

TAP Guidance Article
September 2024



DEAR MS. M

Gifted Education Questions Answered

Dear Ms. M,

What is a talent pool in gifted education?

In August, I took a team of three gifted teachers and case managers to the Talent And Potential Assessment System (TAPAS) alternative gifted identification protocol training in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In a room full of thirty gifted and special education educators, administrators, directors, and diagnosticians — a common question kept coming up throughout the three-day training — “what is a gifted talent pool and what does it look like in our New Mexico classrooms?”

The talent pool is defined in the New Mexico Gifted Technical Assistance Manual (2023) as “a group of students who demonstrate an advanced ability in a particular area, but do not at this time, meet the criteria for gifted identification...students within the talent pool should receive appropriate programming options and interventions to address strength and potential growth areas.” New Mexico is not the only state that has gifted talent pools! Colorado, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Kentucky all have systems for creating, developing, and identifying the gifts and talents of students.

What does this look like in New Mexico’s districts, school sites, and classrooms? Central Consolidated School District’s “talent pool” includes kindergarten through eleventh-grade students. Talent pool students are being serviced in various ways across ages, school levels, and school locations. Examples of differentiated learning consist of elementary gifted “pull-out” classes, elementary enrichment “push-in” into regular education classes for enrichment layers, middle and high school Enrichment Seminar classes with cross-curricular curriculum, and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) teaching and learning standards. These students are also encouraged to participate in activities and

specialized electives like coding and robotics, after-school clubs, academic competitions, and field trips.

My goal for my school district is to have my gifted teachers at each school site work collaboratively with regular education teachers and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to analyze data from interim and state testing to identify students in the top twenty percent of their classes that may have **potential** in growing talents and abilities. In a post-COVID world, educators and administration have been focusing on reversing the learning loss and deficits of students in the classroom. Although extremely important, it has left our top 20% of students disengaged, bored, frustrated, and uninspired in the regular education classroom setting. These students are being “identified” as a talent pool, and gifted education teachers are working with both the talent pool and gifted-identified students together in many different types of education settings.

The creation of a talent pool allows for the protection of these proficient and advanced students' rights to a differentiated curriculum using gifted pull-out and push-in techniques to service extension and enrichment in a Layer 3B Multi-Layered Support System at all levels of education. For talent pool development to be successful in your school district, it may require regular education teacher and administrator professional development to understand this is an educational need, not a “reward,” breaking the common practice of keeping students from enrichment opportunities due to behavior, not turning in their work, or low test scores. Gifted pull-out and enrichment programs are an educational intervention for students — a need for gifted students and talent pool students equally.

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