

## Gifted Education in Georgia is in crisis.

**On June 1, 2017, the GaDOE published guidelines that fall short of what is required by Georgia law, fail to embrace the new ESSA requirements for states, and make meeting the learning needs of ESOL and gifted students optional in our state.**

**May 3, 2017:** The GaDOE published the Georgia Department of Education Instructional Service Model Professional Qualification Requirements Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), upholding the requirement for gifted and ESOL certification and the use of the approved gifted delivery models.

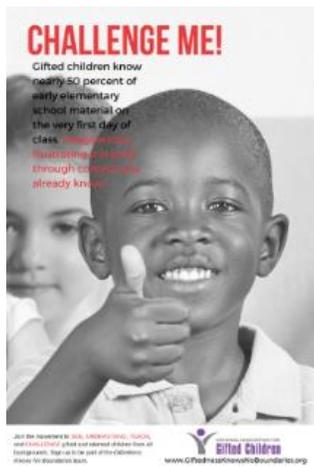
**June 1, 2017: The GaDOE drops the requirements and explicitly states that LEAs may waive any gifted or ESOL training for teachers. Under Georgia law gifted students are Category VI of Special Education.** The decision to waive the need for specialized training for teachers of the gifted and ESOL students suggests that these exceptionalities do not require specially trained teachers to ensure understanding and implementation of identification procedures and services in order to challenge gifted and talented students appropriately and to meet the learning needs of ESOL students.



### Georgia State Law Requires Identification Procedures and Qualified Teachers to Meet the Needs of Gifted Students:

*O.C.G.A. 20-2-152 Special education services:*

In language that is similar to the ESSA requirements for the SEA application, **state law requires the provision of teachers who are professionally trained to meet the needs of gifted students.** The gifted endorsement provides this training. The law includes specific requirements related to **identification of gifted students using multiple criteria.** If training teachers of the gifted is waived, educators would not have the key understandings, taught in the gifted endorsement courses, to use multiple criteria effectively to identify potentially gifted students.

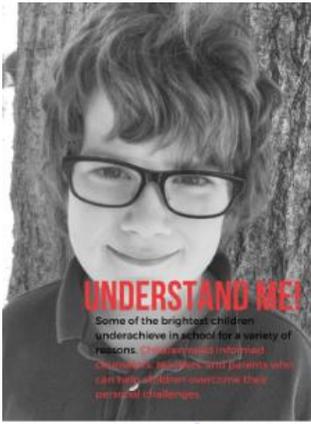


### Requirements from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ESSA requires the state educational agency to include in its application and resulting guidance documents **a plan to improve the skills of teachers for both identifying gifted students and providing instruction to meet their special needs.** These are the important skills that are addressed in our Gifted In-Field Endorsement Programs, which are based on the best-practice evidence of national standards.

**ESSA Language: From Sec. 2101 Formula Grants to States: (d)(2) Each application...shall include: (J) A description of how the State educational agency will improve the skills of teachers, principals, or other school leaders in order to enable them to identify students with specific learning needs, particularly children with disabilities, English learners, students who are gifted and talented...and provide instruction based on the needs of such students.**

***Allowing Georgia school districts to waive specialized training for teachers of gifted students contradicts this clear directive from ESSA.***



**It's an issue of EQUITY.**

Like ALL of our children, gifted students have a right to an education that will enable them to reach their potential.

**From the GaDOE Gifted Education website:**

The Georgia Department of Education's Gifted Program is funded by the State of Georgia. In Georgia, a gifted education student is defined as one who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and **who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her ability(ies).**



**It's an issue of FUNDING and using taxpayer monies appropriately.**

With the most recently published guidelines, local districts may waive the gifted endorsement for teachers, as well as the approved gifted delivery models, and still receive weighted funding for whatever they decide to call gifted education. That means that districts can earn weighted funding for gifted students for every hour of the day, while not being required to provide any approved services to meet their learning needs. The state stands to double the weighted funding for gifted education, while removing the safeguards for the integrity of those services.

PSC approved training and the delivery models outlined for gifted education are in place because lawmakers believe these students have special needs and need teachers who are trained to meet those needs. QBE funding formulas recognize the exceptional needs of special populations, and money from Georgia taxpayers goes to districts under the expectation that the districts will provide professionally trained teachers who will meet gifted students' needs through approved, research-based instructional strategies.

**How do current gifted regulations allow for needed flexibility?**

The *Georgia Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services* already allows for monitored flexibility and creativity in options for delivery models, in the non-renewable endorsement, and in flexibility with class size. We as a field make it our goal to address exceptionalities. There is no need to waive the endorsement and/or delivery models to address exceptionalities. Nothing about our current regulations limits districts. We as a state must hold on to our foundation of Georgia's longtime commitment to addressing the needs of our gifted students.

**Call to Action:**

- **Demonstrate Georgia's commitment to ALL students by restoring the certification and service requirements for our gifted students.**
- **Create a REAL plan of improvement for Gifted students in our state's ESSA application.**