifted student has been dismissed from the program?

Students who are gifted and who are readmitted to special programs for gifted students after dismissal do not have to meet the eligibility criteria. Instead, eligibility is determined by a staffing committee and would be indicated if the student no longer met the criteria for dismissal as described in the district's special programs and procedures document for the applicable school year.

12. Does a timeline exist for a student to be readmitted to Special Programs for Students Who Are Gifted?

No. A timeline does not exist for readmission. Any timeline should be based on the individual needs of the student.

Teacher Credentials

13. Must gifted services be provided by a teacher with the gifted endorsement?

Yes. Services must be provided directly or indirectly by a teacher with the gifted endorsement. No waivers are available from this requirement. Direct services include face-to-face interactions and instruction by the gifted endorsed teacher to the student. Indirect services include consultation whereby the gifted endorsed teacher works with the general education teacher to provide appropriate services. The services are then provided by the general education teacher to the student.

14. What options are available for teachers to obtain appropriate credentials?

Teachers of students who are gifted are required to have the gifted endorsement. Several options are available for teachers to access the endorsement courses.

- local Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources Systems (FDLRS) Centers (For contact information for local centers, please call the Florida Department of Education at 850-245-0478.)
- local school districts (Contact your district gifted coordinator for information about district-sponsored endorsement courses.)

- gifted endorsement courses on campus and on-line offered by many of Florida's colleges and universities (Check university web sites or contact your local college or university for course information.)
- gifted courses on-line offered by many universities throughout the country.

Teachers of students who are gifted are also required to have certification appropriate to the subject and content of the courses they are teaching. Several options are available for teachers to establish "in-field" status. Florida law (Section 1012.42, Florida Statutes) specifies that teachers may be considered "in field" if any of the following conditions are met:

- the teacher holds a valid Florida Educator's Certificate with appropriate coverage as provided in the *Course Code Directory* for teaching the course
- the teacher holds a valid Florida Educator's Certificate and has a minor in the field in which the instruction is provided, as shown on an official college transcript or as verified in writing by the college or university
- the teacher holds a valid Florida Educator's Certificate and has demonstrated sufficient subject area expertise in the subject area in which the instruction is provided through an established plan as approved by the district school board.

Additionally, teachers who pass the subject area test for the academic subject area will establish eligibility for application for certification. Steps to obtaining teacher certification in Florida can be found on-line at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/edcert/3steps.htm>.

Finally, the Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) offers financial assistance to professionals who choose to work in critical shortage areas, which include gifted. Two assistance programs are available.

- Critical Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program
- Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement Program

Information about these programs, including program descriptions, qualifications, and award amounts is available from OSFA at 1-888-827-2004 or on-line at www.firn.edu/doe/osfa.