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Teachers Evaluations of NAGC Initial Knowledge & Skill Standards for Gifted and Talented Education

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Introduction

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) have jointly developed standards for the review of NAGC. These standards will be presented to the NCATE for adoption. If you are interested in reviewing the program standards and offering suggestions before they are presented for adoption, please click on the URL below.

The standards may be accessed at: <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1512> .

These standards were evaluated by teachers enrolled in summer University graduate in the area of gifted education scheduled at the University of Houston. Comments are modified verbatim text. Teachers were asked to select one or more standards and give their professional reaction to the selected standard (s). Some teachers made recommendations such as additions or deletions that would strengthen the standards. Some teacher respondents selected more than one standard in their responses.

The following ten standards are coded as (k) for knowledge and (S) for skills. For teachers who had district identified gifted students or students they felt were gifted Following are the respondents based on their first response standard.

Standard 1: Foundations

- K1 = Historical foundations of gifted and talented education including points of view and contributions of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- K2 = Key philosophies, theories, models, and research supporting gifted and talented education.
- K3 = Local, state/provincial and federal laws and policies related to gifted and talented education.
- K4 = Issues in conceptions, definitions, and identification of gifts and talents, including those of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- K5 = Impact of the dominant culture's role in shaping schools and the differences in values, languages, and customs between school and home.
- K6 = Societal, cultural, and economic factors, including anti-intellectualism and equity vs. excellence,

enhancing or inhibiting the development of gifts and talents.

· K7 = Key issues and trends, including diversity and inclusion, connecting general, special, and gifted and talented education.

Respondent #1:

The foundation standard requires that educators understand the historical background ethnic information about gifted and talented education Osterling, J. P. (2001). Background information serves as a framework from which teachers can operate. Knowledge of the theories and related skills that support gifted and talented education helps teachers to get a deeper understanding of gifted education. For instance, the Texas Education Agency (2002) provides us with a broader outlook that recognizes intelligence as being demonstrated in many ways. This in turn makes the identification process more effective and fair because the students with creative talents who would not have otherwise been identified are recognized. Without background information, it is hard for us to meet the needs of gifted and talented students

The relationship between theory and related practices helps teachers understand the diversity that exists within gifted and talented education. This in turn impacts us in several ways. First, it helps teachers understand that giftedness is not all about academic prowess; it includes other aspects such as creativity. Secondly, it has a bearing on our instructional practices. As educators we realize that even within the same class, our gifted students are not the same. Therefore, it requires that we plan instruction in such a way that we meet the academic and social needs of our students.

Respondent #2:

Our knowledge of this standard places us in a better position to anticipate the challenges we are likely to face. Consequently, it helps us to plan curriculum objectives for each student. For example, our understanding of how cultural and economic factors hinder or develop gifts and talents helps us to devise ways that can help us reach these students. Similarly, a research foundation, gives us something concrete applications that we can use in our classrooms.

Despite the fact that this standard is important, most gifted and talented education teachers do not have a sound knowledge of background information about gifted and talented education. I strongly believe that the one shot professional training that is done does not do service to the teachers. There is need for professional training to be on going. In addition, teachers need to take advanced degrees in gifted and talented education.

Respondent #3:

Standard 1 is extraordinarily important. It is the basis for understanding the needs of gifted learners. Too many teachers subscribe to the misconception that gifted children “will be fine” and that no curriculum differentiation is necessary in serving them. They “use” their gifted students to tutor, run errands, or give them extra work to keep them busy instead of challenging them to learn something in school. If teachers were more educated in the foundations described in K1-K7, then these regrettable practices would, in many cases, be set aside. These teachers would come to understand that research supports differentiated education for gifted children. They would know that laws support gifted

education. They would understand the various definitions of giftedness and would learn to spot their gifted students with more accuracy—not by just their achievement results but also by behaviors. Importantly, they would understand equity vs. excellence and would be led to subscribe to the notion that gifted children, like all other children, should have the right to an education that helps them reach their potentials and that this is not an elitist idea.

Respondent #4:

The first standard is labeled “Foundations” and is the bare minimum from which to make decisions with regarding Gifted and Talented programs and their effects upon the students. The laws set the parameters of those decisions. The director and teachers must know the functional definitions, what came before, the different basic assumptions of the theories, the models and the research. The definition of Gifted as identified within the State of Texas can be found in the Texas State Plan for the Gifted and Talented and downloaded from the Texas Education Agency Website (Texas Education Agency 2002). On first view, this may appear to be a great deal of information but when one asks what kinds of decisions would be made without this very basic knowledge, the answer is alarming.

Respondent #5:

Sometime in August, every teacher reviews the class roster before the students take their seats. He may see twenty-five or thirty names along with their Social Security numbers, home telephone numbers, maybe even a bit of parent contact information. If he wants, he can run these names through a state-wide online database used to assess strengths and weaknesses according to the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) (Texas Education Agency 2002). There are many inferences we can draw from simply looking at a class roster. How many boys will be here? How many girls? How many Hispanic or minority-sounding names are here? How many don't have telephone numbers? How many single parent homes are represented in my class?

Indeed, we can make many inferences from looking at a class roster. But the truth is we have not seen the most important part: the student. Standard Two tells us that educators of gifted students “know and demonstrate respect for their students as unique human beings

Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners

- K1 = Cognitive and affective characteristics of individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds, in intellectual, academic, creative, leadership, and artistic domains.
- K2 = Characteristics and effects of culture and environment on the development of individuals with gifts and talents.
- K3 = Role of families and communities in supporting the development of individuals with gifts and talents.
- K4 = Advanced developmental milestones of individuals with gifts and talents from early

Respondent #1

This second standard is critical if the children are to thrive within the new setting. All aspects of

psychological development of humans and factors that affect human development must be understood in order to create a nurturing environment. In addition, how gifted children differ from the normal process of a growing must be understood and appreciated in order to allow the children to thrive within a normal classroom setting. This standard outlines the characteristics under consideration.

Respondent #2:

Gifted learners arrive at our schools wrapped in varied types of gift(ed) packages. Educators in the regular as well as the gifted classroom must learn how to identify and nurture these gifted individuals by broadening traditional identification procedures. Programs must be developed to include children from a wider variety of culturally and economically diverse backgrounds. Educators must also recognize the differing domains to be addressed through gifted education and not allow schools to program solely for the intellectually or academically gifted. The creative, leadership and artistic domains need to be fostered as well. Parents and family members should be included in the educational decisions made concerning the gifted child and schools must recognize and nurture these gifts to best benefit the community long after formal schooling has ended.

Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences

- K1 = Influences of diversity factors on individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- K2 = Academic and affective characteristics and learning needs of individuals with gifts, talents, and disabilities.
- K3 = Idiosyncratic learning patterns of individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- K4 = Influences of different beliefs, traditions, and values across and within diverse groups on relationships among individuals with gifts and talents, their families, schools, and communities.
- S1 = Integrate perspectives of diverse groups into planning instruction for individuals with gifts and talents.

Respondent #1:

We, as teachers must recognize individual learning in all students, not just the gifted students. We must understand WHO we are teaching and what makes these kids who they are before we can ever hope to reach them academically. Teaching is a journey, and the relationship must be reciprocal. Teachers must learn who the students are and reveal who they are so that both parties can benefit from the educational experience. For example, knowing that a child's parents are illiterate should deter us from sending home letters about the child's progress because what good is a letter to the parents if the parents can't read it? We'd have to find another means of parent contact. Realizing religious preferences of a child could impact the kinds of treats we bring in to the classroom. And knowing a child's likes and dislikes could pave the way to a more meaningful experience in school because we all learn better when we are interested...no amount of "well you really need to know this" will work if we are completely disinterested or adverse to the information. Catering education to the individual child may be more work for the teacher, but it elicits a more give-and-take relationship between the teacher and student that benefits both parties. This standard, in my opinion, is the most important of all 10. We must know WHO we are teaching.

Respondent #2:

The third standard encompasses understanding of and embracing the idea that each child is different and has different natures and learning needs. At the same time, there are several strategies that gifted children utilize such as identifying patterns easily in their learning. In addition, each child has a family setting and cultural factors that also affect their beliefs and perspectives regarding the world around it. The teacher must always respect those differences and in fact it behooves them to bring them into the classroom to teach and role model for the students and appreciation for a diverse multicultural world.

Standard 4: Instructional Strategies

- K1 = School and community resources, including content specialists, which support differentiation.
- K2 = Curricular, instructional, and management strategies effective for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- S1 = Apply pedagogical content knowledge to instructing learners with gifts and talents.
- S2 = Apply higher-level thinking and metacognitive models to content areas to meet the needs of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S3 = Provide opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest or talent.
- S4 = Pre-assess the learning needs of individuals with gifts and talents in various domains and adjust instruction based on continual assessment.
- S5 = Pace delivery of curriculum and instruction consistent with needs of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S6 = Engage individuals with gifts and talents from all backgrounds in challenging, multicultural curricula
- S7 = Use information and/or assistive technologies to meet the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs

Respondent #1

Letting students know that teachers genuinely care about them gives students the belief that we, as teachers, innately want students to succeed academically and do well in life. Teachers that collaborate with other teachers foster a level of consistency across curriculum and instructional strategies. Pre and post assessment helps student's expectations and understanding of curriculum procedures. Most students have not had the opportunity to see consistency across a campus with regards to differentiated instruction. For example, using technology to make multi-subjects learning exciting while learning grade level curriculum makes school a fun place. Community resources can be very useful to each classroom. However, in order for students to be able to respect teachers, teachers must respect students and provide consistent curriculum and instructional strategies Hawes, C. A., & Plourde, L. A. (2005).

An example of multi-ethnic teachers working together with multi-ethnic parents is using the library resources to teach/learn grade level curriculum from a multiethnic vantage point. Programs that allows parents, as well as students, access their grades, become notified if anything has changed in the course, as well as parents to be notified if any late work is missing or any progress report failed to get signed. These are just some examples of how the campus fosters instructional consistency.

Respondent #2

Parents of gifted children are often very active in parent-student organizations. I think that this is because they realize that their child can really make a difference in society today. It is not hard to say that every gifted child has the ability to drastically alter the world's course, either for the better or for the worse. It is vital to collaborate with parents and find out what is working and what is not working. An example of parent, teacher, principal, custodial, and clerical staff getting together to find out what some of the strengths and weaknesses of a program are so they can improve the quality of their students' instructional lives on the campus.

Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions

- K1 = Ways in which groups are stereotyped and experience historical and current discrimination and implications for gifted and talented education.
- K2 = Influence of social and emotional development on interpersonal relationships and learning of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S1 = Design learning opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents that promote self-awareness, positive peer relationships, intercultural experiences, and leadership.
- S2 = Create learning environments for individuals with gifted and talents that promote self-awareness, self-efficacy, leadership, and lifelong learning.
- S3 = Create safe learning environments for individuals with gifts and talents that encourage active participation in individual and group activities to enhance independence, interdependence, and positive peer relationships.
- S4 = Create learning environments and intercultural experiences that allow individuals with gifts and talents to appreciate their own and others' language and cultural heritage.
- S5 = Develop social interaction and coping skills in individuals with gifts and talents to address personal and social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping.

Respondent #1:

I think the learning environment is the single most important thing for gifted students. They have extra emotional baggage they carry with them. Some have a zero tolerance for anything less than perfection. Others are not motivated. If their learning environment is engaging and safe, students will be more relaxed, feel more confident, realize they can work in a fashion that is comfortable for them, identify with their teachers as mentors and facilitators, and be more likely to continue reaching their potential as opposed to squelching it. What a way to increase self-esteem!

Respondent #2:

Gifted and Talented children have been grouped overtime because of stereotyped misconceptions. Grouping by academic ability is supported by research (Ogbu, 2004). Oftentimes, gifted children identify injustices much more quickly than the regular population does. This heightens their sensitivities within their social interactions. Learning environments must take this into consideration in order to meet the nature and needs of these special children. As with all other children, gifted children need to be taught, guided and participate in programs that offer opportunities for growth within the realms of social interactions, peer relationships and leadership roles. This all being done within safe environments that allow for mistakes to occur that are supported through positive criticism and encouragement. In addition, the structure and goals of the environment should embrace the objectives of guiding the GT students form appreciating the differences amongst themselves as a group to an understanding of a worldview of respecting different cultures and peoples.

Respondent #3:

I think the learning environment is the single most important thing for gifted students. GT kids have extra emotional baggage they carry with them. Some have a zero tolerance for anything less than perfection. Others are not motivated. If their learning environment is engaging and safe, students will be more relaxed, feel more confident, realize they can work in a fashion that is comfortable for them, identify with their teachers as mentors and facilitators, be more likely to continue reaching their potential as opposed to squelching it, and have more self-esteem. If the environment is not right, they're already lost before they even get going.

Respondent #4:

Educators through out the k-12 system are charged with developing learning environments for gifted students that shape independence, cultural understanding and self appreciation of the learner's own culture, language and heritage. Educators along with administrators and community members must become cognizant of and work diligently to avoid developing an educational environment that promotes stereotypes and discriminatory practices thus excluding learners with special educational needs. Quality educational environments provide for the safety and emotional well-being of all students. Only in such environments can schools produce positive social interactions, and active engagement of a diversity of learners.

Standard 6: Language and Communication

- K1 = Forms and methods of communication essential to the education of individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- K2 = Impact of diversity on communication.
- K3 = Implications of culture, behavior, and language on the development of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S1 = Access resources and develop strategies to enhance communication skills for individuals with gifts and talents including those with advanced communication and/or English language learners.

- S2= Use advanced oral and written communication tools, including assistive technologies, to enhance the learning experiences of individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Respondent #1:

I agree with The Council of Exception Children -The Association for Gifted (CEC-TAG) and National Association for Gifted Education (NAGC) in setting forth these standards for teacher education programs. If our gifted children are to be served, then teachers must, first and foremost, understand gifted children and their needs Fields-Smith, C. (2005).

Respondent #2:

Language and communication programs within the GT program of any given state or district must be language rich and replete with opportunities for communication both between and among students and with ample opportunities for communications with adults and experts in the student's fields of interest Tse, L. (1996). The home language of those students that is not English must be given opportunities to enrich their first language and also that of learning English. These opportunities must include all modalities of learning, written, oral, and auditory with visual to include all technologies.

Standard 7: Instructional Planning

- K1 = Theories and research models that form the basis of curriculum development and instructional practice for individuals with gifts and talents.
- K2 = Features that distinguish differentiated curriculum from general curricula for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- K3 = Curriculum emphases for individuals with gifts and talents within cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and linguistic domains.
- S1 = Align differentiated instructional plans with local, state/provincial, and national curricular standards.
- S2 = Design differentiated learning plans for individuals with gifts and talents, including individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- S3 = Develop scope and sequence plans for individuals with gifts and talents.
- S4 = Select curriculum resources, strategies, and product options that respond to cultural, linguistic, and intellectual differences among individuals with gifts and talents.
- S5 = Select and adapt a variety of differentiated curricula that incorporate advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content.
- S6 = Integrate academic and career guidance experiences into the learning plan for individuals with gifts and talents.

Respondent #1:

Instructional planning is the seventh standard and for me the one that is often underestimated by teachers of the gifted. This standard is the framework of executing the standards in each and every

mixed-ability, mixed-ethnic classroom Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Choices made here have resounding affects upon each child in the class. This is where the question W's come to meld to make the environment, actualize the goals and objectives of the entire program to meet the nature and needs of each student: Who, what , where, when, why, how. These may be some basic and common words but their compilation into a program can never be underestimated or overlooked. They must be taken into account each and every time a teacher puts a lesson together. Who will instruct? How much control will the instructor implement as the lesson unfolds? How will each domain be addressed in the lesson? Will each domain be addressed?

Standard 8: Assessment

- K1 = Processes and procedures for the identification of individuals with gifts and talents.
- K2 = Uses, limitations, and interpretation of multiple assessments in different domains for identifying individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- K3 = Uses and limitations of assessments documenting academic growth of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S1 = Use non-biased and equitable approaches for identifying individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds.
- S2 = Use technically adequate qualitative and quantitative assessments for identifying and placing individuals with gifts and talents.
- S3 = Develop differentiated curriculum-based assessments for use in instructional planning and delivery for individuals with gifts and talents.
- S4 = Use alternative assessments and technologies to evaluate learning of individuals with gifts and talents.

Respondent #1:

This is the most often contested standard within a gifted program Christie, K. (2005). Who is identified and how they are identified must be common knowledge throughout the district in order to reduce misconceptions of this standard. Who is identified hinges upon how they are identified based on the definition of Gifted. Research demonstrates that both qualitative and quantitative measures should be included. Both methods should be used because each type of assessment has identifiable issues and concerns that underestimate children due to the validity and reliability of the assessment's use within each separate subpopulation. For example, minority children and those growing up in poverty are often underrepresented within GT programs due to their limited vocabulary and life experiences.

Assessments identification tools used within a classroom or for a child must be more than a multiple choice or fill-in –the-blank exam. Students must experience the wide range of assessment formats to be truly able to assess the knowledge and skills. What we are teaching is often times below the knowledge capacity of the GT child. When a performance assessment is administered, the child can blossom and demonstrate full spectrum of knowledge on any given topic or field of inquiry.

Respondent #2:

I feel that alternative assessment is a significant aspect of gifted education. Too many gifted students are overlooked with the traditional 'one correct answer' assessments. Poor achievement on these tests can be caused by boredom, divergent thinking, or many other reasons. Alternative assessments, such as portfolios, open the door to these students and give them a chance to showcase their exceptional abilities.

Respondent #3:

Creativity and giftedness do work well together if applied appropriately. Teachers and parents have a primary responsibility to see that assessment needs of their students are effectively met. This may mean some extra work on the part of the teacher since we are the ones that must help students reach their potentials. We are charged with the duty of meeting student needs even if it means going above and beyond what is expected. Sometimes the significance of process outweighs the significance of product. Alternate forms of assessment are critical at this time.

Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

- K1 = Personal and cultural frames of reference that affect one's teaching of individuals with gifts and talents, including biases about individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- K2 = Organizations and publications relevant to the field of gifted and talented education.
- S1 = Assess personal skills and limitations in teaching individuals with exceptional learning needs.
- S2 = Maintain confidential communication about individuals with gifts and talents.
- S3 = Encourage and model respect for the full range of diversity among individuals with gifts and talents.
- S4 = Conduct activities in gifted and talented education in compliance with laws, policies, and standards of ethical practice.
- S5 = Improve practice through continuous research-supported professional development in gifted education and related fields.
- S6 = Participate in the activities of professional organizations related to gifted and talented education.
- S7 = Reflect on personal practice to improve teaching and guide professional growth in gifted and talented education.

Respondent #1:

Standard 9 is also absolutely essential to discuss because without teachers putting coherent plans into action, there really is no benefit for the student, Brilliant, C. D. G. (2001). Districts sometimes try to coerce or compel teachers into adopting new methods. Perhaps they should try to convince through complete and systematic training (not just a 2 hour session on the benefits of research. Perhaps offering them real incentives for participating in carefully planned workshops could help them to at least

begin thinking about the “pros” of helping our gifted students. Many teachers, I believe, still have too much reliance on “common sense” practices. Obviously, these practices can be fine if they clearly work. However, many times they don’t. Standard 9 reminds us that teachers need to remain focused and be guided by scholarly research which demonstrates best practices.

Respondent #2:

Standard 9 emphasizes the idea that teachers should be life long learners and continuously strive to update themselves on evidence-based practices. I wish I could get this idea through the thick skulls of some of the professionals I work with. Diversity is always an imperative issue so long as classrooms are filled with students from different backgrounds. Educators of the gifted have a great responsibility when guiding gifted students. We must empower them to learn and acquire knowledge for themselves so that they can effectively help the growth of society.

Standard 10: Collaboration

- K1 = Culturally responsive behaviors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals with gifts and talents, their families, school personnel, and community members.
- S1 = Respond to concerns of families of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S2 = Collaborate with stakeholders outside the school setting who serve individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.
- S3 = Advocate for the benefit of individuals with gifts and talents and their families.
- S4 = Collaborate with individuals with gifts and talents, their families, general, and special educators, and other school staff to articulate a comprehensive preschool through secondary educational program.
- S5 = Collaborate with families, community members, and professionals in assessment of individuals with gifts and talents.
- S6 = Communicate and consult with school personnel about the characteristics and needs of individuals with gifts and talents, including individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Respondent #1

Educators of the gifted effectively collaborate with families, other educators, and related service providers Barton, A.C., Drake, C., Perez, J.G., St. Louis, K., & George, M. (2004). This collaboration ensures comprehensive articulated program options across educational levels and engagement of individuals with gifts and talents in meaningful learning activities and interactions. Moreover, educators of the gifted embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with gifts and talents. They promote and advocate for the learning and well-being of individuals with gifts and talents across settings and diverse learning experiences Jeynes, W. H. (2005).

Respondent #2

Standard 10 directly relates to a big initiative that my school district is proposing this school year. This

initiative is called Private Learning Communities, which encourage horizontal and vertical alignment strategies Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. C. (2004). Since I teach at a gifted school, I have learned that in order to fully reach a student, it is important to communicate and collaborate with them. One reason why this standard is important in the classroom because it shows students how teachers work together.

Respondent #3

This collaboration standard is a key component, especially since gifted programs are so often under threat Antuñez, B. (2000). Collaboration brings more people into the fold, so to speak. The more people are included and informed about gifted education, the more people will be out there to support and advocate for gifted programs. By collaborating with families, educators come to understand their students better and gain that all-important home-support. Furthermore, collaborating with other teachers and within the community leaders brings almost limitless resources to the table to help students.

Summary

The National association for gifted students standards were evaluated by teachers enrolled in summer Session IV of 2006 at the University of Houston. Comments are modified verbatim text. Teachers were asked to select one or more standards and give their professional reaction to the selected standard (s). Some teachers made recommendations such as additions or deletions that would strengthen the standards. Some teacher respondents selected more than one standard in their responses.

The standards overall seem to make sense. They seem to be aligned with research. They are general enough to allow flexibility and they serve as guidelines for what to think about when working with the G/T population.

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