

Highlands SD

Gifted Education Plan Assurances (Chapter 16) | 2025 - 2028

Profile

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Gifted Education Plan Assurance

1. Describe your district's Child Find public notice procedures conducted annually to inform the public of the gifted education services AND programs offered (newspaper, student handbooks, school website, etc.).

The Highlands School District complies with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) by conducting annual Child Find public notice procedures to inform the public about the gifted education services and programs available to eligible students. To ensure broad accessibility and awareness, the district publishes this notice on its website, within all student handbooks, and in the district calendar, which is distributed to all families and made available to the wider community. The notice includes: A description of the gifted services and programs available in the district, as well as the needs of the students these services support The purpose, frequency, and tools used in the district's gifted screening process Information on how parents/guardians can request a screening or evaluation for their child An overview of the district's gifted evaluation process, including the steps involved, the team members participating, and the assessment tools utilized An explanation of the confidentiality protections in place for all information obtained during the screening and evaluation process.

2. Describe your district's screening process for locating students who are thought to be gifted and may need specially designed instruction. Use district specific details including the data sources used in the process as well as the titles for those staff who have an active role in screening. If the district uses a matrix/rubric, include the matrix in this section.

Request for Gifted Evaluation Parent Request: Parents may submit a written request at any time for their child to be evaluated for gifted services. Upon receiving the referral, the district will issue a Permission to Evaluate (Gifted) form within 10 calendar days, per Chapter 16 regulations. Parents may request a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE) once per school term. When a parent submits a request for a GMDE, the evaluation must be completed within the regulatory timelines, which begin on the date the school district receives the signed Permission to Evaluate form from the parent. If a parent makes a verbal request to any professional employee or administrator, that individual must provide the Permission to Evaluate form within 10 calendar days of the verbal request. Once the district receives the signed form, the GMDE process begins. **School Request:** As part of the district's Child Find obligations, teachers, school personnel, or other educational staff may nominate a student for a gifted evaluation if they suspect the student may meet eligibility criteria. **Initial Screening (Level 1)- Universal Screening/ Child Find** As part of the district's ongoing Child Find obligations, Highlands School District implements tiered support through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The MTSS team meets regularly throughout the school year and includes MTSS facilitators, general education teachers, school psychologists, and building administrators. The MTSS team systematically reviews multiple data sources based on grade level to monitor student progress and adjust instruction in literacy, mathematics, and science. These data sources also help identify students who may require further evaluation for gifted education services. The initial screening is intended to identify students who may meet the criteria for a full gifted evaluation, using a variety of tools based on the student's grade level: **K-2nd Grade:** The district administers Acadience Reading and Math assessments at the beginning of the year. A student who scores in the 95th percentile or above in either the reading composite (oral reading fluency and retell) or the math composite proceeds to the next level of screening. **3rd- 6th Grade:** For 6th-grade students, the district uses Star360 Reading and Math assessments. Students scoring 95th percentile or above in either area are referred for further testing. For Grades 3rd grade and higher. if available - Students scoring in the 95th percentile or higher in Reading or Math. **7th- 12th Grade** For 7th and 8th grade students, PSSA Scores –Students scoring in the 95th percentile or higher in Reading or Math. For 9th and 10th grade students, 95th percentile score on at least one Keystone exam **Important Note:** These assessments must be used as one of multiple criteria for screening and cannot be the sole determinant for moving forward in the process. **Advanced Screening (Level 2)** For students who meet the academic criteria in Level 1, the district administers the KBIT-2 (Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, 2nd Edition) to evaluate cognitive ability. A student with an IQ Composite, Verbal Composite, or Nonverbal Composite standard score of 130 or higher, or within the 90% confidence interval including 130, moves to Level 3. The district also administers the WRAT5 (Wide Range Ability Test, 5th Edition) to evaluate academic performance. A student with a standard score of

130 or higher, or within the 90% confidence interval including 130 in both reading and math, moves to Level 3. If the student meets the cognitive/achievement screening criteria, the student's classroom teacher (in K-2, the homeroom teacher; in 6th grade, both the reading and math teachers) completes a Teacher Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) to assess learning ability and behavior.

3. Describe your district specific process for determining ELIGIBILITY (through MULTIPLE CRITERIA) and NEED (based on ACADEMIC STRENGTH) for potentially mentally gifted students (EVALUATION). Use district specific details including the data sources used in the process as well as the titles for those staff who have an active role in the evaluation process. If the district uses a matrix/rubric for evaluation that is different from the one described in Question 2, include the different matrix in this section.

Comprehensive Gifted Evaluation (Level 3) Permission to Evaluate: After the initial screenings and with parental consent, the district provides a Permission to Evaluate (Gifted) form within 10 calendar days to formally initiate the evaluation process. Parents must return the signed form to begin the evaluation, and the district has 60 calendar days (excluding summer) from the receipt of signed consent to complete the evaluation. Comprehensive Evaluation: A multidisciplinary evaluation team (MDT) will conduct a thorough evaluation, including: Cognitive Testing: WPPSI-IV, WISC-V, or WAIS-IV or other standardized cognitive assessment. Achievement Testing: Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-4) or another standardized achievement test Teacher Input: Completion of the SIGS-2 and narrative input form. Parent Input: Completion of SIGS-2 and narrative input form. The Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT) can review this qualitative input as supplementary evidence in determining eligibility. Behavioral Data: If relevant, the district may also conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) to address any significant behavioral concerns impacting learning. Gifted Eligibility Determination The district uses a Gifted Multiple Criteria Matrix to evaluate students based on their performance in cognitive ability, achievement, and teacher/parent input. Matrix Scoring: Students receive points for their cognitive ability, achievement scores, and rating scales. A student with 9-12 points on the matrix will be considered eligible for gifted support services. Automatic Eligibility: A student obtaining a Full Scale IQ or General Ability Index (GAI) score of 130 or higher will be referred for Gifted Support, regardless of the total points earned on the matrix. The evaluation team must consider multiple criteria for eligibility and ensure no single criterion, such as IQ, excludes a student from gifted programming if other criteria indicate gifted potential. If a student does not meet standard eligibility criteria, a multidisciplinary team will review additional evidence, including local norms, classroom performance, problem-solving abilities, and qualitative data.

4. Describe the gifted programs* that are offered to provide opportunities for acceleration, enrichment, or both. *The word "programs" refers to the CONTINUUM OF SERVICES, not one particular option. Describe what acceleration means and how it is applied in each of the grade spans (EL, MS,HS). Describe what enrichment means and how it is applied in EL,MS,HS. (i.e. there are 20 forms of acceleration- which ones are offered in the district and at which grade spans are they offered).

Acceleration and Enrichment in the Highlands School District The Highlands School District is committed to providing a continuum of services for gifted students in compliance with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code. These services include acceleration and enrichment opportunities across all grade levels to meet the intellectual, academic, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. Acceleration in the Highlands School District Acceleration involves modifying the pace at which a student progresses through the curriculum to match their advanced learning needs. There are 20 recognized forms of acceleration, and the Highlands School District offers a variety of options tailored to different grade spans: Elementary School (K-5): Subject-Based Acceleration: Gifted students may receive instruction in advanced subject areas while remaining in their grade-level classroom. This may include higher-level math or reading groups. Grade Skipping: Considered on an individual basis when a student demonstrates readiness across multiple subject areas. Early Entrance to Kindergarten/First Grade: Evaluated based on cognitive ability, achievement, and developmental readiness. Pull-Out Instruction: Students receive accelerated instruction with the gifted teacher to engage in advanced projects, research, and problem-solving activities. Middle School (6-8): Honors Courses: Advanced coursework is available in core subjects such as math and English language arts. Cross-Grade Subject Acceleration: Students may take courses at a higher grade level if they demonstrate readiness. Pull-

Out Gifted Instruction: The gifted teacher provides individualized, advanced instruction aligned with students' GIEP goals. Competitions & Academic Challenges: Students participate in academic competitions, including MathCounts, Science Bowl, and writing contests. High School (9-12): Advanced Placement (AP) Courses: Offered in various subjects, allowing students to earn college credit. Dual Enrollment (College in High School): Partnerships with Seton Hill University, Robert Morris University, and the University of Pittsburgh provide students with opportunities to take college-accredited courses. Early Graduation: Students who meet credit and course requirements may graduate ahead of schedule. Credit by Examination: Students can test out of certain courses if they demonstrate mastery. Independent Study & Mentorships: Students can pursue research projects, internships, and mentorship opportunities in their fields of interest. Enrichment in the Highlands School District Enrichment enhances the curriculum by providing students with deeper, broader, and more complex learning experiences beyond standard coursework. Elementary School (K-5): Gifted Pull-Out Program: Students participate in small group instruction focused on critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. Differentiated Instruction in General Education: Teachers provide advanced learning opportunities through project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, and tiered assignments. Academic Competitions & Special Interest Seminars: Students engage in STEM challenges, Odyssey of the Mind, and creative writing contests. Enrichment Groups: Students who do not qualify for gifted services but demonstrate high achievement participate in enrichment groups Middle School (6-8): Pull-Out Gifted Support: The gifted teacher provides advanced instruction, helping students develop skills in research, debate, and innovation. Honors Courses & Pre-AP Pathways: Middle school students are placed in advanced coursework to prepare for high school acceleration options. Project-Based Learning & Competitions: Students take part in robotics, history fairs, and literature competitions. Guest Speakers & Field Trips: Gifted students attend specialized learning experiences to enhance their academic development. High School (9-12): Advanced Coursework: Students access AP courses, honors courses, and college in high school. Independent Research & Internships: Students explore personalized projects, career studies, and mentorships in specialized fields. Extracurricular Academic Opportunities: Students participate in academic games, national competitions, and leadership programs. Flexible Scheduling & Special Interest Seminars: Opportunities are available for students to explore advanced topics in science, humanities, and technology. The Highlands School District ensures that gifted students receive a balanced approach to acceleration and enrichment, allowing them to reach their full potential. Acceleration and enrichment opportunities are determined based on the students' GIEP goals and instructional needs, ensuring personalized learning pathways. By offering a variety of instructional models, the district provides students with challenging, engaging, and personalized educational experiences that align with their unique strengths and interests.

5. Look at the district's most recent PIMS October 1 snapshot in field 80. How many students are identified in each area GY (gifted with or without a 504 and receiving services on a GIEP); GS (dually exceptional/twice exceptional and receiving services through an IDEA IEP); GX (gifted and does not require specially designed instruction). Provide the numbers for each category in PIMS. Are all the district's gifted students accounted for in PIMS. If not, how are they different and how will you address the discrepancy?

Upon reviewing the district's most recent PIMS October 1 snapshot in field 80, the following numbers of gifted students are identified in each category: GY (gifted with or without a 504 and receiving services on a GIEP): 42 students GS (dually exceptional/twice exceptional and receiving services through an IDEA IEP): 5 students The total number of gifted students in the district, as indicated by the data, is 47. This demonstrates that all of the district's gifted students are accounted for in PIMS. The 42 students identified as GY and the 5 students classified as GS align with the most recent PIMS snapshot.

6. Review the district data for gifted identification proportionality. Is the district identification proportionately reaching the underrepresented populations? If the answer is yes, how did you address the issue. If the answer is no, how will you address the issue.

Chapter 16 of the PA Code requires school districts to use equitable identification methods, ensure multiple criteria for eligibility, and provide appropriate gifted services for all identified students. Based on the district's data, both white and black students are under-identified compared to the state average (4.3%), with Black students experiencing a larger disparity (1.7% vs. 2.3% for white students). Since the Highlands School District's identification rate suggests

underrepresentation of historically underserved populations, the following corrective measures have been taken to ensure compliance with Chapter 16 and equitable access to gifted education: Improvements to the Gifted Identification Process 1. Professional Development for School Psychologists The school psychologist attended targeted training on best practices for gifted identification, ensuring alignment with PA Chapter 16 guidelines. 2. Redesign of the Gifted Identification Process A structured, research-based identification process was implemented to reduce bias and increase equitable access. A variety of assessments are now used, including rating scales validated for cultural fairness. 3. Early Identification Efforts A proactive screening process was introduced in early elementary grades to ensure talent development before traditional referrals. Early enrichment opportunities have been expanded to provide gifted-like services before formal identification. 4. Use of Bias-Free Rating Scales The district adopted validated, bias-free assessments to ensure equal access for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. These rating scales eliminate gender and ethnic biases, improving identification accuracy for underrepresented populations. Data-Driven Monitoring & Standards-Based Report Cards Standards-Based Report Cards allow for real-time tracking of student performance, helping teachers identify students who may require enrichment or a gifted referral. The use of ongoing performance data ensures that students who demonstrate advanced learning potential receive appropriate interventions before the formal evaluation process. Parent & Teacher Training Initiatives 1. Teacher Training on Gifted Characteristics All teachers will receive additional training on recognizing gifted characteristics in diverse populations, aligning with PA Chapter 16's requirements for equitable identification. 2. Parent Engagement through Informational Videos A parent video on gifted identification and enrichment opportunities will be posted on the district website. This initiative aims to increase awareness among families in Title I communities who may not be familiar with the gifted referral process.

7. 22 Pa. Code § 16.5 (related to personnel) requires that a school district and intermediate unit shall provide, under section 1205.1 of the School Code (24 P.S. § 12-1205.1), in-service training for gifted and regular teachers, principals, administrators, and support staff persons responsible for gifted education. Describe how the district is addressing this mandate, including information related to how and when general education teachers are trained and held accountable for delivering gifted services.

Highlands School District ensures compliance with 22 Pa. Code § 16.5 by providing ongoing, structured professional development for all educators responsible for delivering gifted services, including general education teachers, special education staff, principals, and administrators. The district prioritizes differentiation, universal design for learning (UDL), and specialized instruction to support gifted learners effectively. Professional Development for General Education Teachers General education teachers receive targeted professional development on differentiation, universal design, and instructional strategies for advanced learners. This training is embedded into the district's 6.5 mandatory professional development days each school year, ensuring all educators are equipped to challenge and support gifted students within their classrooms. Additionally, lesson plan accountability measures are in place to ensure implementation. Building administrators review lesson plans weekly, specifically examining differentiation strategies. Teachers receive ongoing feedback to enhance instructional practices and ensure that the needs of gifted students are met within core academic courses. Specialized Gifted Support & Data-Driven Instruction The district also uses multiple strategies to identify and support students who exceed grade-level expectations:

- Standards-Based Report Cards (K-6): These report cards help track students who consistently exceed grade-level benchmarks, ensuring instruction is aligned with their abilities.
- What I Need (WIN) Instruction (K-8): Daily WIN blocks provide specialized instruction tailored to student data, offering enrichment and acceleration for students needing gifted-level challenges.
- Academic Rigor Review: The Curriculum Director collaborates with general education teachers to evaluate and adjust academic rigor levels within classroom tasks, ensuring that students receive appropriately challenging instruction.

Professional Development & Accountability for Administrators Building administrators receive ongoing professional development on state requirements, compliance, and best practices in gifted education. Administrators meet monthly with the Student Services Department, where they receive training on differentiation expectations, instructional best practices, and updates on Chapter 16 regulations. These meetings ensure that school leaders are actively involved in monitoring and supporting gifted education compliance across all

buildings. Ensuring Ongoing Compliance & Teacher Accountability To ensure consistent accountability, the district has implemented the following measures: - Mandatory professional development on differentiation and universal design during 6.5 in-service days per year. - Weekly lesson plan reviews by administrators to ensure differentiation for gifted learners. - Monthly administrator meetings with the Student Services Department for training on best practices and compliance. - Differentiated supervision model to provide ongoing support and coaching for teachers in meeting the needs of gifted students. Through these professional development initiatives and accountability structures, Highlands School District ensures that all educators are equipped to provide rigorous, differentiated instruction for gifted learners while fully complying with Chapter 16 requirements.

Training for general education teachers	500
Staff costs	152192.29
Training for gifted support staff	500
Materials used for project-based learning	1500
Transportation	3000
Field Trips	4500

Signatures and Quality Assurance

Chief School Administrator	Date