

Gifted Education – Administrative Unit Program Plan

What is a Program Plan?

A Program Plan is a concisely written description of the policy and methods by which an administrative unit identifies and programs for gifted student education. The elements that must be addressed in a Program Plan are based upon ECEA statute and *criteria established by Rules promulgated by the State Board of Education and any criteria for accreditation (22-20-104.5)*. Rules support national standards and best practices in gifted education. A Program Plan includes a brief description of how an administrative unit will improve in any one or more element of the Plan during the three year plan cycle.

What is the history of Program Plans?

Beginning in 1993, individual districts desiring to participate in the State funding program for gifted education submitted a plan. The required elements of the plan were similar to today's requirements. State funding was distributed only among districts that made application for funds. Participation was voluntary.

In 2002, the Attorney General's office declared that gifted education, like special education, must be administered through administrative units according to the language of the Exceptional Children's Education Act statute. Thus, beginning in 2003, administrative units became the responsible agency for implementing the statute and Rules for gifted education. Participation was still voluntary; however, between fall 2003 and 2007, 100% of administrative units participated in writing program plans and received State funds for gifted education.

On July 1, 2007, a change in statute declared that *"each administrative unit shall adopt and implement a Program Plan to identify and serve gifted children"* 22-20-104.5.

How is a Program Plan developed?

A collaborative process guides the cooperative development across schools or districts within the administrative unit. The gifted education director/coordinator works with stakeholders to determine the methods and descriptions required for each Program Plan element. This group provides consensus for identification and programming provided for gifted students in the particular administrative unit. In many administrative units, this team of people is called a steering, advisory or networking committee.

What are Program Plan elements?

Elements are descriptions of the manner and methods by which the following are facilitated: gifted student achievement targets, community outreach and communication, identification, programming, accountability, budget, reporting, record keeping, monitoring and dispute resolution.

What criteria of accreditation must be covered in Program Plans?

Under State accreditation and accountability, gifted students are labeled *exceptional ability* in the categorical sub-groups. Thus, requirements for all students, especially categorical sub-groups, must be satisfied. The gifted student achievement targets in the Program Plan address accreditation requirements similar to the district's ongoing accountability for all students. Gifted student achievement targets should be based upon local assessment data, disparities in gifted student data and improvements for the learning and growth of gifted students. The Plan's targets should match the administrative unit's targets for gifted students.

How extensive must a Program Plan be?

Every administrative unit must submit a Plan. The Plan must address all required elements. The key point is that the Program Plan is written according to local, community and state resources. A Program Plan's continuum of delivery and number or types of programming options will vary according to local size, location and other resources. No Program Plan should be written that exceeds realistic implementation goals.

22-20-104.5(1) "The program plan shall be implemented to the extent that funds are provided for such implementation."

How are programming options determined?

Each administrative unit must be knowledgeable about the categories of giftedness: specific academics, general cognition, creativity, leadership, visual arts, performing arts and music. The Program Plan addresses how the AU will provide direct support or networking support for nurturing and developing the strength area of gifted students. The statute cites, *22-20-401.5 A Program Plan...shall be consistent with the advanced learning plans of the gifted children who are identified by the administrative unit.*

Are schools in a district and districts in a BOCES required to participate in the Plan?

According to the Exceptional Children's Education Act, *22-20-106(3)(a) each administrative unit shall ensure that its constituent schools and school districts make available appropriate special provisions for gifted children.*

Do charter schools participate in gifted education identification and programming?

Yes, participation by charter schools is expected. Policies, procedures, resources and activities should be shared consistently within the district. Charter school members of Colorado's Charter School Institute, which is its own administrative unit, must abide by the description, goals and expectations set in the Program Plan submitted by the Charter School Institute. The Charter School's agreement with the district may clarify specific factors regarding materials, professional development and services.

How often are Program Plans submitted and reviewed?

A Program Plan is a comprehensive three year plan signed by the superintendent of the district or superintendents of a BOCES. In year 2 and 3 of the three year cycle, the administrative unit's submission of an annual gifted education budget page to the Department of Education satisfies the statute's requirement for "*an annual plan for educating gifted children*" - *22-20-106(b)*. Annual submission is by April 30 for the next school year. Plans are reviewed in May. Feedback is provided by fall; and, revisions are due 30 days after the review session.

What assistance is available for writing the Program Plan?

The Colorado Department of Education provides guidance and technical assistance. A Programming Rubric describing each element of the Plan is at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/director.htm>. Gifted education networks in educational regions provide examples from different administrative units. Gifted Education Regional Consultants, accessible in each region, assist individual districts or BOCES. Sharing among administrative units or collegial collaboration is a theme in Colorado's development of gifted program designs.

What are the consequences if a Program Plan is not submitted?

State funding is withheld. A letter is written to the local School Board/s of Education and superintendent/s. An alert for technical assistance is released. The intent is to provide help so that all gifted students and their families are aware of how exceptional strengths may be addressed in their community. Location in Colorado is not a factor as to whether exceptional abilities are addressed or not. The best scenario would be to ask for technical assistance before April 30. In an emergency, extensions are granted so that a quality and relevant Plan is submitted.

Gifted education is embedded in quality instruction, curriculum and instruction. The main elements of a response to intervention instructional framework will help in thinking through local gifted programming.