

Q & As
COMAR 13A.12.03.12 Gifted and Talented Education Specialist¹

1. What is the COMAR regulation that establishes the Gifted and Talented Education Specialist certification?

- COMAR 13.A.12.03.12, adopted by the Maryland Professional Standards in Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) on February 5, 2009, establishes a Gifted and Talented Education Specialist certification.
- Maryland Specialist certification areas require a master's degree.
- The COMAR regulation and its requirements are attached below. They can also be found at <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/13a.13a.12.03.12.htm>.

2. What was the rationale for adding a certification area in Gifted and Talented Education?

The rationale for adding a certification area in gifted and talented education is based on three realities which have been supported repeatedly by both research and experience.

1. Gifted and talented students are a unique group with special educational needs.
2. There is a specialized body of knowledge that educators need in order to be able to meet the needs of these students.
3. Building the capacity of educators in gifted and talented education competencies has a positive effect on students and their achievement.

The regulation was designed "...to provide educators with recognition of and the opportunity to pursue specialized preparation that will enable them to provide more effective instruction for gifted and talented students, who present a unique set of educational needs."²

3. Who will be required to have the Gifted and Talented Education Specialist certification?

This certification would be *required* only for a position classified by a local school system's (LSS) Department of Human Resources as "Specialist in Gifted and Talented Education." However, school systems have the *option* of requiring this certification for other related positions.

¹ This paper was prepared by the Maryland Gifted and Talented Advisory Council Professional Development Subcommittee, April 2009.

² Memorandum re COMAR 13A.12 03.12 (NEW) Gifted and Talented Education Specialist from Maryland Assistant Superintendent of Schools John E. Smeallie to the Maryland Professional Standards in Teacher Education Board, February 5, 2009.

4. Who will benefit from adoption of the COMAR regulation – Gifted and Talented Education Specialist?

- Teachers and other educators: Educators will be encouraged to take post-baccalaureate coursework in gifted and talented education as part of a master's program and would be recognized for having done so. Individuals who have the Gifted and Talented Education Specialist certification can be a resource to other educators. The certification is transportable from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
- Educational administrators: Administrators will be better able to identify individuals who have expertise in gifted and talented education. Administrators retain flexibility in hiring, but now have the option to specify GT certification requirements for a given positions. For example, a position could be advertised as "Certification as Gifted and Talented Education Specialist, preferred." A person who has not yet completed the certification may be hired as "acting" in the position while working on this additional certification.
- Students: Most importantly, Maryland students will benefit from adoption of this regulation. Gifted and talented students will have greater access to educators trained to identify and provide the services they need in order to reach their full potential. Research has demonstrated that educators trained in gifted and talented education are better educators of all students.

5. How is adoption of the new COMAR GT Ed Specialist and its requirements being publicized to stakeholder groups across Maryland, including educators, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and the community?

Information about the new regulation for Gifted and Talented Education Specialist has been shared with the following groups:

- LSS gifted and talented (GT) coordinators at state meetings and via electronic mail;
- LSS Human Resource directors have been kept informed throughout the certification adoption process;
- Members of the Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE) via the MCGATE list serve;
- Deans and directors in Maryland IHEs have been informed through a memo;
- Educators and parents attending the February 11, 2009, Annapolis reception "Celebrating Gifted Education in Maryland" were also told about the new regulation.

6. How can an educator who believes she/he meets the requirements for the COMAR GT Ed Specialist apply for state certification?

Individuals must work through their local system office of certification, just as they would for any other certification request. MSDE is contacted only in the event that the individual is not currently employed in a school system.

7. How can teachers who already hold a master's degree and/or have completed graduate level coursework in GT education find out whether the coursework applies toward certification as a GT Specialist and if additional coursework and/or a practicum is needed to meet the requirements?

See Question 6.

8. How do Maryland institutions of higher education (IHE) get approval for “a master's program which leads to Gifted and Talented Certification” from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)?

The IHE should contact its MSDE program approval liaison.

9. How do out-of-state master's programs get approved to offer GT Specialist certification?

Out-of-state programs are approved in their respective states.

10. What are some current options in Maryland for enrollment in graduate level courses in gifted and talented student education?

Maryland IHEs may offer courses on their main campus and/or at regional centers across the state.

Some Maryland school systems have partnered with a university to form cohorts to offer graduate course work in gifted and talented education for educators in that district. These cohorts are generally taught in the school district. Maryland LSS-IHE cohorts in education of gifted and talented students include:

- Anne Arundel – Johns Hopkins University (completed)
- Baltimore County – Towson University (in progress)
- Carroll County - Johns Hopkins University (completed)
- Charles County – CaseNEX online graduate courses (ongoing)
- Howard County - Johns Hopkins University (completed)
- Montgomery - Towson University (in progress)
- Prince George's – Johns Hopkins University (in progress)

Questions? Contact

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13A.12.03.12

.12 Gifted and Talented Education Specialist.

To be certified as a Gifted and Talented Education Specialist, an applicant shall:

A. Earn a master's degree from one of the following:

(1) A Department-approved master's program that leads to certification in Gifted and Talented Education;

(2) An out-of-State approved master's program that leads to Gifted and Talented Certification; or

(3) An IHE and:

(a) Complete 15 semester hours of graduate course work in Gifted and Talented Education from an IHE, which includes a balance of content in the following competencies:

(i) Understanding the foundations of gifted education, including historical perspectives, key philosophies and theories, social, cultural, and economic influences, key issues, and trends;

(ii) Understanding the unique cognitive and affective characteristics of gifted and talented students, including the learning differences of gifted and talented students with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds;

(iii) Understanding processes and procedures for the identification of gifted and talented students, including the use of equitable approaches for identifying gifted and talented students from diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities;

(iv) Understanding evidence-based instructional strategies for differentiating instruction for gifted and talented students, including strategies that enhance acquisition of knowledge and skills in specific domains, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and metacognition;

(v) Understanding theories and models for developing and implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessments for gifted and talented students; and

(vi) Understanding how to create learning environments that foster the social and emotional well-being of gifted and talented students, including the development of self-awareness, coping skills, positive peer relationships, and leadership; and

(b) Complete at least 3 semester hours in a clinical/laboratory internship; and

B. Present verification of 27 months of satisfactory teaching experience or clinical experience.