

November 29, 2023

Dear Commissioner Diaz:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Florida Department of Education's proposed changes to rule 6A-4.01791, the Specialization Requirements for the Gifted Endorsement.

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is the nation's largest organization dedicated to empowering all who support children with advanced abilities in accessing equitable opportunities that develop their gifts and talents.

NAGC has serious concerns with the proposed changes to the state's gifted endorsement requirements, namely the elimination of language mentioning social and emotional characteristics of gifted children, minority gifted students, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The social and emotional needs of gifted children vary greatly from their peers. Gifted children may feel troubled by social or ethical issues, express intense levels of empathy, struggle with perfectionism, have difficulty making friends with their same-age peers, be the victim of bullying, or a host of other social and emotional issues that tend to impact gifted learners. The proposal to eliminate the lone mention of social and emotional characteristics of gifted students and replace it with the generic term "behavioral needs" is disappointing and puzzling. NAGC recommends keeping the existing language to describe the needs of gifted learners more adequately.

Similarly, the proposed rule's erasure of language mentioning minority students and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as it relates to educating special populations of gifted students, is very troubling. Minority students, particularly Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, are significantly less likely to be identified as needing gifted programs and services. Such disparities have led to a growing excellence gap at the top of the achievement scale between white students and students of color and between advanced students from low-income backgrounds and those from more advantaged circumstances. It is critical for teachers of gifted and talented children to understand the nuances and unique needs of gifted students from all backgrounds and special populations, as they can vary greatly. NAGC recommends that the language referencing minority and economically disadvantaged students remain.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide the Department with our comments and feedback on this proposal.

Sincerely,

John Segota, MPS, CAE

Executive Director

National Association for Gifted Children