

Report
to the
School District
of Upper Moreland
Township

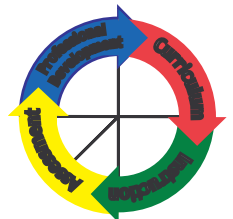


Gifted Evaluation

November 10 - 12, 2003

Grades K-12

Framework for Continuous Improvement



**School District
of
Upper Moreland Township
Willow Grove, PA**



**Gifted Program External Evaluation
2003-2004**

GIFTED PROGRAM EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

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Overall Strengths:

1. The Upper Moreland leadership deserves praise for the ongoing key steps they are taking for continuous curriculum improvement, including curriculum review and design. This framework is an excellent platform for increased gifted program integration and content connections.
2. District leadership is commended for recognizing the need for comprehensive improvement of programming for the gifted, and then conducting an assessment of its program to determine how best to accomplish this goal.
3. Upper Moreland School District's staff is dedicated and exhibits a genuine concern for their students.
4. The District has a variety of mechanisms in place that are ready, or can be quickly re-configured, to address gifted program leadership and change.
5. There is a long-range staff development plan built around both building and district level initiatives. These initiatives are aimed at increasing curriculum integration, informing teachers about best practices, and raising student expectations.
6. Students are caring, kind and considerate to each other, and share a sense of community responsibility. This is evident in the many and varied leadership roles the gifted students assume in student and extra-curricular activities.
7. Parents show a strong interest in increasing the level of challenge and raising academic expectations.

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1. To what extent does the instruction of gifted students include use of current best practices, resources, and technology?

The Upper Moreland School District generally demonstrates examples of pull-out programming at the elementary and middle school levels. Acceleration is evident in mathematics across the district. Cluster grouping is used at both of the elementary schools. At the middle school, some of the gifted students are grouped for advanced mathematics and reading.

Some other examples of best practices at the elementary and middle school levels include reading and writing workshops, inquiry based science, active reading strategies, curriculum compacting in mathematics, and, in limited cases, tiered and differentiated instructional activities. The current gifted program at the middle school uses collaborative problem solving and team building activities through simulations. However, this program seems to focus on specific units of instruction that are the same for every student, instead of ones that address a range of student needs and abilities. Both parents and students were often vocal in their concern that these units were not adequately challenging, interesting or diverse – and connected in a very minimal fashion to GIEP student assessment and profile data.

At the elementary level, The Enrichment Class (TEC) teachers serve as a resource to some classroom teachers at some grade levels where gifted students have been placed. Where there is a rotation of teachers assigned to the top cluster group, there is not always a comfort level or even knowledge among these regular education teachers about how to differentiate or increase the challenge for gifted students. Parents note that where and when this happens at the elementary level, they are pleased with the ongoing challenges and curriculum connections that result.

The Challenge to Change (CTC) middle school teacher doesn't regularly act as a resource to classroom teachers or grade level teams due to schedule constraints. Some of the middle school teachers voiced an interest in working directly with the CTC teacher and collaborating to design high level instructional units and activities. Recently the CTC teacher has been directed to work with science and social studies teachers to model push-in instruction for the gifted. This change seems to have been made with little preparation or planning for the role the CTC teacher will assume when working with both teachers and students in the social studies and science classes.

At the high school level, the academic needs of gifted students are met via various Advanced Placement (AP) and Level 1 courses. Students are required to maintain a high level of achievement to remain in Level 1 courses. Although the Advanced Placement courses deal with rigorous content and prepare students to take the final exam, these courses should also develop underlying key concepts and can be delivered in a more engaging manner. This is not always evident in the Upper Moreland A.P. and honors courses. Delivery of instruction

in these classes appears to be primarily through teacher lecture and student note-taking, and do not reflect students immersed in higher order thinking skills, such as comparing various points of view, using complex data to predict outcomes, or problem solving around authentic issues. Many parents of the gifted, at the high school level, noted that they did not always consider students adequately challenged in both A.P. and honors offerings – and that the expectations for performance were not always set high enough.

There is currently an Advanced Placement study group that is reviewing the status of the program and exploring ways to increase participation in the Advanced Placement Exam. As a result of this committee's work, arrangements have been made for A.P. teachers to attend College Board update training about course content, exams, and instruction. This group is also reviewing and planning action steps to address raising student expectation and ways to increase student participation in final A.P. exams. The District has made funds available for the students' A.P. exam registration fee – certainly a wise step towards removing one hurdle or excuse for students not to take this examination.

An additional opportunity for gifted students exists through a series of field trips of which students may select three. The primary role of the gifted coordinator at the high school is to arrange and schedule these trips. These field trips could serve as rich resources for structured classroom content connections, as alternate sources for gathering research information, and for in-depth mentoring opportunities. However, as they are presently offered, this resource is underutilized. Some students and parents simply commented that these field trips are “a way to get a day off from school.” During the 2003-2004 school year, the field trips have included visits to more competitive colleges. These trips are an avenue to help student explore colleges they may overlook in their college search. The trips to these competitive colleges should include more than just a simple tour of the campus.

With regard to technology at the elementary schools, student's individual instructional levels are being met and monitored in mathematics through the use of the Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC) activities. CCC doesn't continue beyond the sixth grade level. There is a huge discrepancy in technology equipment available in the elementary TEC program. Smart boards are available in various locations throughout the district and at various levels.

Technology at the high school includes computer labs for which teachers may sign up. It is noted by the Gifted Program Evaluation Team that the computer labs are not sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of an entire class. Teachers note that often times the labs are booked ahead, and they have limited time or days to schedule labs for classroom use – or that when available, all computers are not in working order, so some students must share use, or take turns.

At the middle and high school levels, there is very little evidence of high-level technology accessibility, especially in the classrooms, nor of its complex and integrated instructional

use by the teachers. One computer is available in each classroom, although a lack of peripheral devices, such as LCD projectors and the proper supportive software, limits their usefulness for instruction and demonstration. If readily available, in sufficient numbers, and used wisely, technology applications, such as data analysis, using the internet to search for primary source materials, and use of authentic problem based simulations, are an engaging means for presenting bright and gifted students with substantive challenge. The District does have a full time instructional technology software specialist in place, who is poised to move in this needed direction.

There are no formal procedures or supports in place for guiding instruction for the gifted underachieving and unmotivated students.

Recommendations:

The Upper Moreland Gifted Support program's mission statement aims to: *provide for the needs of mentally gifted students through a challenging curriculum that offers opportunities for acceleration and enrichment while following self-discovery and independent learning.*

This is a motivating and all-encompassing framework for defining specific gifted programming goals, structure, and delivery components. It is time for the gifted committee to agree upon and develop a set of specific goals and outcomes that underlie program options, resources needed, curriculum and delivery of instruction. As part of this process, also design an evaluation mechanism to assess effectiveness.

1. For district gifted program teachers to act as a resource to regular education to meet the needs of the gifted in a more comprehensive manner, it is important that they have the training and knowledge about gifted education and best practices including:
 - Parallel Curriculum: Teaching for High Potential
 - Curriculum compacting
 - Dimensions of Learning
 - Differentiated activities including tiered assignments, complex tasks, and learning contracts.
 - Interdisciplinary and integrated learning
 - Project and performance-based assessments with rubrics that embrace high standards.
 - Special interest seminars
 - Flexible grouping
 - Socratic questioning, Touchstone project questioning, and Great Books
 - Understanding by Design
 - Inquiry and problem-based learning
 - High level thinking technology applications

- Co-teaching strategies
 - Designing curriculum, including skills and content, based on student GIEPs present education levels and assessed needs for specially designed instruction
 - Higher order thinking skills
2. Instruction in Advanced Placement classes should reflect best practices, including inquiry-based learning, technology integration, differentiated learning activities and performance-based assessments. To do this, offer teachers in-depth workshops about the characteristics of gifted students and how they learn, how to differentiate instruction, and the many strategies for increasing student engagement and performance. One excellent model to explore for possible use in reaching this goal is the ASCD nationally recognized Understanding by Design. District instructional staff received a brief introduction to this model through a staff development keynote address by Dr. Elliott Seif, a nationally recognized leader in this area (June 2003). This curriculum and instruction design framework is based on the best current research about increasing understanding, is teacher friendly for immediate use, and certainly offers practical strategies for challenging the gifted. It is also a model that complements the District's Framework for Continuous Improvement.
 3. The Advanced Placement study group should develop key steps and actions to increase enrollment in these classes and participation in the exams. These actions need to be clearly communicated to teachers, students, and parents.
 4. Take steps to ensure that the use of technology is connected to developing high-level analytical and critical thinking skills and is integrated with the regular curriculum standards and content. In addition, teachers and students need increased access to technology.
 5. Arrange for workshops and in-service which provide teachers with information and the underlying principles of dealing with unmotivated and underachieving gifted students. Perhaps at the elementary and middle school levels, the IST teachers and R team teachers can take a lead in assisting in this effort.
 6. Consider the establishment of a separate gifted support or seminar-type class where gifted students could work on special projects or assignments related to their honors and A.P classes. The teacher could assist students to learn about extended and enriched research strategies, or simply allow students to explore a topic or interest in a more leisurely fashion on their own or as part of a group. The role of designing and offering this special bridge-class could be part of the present gifted support teacher's responsibilities.

2. To what extent does instruction and programming meet the identified and assessed needs of each gifted student?

At the elementary level and middle school level, each student has a current GIEP in place with present individual educational levels indicated. The GIEP Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives appear to be the same for every student even though, in some cases, the teacher uses student surveys to determine interests and student learning styles. When looked at closely, the actual implementation reflects only limited instructional or program individualization based on student profile and need.

At the elementary grade level, the gifted support teachers place primary emphasis on developing specific challenge program units - ones aimed at a range of topics and some higher level thinking skills. This focus leads to moving students through a cycle of units depending on grade level. At the middle school level, the gifted support teacher places primary emphasis on simulations. These units of study seem to frame the instructional objectives and activities written in the GIEP, rather than the assessed needs of the gifted students.

On the elementary school level, the gifted program does appear to provide individualized and/or enrichment in mathematics through curriculum compacting. At the middle school level, some students are taking Algebra 1 in 7th Grade. However, this enrichment is not reflected in the GIEP.

On the elementary level there is extensive data collection, including: writing samples, running records, biweekly assessments, quarterly math and reading assessments, PSSAs, and Terra Nova data. It is not evident that this data is being used to guide instruction for the gifted students. At the middle school level the teachers review PSSA scores. However the data is not used to individualize GIEPs, to determine whether or not a student should have curriculum compacted, or for making decisions about advancing content.

Each student at the high school has a current GIEP. These documents and the timelines for compliance are managed by the guidance counselors. Classroom teachers are provided with a checklist regarding a gifted student's learning behaviors taken from the GIEP present educational levels. A review of high school student GIEPs reflects comprehensive data on each student's academic achievement and classroom involvement in the present educational levels. Further review of the high school GIEPs reveal goals, objectives and instructional activities that appear to be generic in nature and common to all GIEPs. There appears to be a dis-connect between the identified present education levels and the generic goals, objectives and specially designed instruction.

Students and parents feel there are adequate and varied Advanced Placement and Level 1 courses. However, both parents and students are not unanimous on the degree or extent of academic rigor these programs demand. Few students take the AP exams. A structure is in place to encourage more exam participation, including reimbursement for those students who achieve scores of 3 or higher. Encouraging increased participation in the A.P final examination may push students to seek admission to more competitive universities. Counselors need to develop and plan for providing active supports or additional parent workshops to assist families in securing financial aide or scholarships, and to show parents ways to increase academic expectations for their children.

The students reported feeling particularly stressed by the demands of taking multiple AP/ Level 1 classes. The students were insightful in recognizing that the change from intensive scheduling to traditional scheduling may be contributing to their current level of stress.

The gifted program at the high school provides enrichment through a series of field trips, of which students may select three. The field trips include performing arts, museums, and recently visits to two competitive universities. The students report the field trips are fun, and are a break from the instructional day. The students interviewed recognize that particular trips, such as the trips to the Crayola Factory and the Aquarium are mainly amusing and elementary in nature. The recently planned trip to Princeton University was appreciated by the students, although it consisted solely of a tour by a student guide.

An attempt is made through a job shadowing and mentorship program to provide students with an opportunity to explore individual career interest. The program is designed to be completed during after-school, evening and weekend hours, although one student did report that study hall time was available to participate in a mentorship at the elementary school. Many students and school personnel reported that the job shadowing and mentorship program are rarely taken advantage of, as the students have limited time available due to the academic course expectations, school activities, and community based activities.

Teachers at the high school are provided with a list of the gifted students annually. Individual copies of the students GIEPs are not provided to high school teachers in any routine or timely manner. Students report that they are aware they have a GIEP, although they do not usually attend GIEP meetings, nor are they aware of the goals and objectives contained within. There is a common understanding among students that the document is a formality, rather than a dynamic document that drives educational programming.

Recommendations:

1. Student data is gathered about gifted students from a range of sources, including standardized test scores, teacher and parent inventories, and other information gathered for GIEP present educational levels requirements. However, the important individualized information is seldom shared with regular education teachers, nor does it translate into modified specially designed instruction, when it is clear that student assessment profile calls for this. The District special and regular education teachers, administrative leadership, including principals, must review the process for both gathering and using assessment data, the extent to which it is both the responsibility of the gifted support teacher and the regular classroom teacher to pay attention to the profile, and design specific actions to move from the “one size fits all GIEP.” This should move students toward increased challenge and place the district in compliance with Chapter 16.
2. The District may wish to explore scheduling, budgeting and hiring arrangements that would allow for one gifted support teacher to be assigned full time in each elementary building. In addition, such key steps in staffing would provide regular classroom teachers with the support, time and resources they need to design differentiated activities for gifted students. This move would also allow gifted support teachers to increase curricular connections.
3. Give serious consideration to implementing a middle school course or program for the gifted that is content based, maybe even *in lieu* of one of the present subject offerings and regularly scheduled for one or two periods a day. This arrangement often provides for substantive academic challenge, encourages an interdisciplinary curriculum design, and allows for fast paced instruction and in-depth learning. The advantage of such an approach is that it does not force students to leave class or make them unable to participate in an elective, and does not require them to do “make-up work” for work they missed during a pull-out program. The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading classes may be the vehicle for scheduling this type of program.
4. A first priority for the district is to re-visit the purpose and design of the high school gifted program. The District should consider ways to better utilize the gifted coordinator. The students expressed a desire to have a setting where they might collaborate with other gifted students, explore special topics, engage in interdisciplinary themes, or work with the gifted coordinator on dealing with the social/emotional needs identified by the students. Reconfiguring the responsibilities of the gifted coordinator at the high school may be warranted to shift the responsibility for GIEPs from the counselors to a coordinator who would have the availability to coordinate gifted support with the Level 1 and AP curricula.

5. Although Chapter 16 addresses only academic supports for gifted students, the District is commended for offering AP courses in the fine arts. The students observed in these classes were highly talented and showed an interest in applying to highly competitive universities to pursue studies in the fine arts. The Gifted Program Evaluation Team is aware that attention to facilities and technology for these areas has received attention in the past and encourages continued support for these programs.
6. A recurring theme from parents, students and teachers was the need for extended time for students to work on labs, engage in extended study of concepts and engage in interdisciplinary studies. Students raised concerns that under traditional scheduling fewer opportunities for course selection were available. The team recognizes that the issues around scheduling are complex and reach beyond concerns raised by the gifted program evaluation. In light of these concerns, the District should consider creative scheduling solutions to provide extended blocks of time for gifted students to pursue in-depth study or extended lab investigations.
7. If the District decides to continue offering high school enrichment field trips as one component of the continuum of gifted programming, serious and immediate considerations should include:
 - Assuring that students are selected to participate in trips or events based on present and current GIEP present education level data.
 - Developing a menu of offerings that connect curriculum units of study, individual student projects, in-depth investigations to a specific set of high level skill development, i.e. research, use of primary sources, and real life problem solving
 - Requiring collaboration with the Level 1 teachers and AP teachers to select field trips with defined curricular connections, and structure pre and post-visit academically challenging activities.
 - Arranging visits to competitive universities designed to meet identified students' strengths and career interests to include sessions with specific department chairs or admission counselors.

3. In what way is programming for the gifted coordinated and integrated with the regular education program?

Communication between the regular education program and the gifted program is generally lacking K-12. Gifted resource teachers at all levels appear to operate autonomously. Some resource teachers are successful in meeting with regular education teachers to discuss student progress, but this is inconsistent. Regular education teachers are not clear about the gifted program, including its philosophy, vision, purpose, expectations, and goals. They also are not clear about what role they play in implementing a student's GIEP or how they fit into meeting Chapter 16 specially designed instruction requirements. The program is currently not articulated from K-12.

Due to scheduling constraints and multiple teaching assignments, gifted support teachers do not routinely meet with regular education teachers to serve as a resource, discuss individual GIEP goals and/or plan collaboratively to develop a rich and rigorous curriculum. The team did not find data that describes a system, formal or informal, which holds teachers accountable for delivering instruction and implementing effective strategies to meet gifted learner needs.

The gifted programs at the elementary and middle school levels are not integrated with the regular education curriculum. The Evaluation Team noted the use of units of study and special projects that were not closely tied to the grade level curriculum.

Recommendations:

1. During classroom observations, it was noted that some of the resource teachers had a library of materials and resource books that they could share with regular education teachers. These materials focused on problem-solving skills, contain ideas to further develop student critical and divergent thinking skills, and provide information on some best practices grounded in current research. While sharing these resources is a good beginning, further collaboration and integration between gifted resource teachers and regular education teachers should occur.
2. In an effort to increase communication, collaboration and planning between regular education teachers and teachers of the gifted, consideration should be given to scheduling time where gifted support teachers can attend and participate regularly in grade level team and department meetings. This time is essential to facilitate integration of the curriculum and will allow for opportunities to examine individual GIEP goals, student progress toward these goals, and student academic, social, and emotional development.

3. Communication among curriculum supervisors, building principals, and key teachers should be ongoing and collaborative in order to provide all staff members with additional strategies to meet the needs of the gifted through the differentiated instruction initiative and curriculum review process. Consideration should be given to creating a forum where curriculum dialogue and planning for gifted can take place.
4. The District Framework for Continuous Improvement Process is an excellent overall initiative, whose intent is to “organize a set of steps to ensure that standards, assessment, and K-12 coursework can be seamless and aligned.” The gifted support teachers of the gifted should play a key role in the curriculum review and redesign process in order to better understand how their enrichment or acceleration instruction aligns with standards and the extent to which they should provide for core curriculum extensions.
5. The District should consider a vehicle for informal and/or formal observations of teachers and follow-up meetings where open dialogue and constructive feedback can be exchanged as differentiated curriculum is developed and implemented to ensure that it is appropriately challenging for gifted students.
6. Review gifted program models at all levels to explore ways in which curriculum could be integrated with and serve as an extension of the regular education curriculum. Possible options for consideration include:
 - Special Topic Seminars
 - Implementing the Parallel Curriculum model in the middle and high schools
 - Co-teaching & push-in models
 - Scheduling content based courses for the gifted
 - Use of William and Mary College Center for Gifted Education science, social studies, and literary reflections standards and content-based units of study

4. To what extent is there coordination and communication within and about the gifted program?

What is striking about the Upper Moreland School District's Strategic Plan's goals is the first one that states, "Students at all levels will achieve academic excellence."

This certainly sets the tone for the excellent and substantive current and future curriculum and staff development initiatives. The Gifted Support Mission Statement also establishes the bar for high student expectations by noting that the District will "provide for the needs of mentally gifted students through a challenging curriculum." These are the underlying principles that should guide both the development of a framework for gifted programming design, and for assuring its alignment with the philosophy and vision of the District in general.

At present, the management of the special education components of the gifted program appears to be under the leadership of the Director of Special Education and Support Services. The current gifted program and programming for these students, in the larger context, lacks coordination and continuity across schools, grade levels, and subject areas. The lack of comprehensive vision, philosophy, and program may partially account for these deficits, since staff has no touchstone to reference when questions about program purpose or connections arise.

A mission statement for the Gifted Support Program has been developed. This initial document provides a purpose and priority objectives that reflect those of the Strategic Plan. As the District evaluates and develops curriculum, the mission statement and objectives of the gifted program should be referenced and addressed as natural extensions of each program.

Parents and teachers are largely unaware of the organization, program delivery, activities, and work completed in the gifted classes. Communication about the gifted programs formally occurs at one elementary school through the TEC advisory council. This team meets bimonthly with parents from each grade level. This forum provides direct communication to parents about mentoring and curriculum enhancement development thought a list-serve. This is an excellent vehicle for ongoing communication about the gifted program and should be considered for use by each school in the District.

There is little coordination between the two elementary TEC programs at this time. However, a new alignment of grades is being considered so that one elementary building will house grades K to 2 and the other building will house grades 3 to 5. Because of this reconfiguration, both schools are working together to make the transition run smoothly. Students are using technology to e-mail letters to each other, and special activities are being

planned to help blend both the student body and teaching staff together. This reconfiguration will be an opportunity to articulate gifted curriculum across the elementary grade levels and eventually across both middle and high school levels.

Regular education teachers and teams at the middle school note that they have little opportunity to communicate with the CTC teacher, and the outside evaluation team found little or no evidence of joint planning or collaboration over the past three or four years. The middle school CTC program offers a series of enrichment units, and the goals and objectives of these activities are not routinely known or shared with other teachers. When interviewed and questioned, both parents and teachers at the middle school level said they would welcome increased and regular communication/ information about student work and performance in CTC.

Recommendations:

1. The person or persons in the leadership role for programming for gifted should be knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction for the gifted, have interpersonal and leadership skills, be informed about special and regular education curriculum and instruction initiatives, and know how to hold both teachers and students accountable. This person(s) should be responsible for:
 - developing criteria for selecting and employing teachers of the gifted.
 - developing gifted support teacher job responsibilities. These descriptions should state the role expectations for gifted support teachers at each of the different grade or building levels. These expectations will not only assist when selecting and hiring teachers of the gifted, but will also be invaluable when letting regular education teachers know the role these support people play, vis-à-vis regular education differentiation for the gifted. In addition, once the role responsibilities of the gifted support teachers are defined, they, supervisors, and principals will have some standards for accountability.
 - overseeing an articulated K-12 gifted program with a clear mission statement, goals, and objectives. Gifted courses should continue to be developed under and related to the District Framework for Continuous Improvement.
 - working with regular and gifted education staff to assure best practices delivery of differentiated instruction through staff development. Activities such as flexible grouping, problem-based and problem centered learning, curriculum compacting, mentorships, tiered activities, and creative application of technology should be encouraged, as should curriculum unit design emphasize the “big ideas,” and the use of appropriate materials and resources.
 - assisting with organizing staff development opportunities for all staff involved in gifted education
 - monitoring procedures for screening, identification and GIEP development and implementation

- keeping abreast of legislative and Chapter 16 legal issues relevant to gifted education
 - increasing supervisory efforts, and assessing gifted program implementation at the classroom, school and district levels
 - maintaining communication about the gifted program with parents and staff on a regular basis through newsletters, web pages, parent meetings, board meetings, and timely program updates.
2. Building leaders should play a larger role in the GIEP development and at meetings with parents. It may be desirable to have the building principal serve as the LEA so that decisions regarding utilization of District and building resources may be addressed directly.
 3. Consideration should be given to offering parent workshops that are offered during National Education Week, Back to School Nights, student conference days, and/or correlated with other scheduled events. The District might want to think about the possibility of annual or bi-annual information and discussion forums for parents of non-identified and identified gifted students as another attempt to educate parents about the characteristics of giftedness, program options within the school settings, and how they can better play a role at home to address and support the needs of their gifted children. By offering such forums and workshops the District can further strengthen its partnership between home and school.
 4. Programming and challenge for the gifted assumes strong instructional leadership at both the District central office and building levels. Upper Moreland School District has in place a determined and informed cadre of curriculum and special education supervisors/directors and a supportive superintendent. They need to be an integral part of future gifted program change and implementation. In addition, the key to successful, day-to-day programming for the gifted child is highly dependent on the instructional leadership provided by building principals supported by his/her assistants. It is these leaders who sets the tone for classroom excellence by being knowledgeable about what characterizes exemplary learning for the gifted and who is able to assist all staff to put these practices and exemplars into team, classroom, or program practice. The gifted education literature and NAGC Standards note often that: *Effective gifted programs depend on the leadership of individuals with knowledge of the theory, research, and application in gifted education.*

The District must take steps to involve the principals more directly in key gifted program decisions and instructional leadership in this area. Provide principals and their assistants with staff development and in-service that allows them to learn about best practice instruction for the gifted and develop policies, procedures and resources that empower them to play a significant role in the everyday delivery of Chapter 16 required specially designed instruction.

5. To what extent are the practices for student screening, assessment, identification, and placement current and appropriate?

Gifted screening is ongoing in the elementary schools and initiated by parent or teacher referral. The elementary schools have developed a screening process that involves use of multiple criteria, including teacher and parent input, and a review and assessment of the student's academic performance. When teachers refer a student for gifted support services, they then complete a Child Study Request form. If parents wish to refer their child for testing, they are asked to submit their request in writing to the guidance counselor. The pre-screening process at the elementary level includes use of the K-Bit and/or Slosson. In addition to the teacher/parent requests for screening, results from standardized testing are reviewed. Students who have not been screened previously and who score at the 98th percentile or above on the Terra Nova can also be referred for further testing. Based on the results of these screenings the child may be referred for a full evaluation by the school psychologist. The evaluation process is consistent across all buildings. A multi-criteria matrix is used which includes the WISC-III Full Scale, Verbal, and Performance IQ scores; group and individually administered achievement test results; a parent checklist; and teacher(s) rating scale results.

The screening process at both elementary schools includes the classroom teacher's involvement in the initial stages of the screening process. At the middle and high school level, the school personnel receive very few if any referrals for gifted evaluation because the Chapter 16 child-find obligations are largely met at the elementary level.

Chapter 16 requires that the GIEP team include one or more of the student's current teachers. While most gifted support teachers do meet this requirement, it is also important that the regular classroom teachers play a significant role in the development of the GIEP goals, objectives and specially designed instruction. This is not a common practice across all grade levels and buildings. Clearly, if both the regular classroom and gifted support teachers participate in developing the GIEP goals and objectives, integration and implementation of these goals and objectives would be more apparent in the regular classroom period.

During the parent interviews, it was noted that there is a relatively low identification rate for African-American students. They are not identified at an appropriately proportionate rate to the African-American population in the District.

Recommendations:

1. It appears that considerable thought and effort have been given to developing an effective screening and identification process that includes use of multiple criteria and assessment tools. However, the screening process at the two elementary schools is inconsistent. One school uses the Slosson and the other administers the K-Bit. In order to maintain the integrity of the screening process, procedures must be developed that are consistent and used in the same manner at all school levels.
2. Develop a pamphlet or brochure that clearly describes the screening and identification process. Once such a document has been developed, it is important that it be distributed to regular education teachers, gifted support teachers, building administrators, guidance counselors, psychologists, and parents.
3. The District should follow the Chapter 16 guidelines that require a regular education teacher to be present during the GIEP meetings at all levels, or at least in attendance when significant components of the student's GIEP are to be implemented in regular classrooms.
4. The Gifted Program Review Team recommends that there be a monitoring of the proportion of African-American students identified as eligible for and in need of gifted support. Perhaps use of the Naglieri Nonverbal Test of Abilities would be appropriate for this purpose. These screening and assessment instruments are particularly important when there are cultural, language, social or emotional factors that may mask gifted abilities.

6. What staff development options are provided for all professional staff members to maintain a gifted program, which is appropriate to the needs of students and staff?

The Upper Moreland Township School District is commended for providing the professional staff with a comprehensive continuing professional education plan, and a variety of related activities. Professional development is provided based on a research-based model. A Teacher/Learning Center is available with up to date technology for presentations and easy participant interaction, and is a place conducive to staff development. The delivery system for professional development includes two major categories:

- “A list of professional events or experiences in which accountability for content and professional education hours are clearly delineated.” Options include collegiate studies, PDE approved continuing professional education courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, and course presentations.
- “Professional events that give professional staff additional options for accruing professional education hours in nontraditional formats.” Options include grant writing, formal and systematic evaluation of District school-wide programs, grant project management, peer coaching / mentoring, curriculum development, on-site and off-site classroom/program visitations, author/publish in professional publications, and committee work.

Professional staff development offerings have focused on topics such as Strategic Action Planning, No Child Left Behind requirement and implications, and updates of District curriculum initiatives. Flex presentations have included offerings such as author studies, literacy instructional practices, science technology, successful instructional strategies, and PSSA open-ended math questions.

The District has recently implemented structured Study Groups at each building level. For example, at the middle school, “Creating a Developmentally Responsive Middle School,” is the timely topic. All teachers are required to participate in this useful seminar and investigative approach and many are already noting that these seminars are useful and interesting.

A small core of elementary teachers and administrators had an opportunity to attend the Summer Institute at the University of Virginia to participate in workshops by Carol Tomlinson related to differentiating curriculum in the classroom. This information was then shared with all teachers in the elementary schools. In addition, elementary principals conduct Study Groups to give teachers a variety of instructional strategies during morning planning sessions. Teachers have the opportunity to learn about and incorporate instructional strategies within their classrooms that can meet diverse student learning styles and needs.

There is little or no record of workshops directed toward administrators or professional staff that specifically addresses some of the following gifted education concerns:

- Chapter 16 special education requirements for gifted
- Characteristics of the gifted learner
- Procedures for screening, identification, and placement of gifted
- Differentiating instruction for the gifted
- Strategies for partnering with resource teachers for program integration.
- Meeting the needs of gifted students in the regular educational classroom
- Using data to promote student achievement

Recommendations:

1. As a part of the new teacher induction plan, include presentations where all participants are presented with an overview of the procedures used to identify students as gifted and the services the District provides to them K-12.
2. Provide in-service to all staff members on Chapter 16 requirements for gifted education to include:
 - Chapter 16 overview and GIEP implementation requirements
 - Characteristics of the gifted learner
 - Procedures for screening, identification, and placement of gifted
 - Differentiated instruction for the gifted
 - Meeting the needs of gifted students in the regular educational classroom
 - Using data to promote student achievement
3. It is suggested that a small planning team come together made up of building administrators, curriculum supervisors, software specialist, teachers of the gifted, and regular classroom teachers to develop a short and long range staff development plan related to the needs of the gifted.
4. The differentiated instructional model is an excellent one for promoting academic success for both gifted and regular education students. To build on the differentiated instructional model that is in place in the elementary buildings, the District should consider adding the following components to staff development K-12 that focus on the unique needs of the gifted and address at a high intellectual level the chapter 16 requirements for specially designed instruction such as :
 - Emphasis on analytical and critical thinking
 - Integrated and interdisciplinary learning
 - Socratic questioning
 - Touchstone and/or Great Books seminars

- Understanding by Design
 - Use of performance and alternative assessments
 - Use of rubrics based on high standards and rigorous criteria
 - Inquiry-based models for creative and critical thinking
 - Flexible group and tiered assignments
 - Investigation of real problems in an authentic context
 - Use of units of study based on key concepts and essential questions
 - The study of philosophy and aesthetics
 - Recognizing the differences between the high achieving student and gifted learner
5. Gifted support teachers should provide increased support for regular classroom teachers and tie more of their instructional activities to standards-based curriculum and content. To act as a resource to many teachers and manage a variety of student needs assumes a role different from the present one—and assumes a commitment from the District for time, resources, and ongoing training to support these additional job responsibilities.
6. Provide teachers at the building level with specific resources that address how to differentiate for the gifted in a variety of disciplines such as mathematics, social studies, science, and language arts. In the past few years, many excellent and practical guidebooks have been published filled with field tested classroom approaches and authored by knowledgeable gifted education experts. These are resources that can be used for sharing of ideas at building staff meetings, for team planning, for GIEP implementation design, and simply as a handbook for teachers when working with individual or small groups of students. Some of these include:
- *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*, Susan Winebrenner
 - *Teaching Young Gifted in the Regular Classroom: Identifying, Nurturing, and Challenging Ages 4-9*, Joan Franklin Smutny.
 - *The Differentiated Classroom*, Carol Ann Tomlinson
 - *Parallel Curriculum: A Design to Develop High Potential and Challenge High-ability Learners*
 - *Teaching Gifted in the Regular Classroom*, NAGC
7. In the future, it would be useful for Study Groups to focus some of their time on understanding the gifted and reviewing research and literature that deal with how to challenge these students.
8. Continue to provide funding to select teachers to attend conferences outside of the District that might include:
- Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education (PAGE)
 - Understanding by Design
 - Bucks County Intermediate Unit Challenging the Gifted

Upon returning to the District, it would be reasonable to expect these teachers to provide professional development opportunities for other staff at the Teacher/Learning Center