PRESERVICE GENERAL EDUCATION STANDARDS IN GIFTED EDUCATION

September 2026

NAGC
National Association for Gifted Children

Overarching Standards and Components

The Preservice General Education Standards in Gifted Education are designed to outline the knowledge, pedagogical skills, and professional dispositions preservice teachers need to develop to meet the comprehensive, distinct profiles of learners with gifts and talents.[1] Specifically, these standards aspire to cultivate a transformative mindset in all preservice teachers, not just those training for specialized gifted education roles, and to recognize and respond to the complex, multidimensional nature of advanced ability across various populations and talent domains.

Rather than prescribing static competencies, the standards serve as a dynamic developmental framework that prepares future K-12 teachers to engage in reflective, equity-centered, and evidence-informed practice. The standards are intended to function together to ground preservice teachers in a solid understanding of learner variability represented in all classrooms, including the intersectional identities and asynchronous development of learners with gifts and talents. The standards promote the use of responsive, differentiated pedagogy that not only challenges learners with gifts and talents, but also nurtures their cognitive, creative, and affective growth across content areas. These standards position preservice teachers as emerging practitioners and advocates who are committed to continuous professional learning and collaborative leadership.

The ultimate goals of these standards are (1) to ensure that all learners with gifts and talents are recognized, supported, and empowered to thrive in inclusive, multi-ability classrooms, (2) to dispel persistent myths that prevent learners with gifts and talents from achieving their true potential, and (3) to support the widespread dissemination of research-informed understandings about learners with gifts and talents in undergraduate teacher preparation programs. Our intent is that these standards will be used to create a standalone course[2] that prepares preservice teachers to meet the academic and affective needs of this often-overlooked population of learners who will inevitably be present in their classrooms.

Standard 1

Knowledge of the Profiles and Needs of Learners With Gifts and Talents

Preservice teachers demonstrate foundational knowledge of the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of learners with gifts and talents, including those from twice-exceptional and/or underrepresented populations.

COMPONENT 1.1 Preservice teachers demonstrate foundational knowledge of the holistic needs of learners with gifts and talents (e.g., cognitive, social, and emotional) and effective practices within and across domains to provide responsive instruction and appropriately differentiated learning experiences.

COMPONENT 1.2 Preservice teachers apply their understanding of how advanced learning and development are influenced by learners' cultural, linguistic, or economic backgrounds and/or individual (dis)abilities to provide meaningful learning experiences.

1 This terminology will be used throughout to describe learners with gifts and talents, including learners with advanced potential.

2 Our goal is to encourage a specific course addressing these standards; however, at minimum, the standards should be incorporated into existing courses focused on learner exceptionalities.

Standard 2

Evidence-Based Practices for Recognizing and Supporting Learners with Gifts and Talents

Preservice teachers use evidence-based practices to recognize potential and provide access to advanced learning opportunities. They comprehend the necessity of supporting the academic, social, and emotional growth of all learners with gifts and talents, including twice-exceptional learners, through valid identification, responsive environments and services, and collaborative partnerships with families and educators.

COMPONENT 2.1 Preservice teachers are able to explain the relationship between talent development models, legal requirements, and evidence-based practices for recognizing all learners with gifts and talents.

COMPONENT 2.2 Preservice teachers understand the principles of supportive environments that enhance the social, emotional, and academic growth of all learners with gifts and talents.

COMPONENT 2.3 Preservice teachers are able to advocate for the needs of learners with gifts and talents in collaboration with families, administrators, counselors, and other educators.

Standard 3

Differentiating and Enhancing Curriculum and Instruction to Increase Challenge and Support Growth

Preservice teachers use formal and informal classroom assessments to recognize the needs, strengths, and interests of learners with gifts and talents; monitor progress; implement appropriate grouping strategies; and adjust curriculum and instruction to increase challenge and support growth. Such curriculum and instruction provides depth, complexity, and acceleration; promotes critical and creative thinking; and offers meaningful challenge and rigor to support advanced learning needs across content areas.

COMPONENT 3.1 Preservice teachers develop foundational competence, within the grade-level or subject-area curriculum they teach, to plan, implement, and evaluate differentiated instruction for advanced learning.

COMPONENT 3.2 Preservice teachers apply their knowledge of grade-level, above-grade-level, and advanced subject area content to modify the general curriculum and, when appropriate, draw upon specialized resources to create appropriately challenging and rigorous learning experiences for learners with gifts and talents.

COMPONENT 3.3 Preservice teachers use preassessment and formative assessment evidence to select, adapt, or create responsive and challenging instruction that addresses interests, readiness, academic strengths, and holistic development of learners with gifts and talents, with support through guided practice, modeling, and flexible grouping.

COMPONENT 3.4 Preservice teachers promote critical and creative thinking in their content area(s) through an inquiry-driven approach to teaching and learning that addresses the full range of learners' academic abilities.

Standard 4

Expectations for Continuing Professional Learning in Gifted Education

Preservice teachers demonstrate an awareness of appropriate services and support systems that continue their own professional learning in gifted education.

COMPONENT 4.1 Preservice teachers have awareness of continuing professional learning opportunities that enhance their overall knowledge of and effectiveness in teaching learners with gifts and talents, including how various perspectives and historical and current issues influence teaching practices.

COMPONENT 4.2 Preservice teachers understand how standards, ethical principles, and legal policies and procedures may influence their teaching practices, especially with regard to teaching learners with gifts and talents across various backgrounds.

Suggested Resources

Social and Emotional Needs of Learners With Gifts and Talents (Standards 1 & 2)

Cross, T. L. (2017). *On the social and emotional lives of gifted children: Understanding and guiding their development* (5th ed.). Routledge.

Provides an in-depth examination of the complex social and emotional experiences of gifted learners and offers practical guidance for parents, teachers, and counselors who support them.

Galbraith, J., & Delisle, J. (2016). *When gifted kids don't have all the answers: How to meet their social and emotional needs*. Free Spirit Publishing.

Offers practical suggestions for addressing the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Hébert, T. P. (2020). *Understanding the social and emotional lives of gifted students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Offers a comprehensive examination of social and emotional development in high-ability learners grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2025). *Nurturing the social and emotional development of gifted children* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/nurturing-the-social-and-emotional-development-of-gifted-children

Provides guidance on how educators and parents can intentionally nurture the development of gifted children, including all aspects of their development: physical, social, emotional, psychological, and cognitive/intellectual.

Peterson, J. S., & Peters, D. (2021). *Bright, complex kids: Supporting their social and emotional development.* Free Spirit Press.

A field guide for understanding the complex characteristics and social and emotional needs of gifted kids.

Rinn, A. N. (2020). *Social, emotional, and psychosocial development of gifted and talented individuals.* Routledge.

Integrates research from individual differences, developmental psychology, and educational psychology with the field of gifted education to provide a comprehensive examination of development across the lifespan.

Rinn, A. (2026). *Working together to support the social and emotional experiences of gifted and talented children* (Framing paper).

Shares detailed recommendations for best practices regarding nurturing the social and emotional development of gifted children.

VanTassel-Baska, J., Cross, T. L., & Olenchak, F. R. (2009). *Social-emotional curriculum with gifted and talented students*. Prufrock Press.

Provides a thorough introduction to methods for developing social-emotional curricula for use with gifted and talented learners in the school setting.

Opportunity and Access to Gifted Services (Standard 2)

Ford, D. Y. (2013). *Multicultural gifted education* (2nd ed.). Prufrock Press.

Explores systemic barriers in identifying gifted students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Fugate, M., Behrens, W., Boswell, C., & Davis, J. L. (2021). *Culturally responsive teaching in gifted education: Building cultural competence and serving diverse student populations.* Prufrock Press.

Focuses on gifted and talented students from special populations, including those who are culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse.

Gray, C. J., Pineda Medina, A., & Glass, T. (2026). *LEAP guidebook for culturally responsive teaching for gifted and high-potential students.* National Association for Gifted Children.

Provides an overview of research-based practices in culturally responsive instruction, including culturally responsive gifted education.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2025). *Addressing excellence gaps in K-12 education* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/addressing-excellence-gaps-in-k-12-education

Calls on policymakers and educators to set a goal of closing achievement differences at every level of achievement between different groups of students.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2026). *Identifying and serving culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/identifying-and-serving-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-gifted-students

Recommends that all gifted programs and services implement and maintain best practices aimed at recognizing and intentionally developing the advanced academic potential of students who are culturally, economically, and linguistically diverse.

Roberson, J. J., & Collins, K. H. (2024). *Sparking change to promote equity: Implementing culturally responsive leadership.* Prufrock Press.

Empowers leaders and other educational stakeholders to build a more equitably represented student population within gifted and advanced programs.

Peters, S. J., Rambo-Hernandez, K. E., Makel, M. C., Matthews, M. S., & Plucker, J. A. (2019). Effect of local norms on racial and ethnic representation in gifted education. *AERA Open*, 5(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858419848446

Empirical study showing how local norms can improve equity in identification.

Differentiated Instruction and Curriculum Design (Standard 3)

Kaplan, S. N. (2020). The curriculum dilemma. *Gifted Child Today, 43*(4), 199-201. https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217520916212

Describes four patterns for implementing a differentiated curriculum.

LaFollette, J., & Reddish, T. M. (2024). *LEAP guidebook for differentiating instruction for gifted and high-potential students.* National Association for Gifted Children.

Provides a practical overview of best practices in differentiation.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2025). *Acceleration* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/acceleration

Outlines recommendations for providing advanced learners with accelerative opportunities, including moving ahead in one or more subjects (content/subject acceleration) and/or skipping a grade (whole grade acceleration).

National Association for Gifted Children. (2025). *Grouping for gifted learners* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/grouping-for-gifted-learners

Shares NAGC recommendations for grouping as a viable tool for advanced learners when it is based on student readiness for the instruction.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2026). *Challenging gifted & advanced learners through differentiated curriculum & instructional strategies.* https://www.nagc.org/news/challenging-gifted-and-advanced-learners-through-differentiated-curriculum--instructional-strategies

Shares NAGC recommendations for differentiated curriculum and instructional strategies found to be effective with gifted learners.

Differentiated Instruction and Curriculum Design (Standard 3) *(continued)*

Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. ASCD.

Provides strategies on differentiation, applicable to gifted learners.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2023). Teach up for equity and excellence. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/teach-up-for-equity-and-excellence

Explores the principle of "teaching up" to challenge learners in classrooms.

VanTassel-Baska, J., & Stambaugh, T. (2006). *Comprehensive curriculum for gifted learners* (3rd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Offers models for curriculum planning and instructional design.

Weber, C. L., & Mofield, E. L. (2023). *LEAP guidebook for curriculum design for teachers of gifted and high-potential students.* National Association for Gifted Children.

Provides an overview of the features of high-quality curriculum and how it is responsive and relevant to the needs of gifted students.

Critical and Creative Thinking (Standard 3)

American Psychological Association. (2017). *Thinking and learning: Teaching principles for creative, talented, and gifted students.* https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/teaching-learning/top-twenty/creative-talented/thinking-learning?tab=1

Explores how gifted students think and learn and provides guidelines and tips for teachers.

Hines, M. E., Catalana, S. M., & Anderson, B. N. (2018). When learning sinks in: Using the Incubation Model of Teaching to guide students through the creative thinking process. *Gifted Child Today, 42*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1076217518804858

Explores how the incubation model of teaching (IMT) can be used to encourage creativity in gifted learners.

Puryear, J., & Lamb, K. (2025). Fact, fiction, and teaching for creativity. *Teaching for High Potential* (August). https://www.nagc.org/news/teaching-for-high-potential---august-2025

Examines facts and myths related to creativity and suggests practical implications for the gifted education classroom.

Renzulli, J. S. (2012). Reexamining the role of gifted education and talent development. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 56(3), 150–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986212444901

Advocates for creativity and problem-solving as central to gifted education.

Trowbridge, K. (2025). *Creative and critical thinking are game-changers for gifted students.* https://curiosity2create.org/creative-and-critical-thinking-are-game-changers-for-gifted-students/

Explores why creativity and critical thinking matter for gifted students.

Professional Learning and Advocacy (Standard 4)

Davis, J. L., & Douglas, D. (2021). *Empowering underrepresented gifted students: Perspectives from the field.* Free Spirit Press.

Provides strategies to help underserved high-potential students claim their right to an education that addresses their unique needs.

Gilson, C. M., Gallagher, S., Connors, T. W., Pereira, N., Dash, L. O., & Little, C. A. (2024). *Universal educator preparation in gifted education* (Framing paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/universal-educator-preparation

This paper examines how universal educator preparation in gifted education can fill a critical gap in educator expertise, benefiting gifted students and their classmates.

Johnsen, S. K. (2012). *Identifying gifted students: A practical guide* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Discusses professional responsibilities in identification and advocacy.

National Association for Gifted Children. (2026). *Universal educator preparation in gifted education* (Position paper). https://www.nagc.org/news/universal-educator-preparation-in-gifted-education

Outlines recommended best practices and urges education agencies, preparation programs, and professional learning providers to embed gifted education into pre-service and in-service training.

Professional Learning and Advocacy (Standard 4) *(continued)*

Novak, A. M., & Weber, C. L. (2019). *Best practices in professional learning and teacher preparation.* Prufrock Press.

This three-volume series provides specific strategies for professional development for educators of gifted students in a variety of settings using various methods.

Roberts, J. L. (2022). Advocating to put policy in place. *Gifted Child Today, 45*(4), 187-191. https://doi.org/10.1177/10762175221110941

Provides a primer on creating an advocacy initiative within gifted education.

Roberts, J. L., & Clark, T. (2025). Javits projects: Supporting best practices for serving gifted students. *Gifted Child Today, 49*(1), 7-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/10762175251381363

Details how the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act has influenced gifted education; a must-read for advocates.

Robinson, A., Shore, B. M., & Enersen, D. L. (2007). *Best practices in gifted education: An evidence-based guide*. Prufrock Press.

Synthesizes research-based practices for teacher preparation.

Weber, C. L., Boswell, C., & Behrens, W. (2025). *Exploring critical issues in gifted education: A case studies approach* (2nd Ed.). Prufrock Press.

Presents problem-based learning scenarios that explore authentic situations found in K-12 classrooms.

Other Gifted Education Standards

For a list of other gifted education standards, including standards for gifted programming and for teacher licensure, visit the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) website at https://www.nagc.org/national-standards-in-gifted-and-talented-education.