ASSEMBLY, No. 1201

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

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SYNOPSIS

Establishes Division of Gifted and Talented Education in DOE; directs State Board of Education to authorize gifted education endorsement to instructional certificate; and establishes certain other requirements related to gifted and talented education.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/8/2021)

AN ACT concerning the education of gifted and talented students, amending P.L.2017, c.6, and supplementing Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. (New section) As used in sections 1 through 8 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill):

"Gifted and talented students" means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

"Instructional adaptation" means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling students who are gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, or demonstrate knowledge and application of, the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

2. (New section) a. There is established a Division of Gifted and Talented Education in the Department of Education. The division shall be staffed by at least one full-time individual who has a demonstrated knowledge base in the education of gifted and talented students and who is qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the division. Staff in the division, to the extent possible, shall possess, or be eligible for, the gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate established pursuant to section 7 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

b. The Division of Gifted and Talented Education shall ensure, in conjunction with each office of the executive county superintendent of schools and each County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education required pursuant to section 3 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), that each school district provides for its students who are gifted and talented a thorough and efficient education with appropriate modifications so that they can achieve in accordance with their capabilities. The division shall ensure that each school district:

(1) Identifies gifted and talented students and provides them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services, in accordance with the following:

(a) School districts shall make provisions for an ongoing identification process for gifted and talented students in grades kindergarten through 12 that includes multiple measures;

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined <u>thus</u> is new matter.

(b) School districts shall provide appropriate educational services in grades kindergarten through 12 for gifted and talented students;

(c) School districts shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment; and

(d) School districts shall take into consideration the Pre-K to Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students;

(2) Designs and delivers curriculum in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and designs and delivers appropriate instructional adaptations, integrated accommodations, and modifications for gifted and talented students; and

(3) Actively assists and supports professional development for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders, including their efforts to meet mandatory professional development requirements specified in State Board of Education regulations in the area of gifted and talented education.

3. (New section) The office of the executive county superintendent of schools shall include a County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education. The County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education shall have a demonstrated knowledge base in the education of gifted and talented students, and to the extent possible, shall possess, or be eligible for, the gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate established pursuant to section 7 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education shall ensure, through collaboration with each school district and each school district's Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education required pursuant to section 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), that each school district's gifted and talented program meets or exceeds the parameters set forth in subsection b. of section 2 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).

4. (New section) Each school district shall appoint a school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education. A school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education shall possess the gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate established pursuant to section 7 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). A school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education shall, in conjunction with each school principal, coordinate the school district's gifted and talented

program. The responsibilities of a school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. meeting on a regular basis with teachers of gifted and talented education within the school district to discuss ways in which the district's gifted and talented program can be improved in the areas of student identification and the development and delivery of curriculum and instructional adaptations for gifted and talented students;

b. meeting on a regular basis with general education teachers who have students identified as gifted and talented in their classrooms to discuss ways in which the development and delivery of curriculum and instructional adaptations for gifted and talented students can be improved for students in general education classrooms; and

c. coordinating professional development opportunities for teachers of gifted and talented education and general education teachers who have students identified as gifted and talented in their classrooms.

5. (New section) a. The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with recognized experts in gifted and talented education from a cross section of academia, gifted and talented student advocacy organizations, nonprofit organizations, professional associations, and government agencies, shall establish inservice workshops and training programs to train selected public school employees to act as County Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education and school district Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education in accordance with the provisions of sections 3 and 4 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill). The commissioner shall seek to make the workshops and training programs available and administered both in person and online through the department's website, inservice programming, or other existing online resources. The commissioner shall evaluate the effectiveness of the consulting group on an annual basis. The inservice training programs may utilize the offices of the executive county superintendents of schools, or such other institutions, agencies, or persons as the commissioner deems appropriate. Each board of education shall provide time for the inservice training during the usual school schedule in order to ensure that appropriate personnel are prepared to act in the district as school district Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education.

b. Upon completion of the initial inservice training program, the commissioner shall ensure that programs and workshops that reflect the most current information on gifted and talented education are prepared and made available to County Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education and school district Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education at regular intervals.

c. Nothing in this section shall preclude a school district from making the inservice workshops and training programs for County Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education and school district Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education available to other teachers of gifted and talented education or general education teachers who have students identified as gifted and talented in their classrooms.

6. (New section) In addition to any other requirements adopted by the State Board of Education for educator preparation programs, the State board shall require that the preparation program for an instructional certificate include a minimum of the equivalent of three semester credit hours of classroom instruction, clinical experience, including student internships, or a combination thereof, in the education of gifted and talented students. Coursework in this area shall include, but not be limited to: foundations of gifted and talented education; needs and characteristics of gifted and talented students; identification of gifted and talented students; curriculum development, modification, and differentiation of instruction for gifted and talented students; social and emotional development and needs of gifted and talented students; program options for gifted and talented students; and the education of twice-exceptional students who have been identified as eligible for special education and related services and have also been identified as gifted and talented.

7. (New section) a. The State Board of Education shall authorize a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate. The endorsement shall authorize the holder to teach gifted and talented education in all public schools.

b. State Board of Education regulations prescribing the requirements for eligibility for a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate shall, at a minimum, require that a candidate for the endorsement:

(1) completes a Department of Education-approved course of study, with 15 semester credit hours, from an accredited college or university, which meets the competencies for gifted and talented education set forth in subsection c. of this section; and

(2) passes the Educational Testing Service Praxis test in Gifted Education.

c. A candidate for the gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate, upon completion of the education requirements of paragraph (1) of subsection b. of this section, shall have obtained the following competencies and knowledge:

(1) understanding variations in learning and development in cognitive and affective areas between and among individuals who are gifted and talented, and applying this understanding to provide

meaningful and challenging learning experiences for students with exceptionalities;

(2) the ability to create safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive learning environments so that students who are gifted and talented become effective learners and develop social and emotional well-being;

(3) using knowledge of general and specialized curricula to advance learning for students who are gifted and talented, and creating and improving programs and services at the classroom and school level, including considering and planning for the needs of minority and low-income students in all programming and service decisions;

(4) using multiple methods of assessment and data sources in making educational decisions about the identification of students who are gifted and talented, including using valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias and ensure an equitable identification process;

(5) the ability to select, adapt, and use a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to advance the learning of students who are gifted and talented;

(6) using foundational knowledge of the field of gifted and talented education, professional ethical principles, and programming standards to inform gifted education practice; and

(7) collaborating with families, other educators, related service providers, gifted and talented individuals, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways to address the needs of students who are gifted and talented across a range of learning experiences.

d. A teacher who has four years of documented experience as a teacher of the gifted in any New Jersey school district shall be issued a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate upon application to the State Board of Examiners, and shall be exempt from the coursework and Praxis test requirements for the endorsement set forth in subsection b. of this section.

As used in this subsection, "teacher of the gifted" means any teacher or coordinator of gifted education with full-time, shared, or part-time responsibility for the education of students identified as gifted and talented. "Teacher of the gifted" shall not mean a general education teacher who has students identified as gifted and talented in the teacher's general education classroom.

e. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, no person shall be appointed by a board of education as a teacher or coordinator of gifted and talented education unless that person possesses a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate.

8. (New section) The State Board of Education shall, as part of the professional development requirement established by the State board for public school teaching staff members, require each public

school teaching staff member to complete at least two hours of instruction in the education of gifted and talented students in each professional development period. The instruction shall include, but not be limited to: foundations of gifted and talented education; needs and characteristics of gifted and talented students; identification of gifted and talented students; curriculum development, modification, and differentiation of instruction for gifted and talented students; social and emotional development and needs of gifted and talented students; program options for gifted and talented students; and the education of twice-exceptional students who have been identified as eligible for special education and related services and have also been identified as gifted and talented.

9. Section 1 of P.L.2017, c.6 (C.18A:26-2.23) is amended to read as follows:

1. In addition to any other requirements adopted by the State Board of Education for teacher preparation programs, the State board shall require that the preparation program for an instructional certificate include a minimum of the equivalent of 6 semester credit hours of classroom instruction, clinical experience, including student internships, or a combination thereof, in special education. <u>Up to 3 semester credit hours of this requirement may include classroom instruction, clinical experience, including student internships, or a combination thereof, in the education of twice-exceptional students who have been identified as eligible for special education and related services and have also been identified as gifted and talented.</u>

(cf: P.L.2017, c.6, s.1)

10. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the provisions of this act.

11. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes several requirements related to the education of gifted and talented students in the public schools. The bill establishes a Division of Gifted and Talented Education in the Department of Education, which would have the responsibility to ensure that each school district provides for its students who are gifted and talented a thorough and efficient education with appropriate modifications so that they can achieve in accordance with their capabilities. The division must ensure that every school

district: (1) identifies gifted and talented students and provides them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services; (2) designs and delivers curriculum in a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, and designs and delivers appropriate instructional adaptations, accommodations, and modifications for gifted and talented students; and (3) actively assists and supports professional development for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders in the area of gifted and talented education.

The bill requires each office of the executive county superintendent of schools to include a County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education, and requires each school district to appoint a school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education. A County Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education would be responsible to ensure that each school district's gifted and talented program meets or exceeds the parameters set forth in the bill. A school district Specialist of Gifted and Talented Education would be responsible for coordinating the district's gifted and talented program, including: (1) meeting regularly with teachers of gifted and talented education and with general education teachers who have students identified as gifted and talented in their classrooms to discuss ways in which gifted and talented education can be improved; and (2) coordinating professional development opportunities concerning gifted and talented education. Under the bill, the Commissioner of Education, in consultation with recognized experts in gifted and talented education and other specified entities, will establish inservice workshops and training programs to train selected public school employees to act as County Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education and as school district Specialists of Gifted and Talented Education.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to authorize a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate, which would authorize the holder to teach gifted and talented education in all public schools. The bill specifies that the eligibility requirements for a gifted education endorsement must, at a minimum, require that a candidate for the endorsement: (1) completes a Department of Education-approved course of study, with 15 semester credit hours, from an accredited college or university, which meets certain specified competencies for gifted and talented education; and (2) passes the Educational Testing Service Praxis test in Gifted Education. However, a teacher who has four years of documented experience as a teacher of the gifted in any New Jersey school district may be issued a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate upon application to the State Board of Examiners, without meeting the coursework and test requirements. Under the bill, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, a person may not be appointed by a board of education as a teacher or coordinator of gifted and talented education unless that

person possesses a gifted education endorsement to the instructional certificate.

In addition, the bill does the following:

- Requires that the preparation program for an instructional certificate includes a minimum of the equivalent of three semester credit hours of classroom instruction, clinical experience, including student internships, or a combination thereof, in the education of gifted and talented students;
- Amends current law to provide that, of the existing requirement that teacher preparation programs for an instructional certificate include at least six semester credit hours in special education, up to three semester credit hours of that requirement may include classroom instruction, clinical experience, including student internships, or a combination thereof, in the education of twice-exceptional students who have been identified as eligible for special education and related services and have also been identified as gifted and talented; and
- Directs the State Board of Education to require, as part of the professional development requirement for public school teaching staff members, that each teaching staff member completes at least two hours of instruction in the education of gifted and talented students in each professional development period.