March 30, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO:       City and County Superintendents
          City and County Special Education Coordinators
          City and County Gifted Education Coordinators

FROM:    Thomas R. Rice  TRB
          State Superintendent of Education

RE:       Gifted and Enrichment Programs, Inclusion, and Remediation of Basic
          Skills by Gifted Specialists

In this time of budget restraints due to proration, questions have been raised by various local education agencies (LEAs) concerning requirements for serving gifted students. Gifted education is mandated under Legislative Act 106, also known as the Alabama Exceptional Child Education Act, and the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) 290-8-9.12 Gifted. Therefore, all LEAs must provide services for gifted students.

Gifted v. Enrichment
There has also been confusion among some LEAs about the difference between serving gifted students through Gifted Programs and Enrichment Programs. These service delivery options are defined as follows:

- Gifted Program: A delivery model to provide services to identified gifted students using the Alabama State Department of Education (SDE) Gifted Eligibility Determination Form and requires a gifted certified specialist to facilitate.
- Enrichment Program: A delivery model to provide services to identified gifted students plus an additional identified talent pool using a state-approved, multiple-criteria eligibility matrix. An Enrichment Program requires a certified gifted specialist to facilitate.

An Enrichment Program should not be confused with the term enrichment, which is any supplemental activity that is above and beyond the core curriculum standards offered in any classroom which may be administered or facilitated by any certified teacher or mentor.

Both delivery options must acknowledge that gifted students have special learning and social-emotional needs not ordinarily met by the general education program and must provide for these needs. Programs must include special services aimed at providing added depth, complexity, acceleration, and choice to meet cognitive needs. In addition, opportunities to encourage creativity and provide for social-emotional needs must be included.

Non-negotiables for state-approved enrichment programs include:
- Specific eligibility requirements consisting of multiple criteria including aptitude, creativity, gifted behaviors, and performance indicators approved by the SDE.
City and County Superintendents
City and County Special Education Coordinators
City and County Gifted Education Coordinators
Page 2
March 30, 2012

- Cluster-grouping gifted students with general education teachers who are willing to differentiate through pre-assessment and curriculum compacting and to collaborate closely with the gifted education specialist.
- Scheduled pull-out time for gifted students to work with intellectual peers and to address social-emotional needs and creativity development through concept-based curriculum.
- Compliance with the AAC including Second Grade Child Find and standard referrals, caseloads and class sizes, modes of service delivery, etc.

Inclusion
Inclusion, “push-in,” or any other practice where the gifted specialists serve gifted students by teaching whole or small groups within the general education classroom on a regular basis is not a service delivery option for gifted services. See the AAC (290-8-9.12(6) (c)) for approvable options for service delivery.

Remediation of Basic Skills
Use of gifted specialists to remediate basic skills of gifted or other students is only permitted when the gifted specialist has time in the daily schedule to complete all of the primary duties required to meet the special needs of gifted students. These are:
- Conducting Second Grade Child Find activities.
- Processing and managing referrals resulting from Second Grade Child Find and standard referrals.
- Serving identified gifted students through pull out programs for three to five hours per week.
- Writing curriculum for pull out classes.
- Supporting general education teachers in providing Response to Instruction for high-end learners by sharing resources and teaching strategies through consultation in Grades K-8 and possibly Grades 9-12.
- Serving students in Grades K-2 who are potentially gifted or who have been identified as gifted through consultation with general education teachers.
- Providing professional development training to faculties and administrators in recognizing gifted characteristics in general and in special populations and in the nature and needs of gifted students.
- Modeling teaching strategies/lessons, differentiated for high-end learners (occasional visits to general education classrooms, followed by observation of general education teachers as they take ownership of these strategies).

However, basic skills at or above the grade levels of students should be embedded in the gifted curriculum.

It is the goal of the SDE to assist you in meeting the requirements for your identified gifted students. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Ms. Shirley Farrell or Ms. Nancy Johnson at (334) 242-8114.

TRB/NJ/LS
cc: Mrs. Sherrill W. Parris
    Dr. Linda Felton-Smith
    Ms. Crystal Richardson
    Ms. Nancy Johnson
    Ms. Shirley Farrell

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