

BEST PRACTICE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Coordinator's Guide



TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR THE
GIFTED & TALENTED

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GOAL OF TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

THE COORDINATOR'S GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GUIDE) facilitates the G/T Coordinator's selection, delivery, and long-term learning potential of professional development in face-to-face, online, or blended formats. The Guide is offered only as a resource and is not required for any purpose beyond that desired by local coordinator's and administrators.

The Guide offers current research on best practice for professional development in all delivery formats. The Guide aligns best practice with requirements set forth in Texas State Plan for the Education of the Gifted/Talented (Texas Education Agency, 2009). It includes TAGT Core Knowledge areas along with definitions and categories for *TAGT On Demand* courses to facilitate ease of finding professional development sessions relevant to local district needs.

Delivery methods and facilitation of sessions are offered as suggestions for professional development best practice. Local administrators and coordinators may use the information to meet local requirements.



TAGT CONFERENCES, MEETING, AND PUBLICATIONS

WHILE THE GUIDE focuses on best practice for face-to-face, online, or blended format professional development, it is important to recognize the variety of opportunities offered by TAGT through conferences and meetings.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The TAGT Annual Conference is three-day event held in late November/early December each year in Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Austin, or San Antonio. The conference is comprised of a wide-variety of presentations, events and exhibit hall activities. Professional Development hours meet requirements of the Texas State Plan for basic thirty hours and six-hour annual update professional development. In addition to sessions to meet novice and expert levels of knowledge, the conference provides a variety of hands-on opportunities with products and best practice, time for

interaction with fellow participants, and events. Attendees return to their district with a multitude of new ideas and professional contacts.

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The TAGT Leadership Conference is a 2-day annual event in early spring each year. Its aim is for administrators, coordinators and specialists to focus on best practices and promising programs. The conference is attended by approximately 250 leaders in gifted education.

GIFTED PLUS CONFERENCE

The TAGT Gifted Plus Conference: Serving the Underserved is geared towards the educators who work tirelessly to ensure equitable access for all gifted students. Sessions focus on gifted students who are also Twice Exceptional (learning disabilities), of Underserved Populations (low SES, minorities), English Language Learners (ELL), and homeless, military, girls, LGBTQ, etc.

TEMPO

TEMPO is the official peer-reviewed journal of the Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented (TAGT). Its mission is to promote awareness of issues in gifted education and to provide information on research and best practices in the field. TEMPO recognizes the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated or potential gifts and talents from all cultures, racial backgrounds and socioeconomic groups and endeavors to support these needs through a high-quality educational journal.

GLOBAL #GTCHAT POWERED BY TAGT

Global #gtchat Powered by TAGT is a weekly chat on Twitter that takes place on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. CT, 8 p.m. ET and 5 p.m. PT in the U.S. For one hour, parents, educators, advocates and experts in the field of gifted and talented gather to share resources, links, authentic life experiences and insights about gifted issues.

A wide-range of topics are discussed each week. Past topics have included: twice-exceptional gifted children, perfectionism, multicultural

gifted education, executive functioning, parenting gifted children, differentiation, acceleration, how to write an individual education plan and much more.

TAGT CONNECT

TAGT Connect is a virtual online community for TAGT members. The platform allows individuals to collaborate, share resources, ask questions and get answers from like-minded individuals around the state.



CRITICAL NATURE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE COORDINATOR'S GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GUIDE) facilitates the G/T Coordinator's selection, delivery, and long term learning potential of professional development in face-to-face, online, or blended formats.

Leaders of gifted education, and/or district personnel who have the responsibility for professional development will find current research in this guide to support professional development. The goal of all professional development rests in facilitating participants' classroom decision-making through research-based strategies that improve learning in students. Proposed selection criteria and in-depth insights connect to research findings included throughout the guide.

In addition to research and practice, the role of a coordinator in professional development encompasses ensuring quality of content, delivery, and follow-up for long-term learning. Discussion of systems of delivery broaden the view of ways to approach professional development. The

systems include face-to-face, online, and blended models of professional development with specific questions that guide the coordinator in all delivery methods. The guide extensively addresses online professional development as well.

The aim of professional development aligns with the Campus and District Improvement Plans (CIP, DIP). This guide intends to facilitate selection and evaluation of professional development sessions that will align with the goals of the campus/district.

In addition to CIP/DIP, the process of professional development includes best practice in the selection of sessions, facilitation prior to and during the course sessions, follow-up after completion of sessions, and long-term implications of participants' learning. The selection of professional development also aligns with the *Texas State Plan for the Education of the Gifted/Talented* (Texas Education Agency, 2009) and TAGT Core Knowledge areas for both thirty-hour and six-hour professional development recommendations.

This guide extends in-depth information for *TAGT On Demand*, online courses provided through TAGT and Responsive Learning, that includes means of selection of courses, TAGT Core Knowledge, definitions and categories of the courses, TAGT six-hour professional development recommendations, and facilitation of online, face-to-face, and blended sessions.

The Coordinator's Guide to Best Practice for Professional Development provides a broad view of professional development in order to add value to experiences for gifted students and their educators.



QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: RESEARCH

O**N-GOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** remains essential for growth of educators' skills that lead to enhanced student learning. While skills and concepts are a part of professional development, they are not its essence. The goal of professional development rests not only in skill or concept development but also in the influence on student academic growth. Abundant research supports effective professional development. The National Council for Staff Development and the Center for American Progress serve as two resources for further study of this topic.

A summary of research focuses on three primary findings:

- 1.** Knowledge and skills increase to change observable classroom practices (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Birdman, 2002).
- 2.** Professional development:
 - a. meshes with the work of teaching,

- b. aligns with school goals, state and district standards and assessment, and other professional development activities,
 - c. focuses on core content and modeling of teaching strategies for the content,
 - d. includes opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies,
 - e. provides the chance for teachers to collaborate,
 - f. includes follow-up and continuous feedback, and
 - g. is intended to improve student learning (DeMonte, 2013, p. 1).
- 3.** Focus on content knowledge, active learning, and consistency with other learning activities (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Birdman, 2002).

These sources provide references for the accommodation of professional development to student learning. Their research summaries relate improvement of student learning to enhanced classroom practices learned in professional development sessions. They feature other essentials, such as inclusion of local and state goals, modeling of new techniques, and collaboration and reflection.

Related studies add depth to these three primary findings. One study highlights two important considerations for professional development:

- 1.** It takes a minimum of two years to change teacher practice to impact student performance positively, suggesting a need for multiple years of sustained professional development.
- 2.** Embedding content pedagogy in the materials to be taught reduces the chance teachers will make inaccurate inferences about how to implement the strategy effectively. Training on these materials ensures a higher degree of transfer to classroom practice (VanTassel-Baska, 2017).

In Educational Leadership, Guskey (2002) finds five levels of evaluation for professional development. His research facilitates selection of meaningful professional development. These levels include

- participants' reactions,
- participants' learning,
- organization support and change,

- participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and
- student learning outcomes (p. 4).

In *Using the National Gifted Education Standards in Planning Professional development: Ensuring Quality Services for Gifted and Talented Students*, (Johnsen & Clarenbach, 2017), Troxclair, Shaunessy-Dedrick, and Murskey express that professional development, “is sustained, facilitates transfer of learning to practice, and provides educators opportunities to collaborate and reflect” (p. 138).

The critical nature of professional development focuses on student learning that is accomplished through a match of participants' content area and grade level, alignment of the session(s) with local and state goals, requirement that learning be active, opportunity for feedback and follow-up with support, addition of new strategies to participants' repertoire, and specific plans for reflection, practice, and evaluation.

Additional research embedded throughout this Guide supports approaches to professional development for gifted students' academic growth.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

The Principles of Adult Learning (Lieb, 1991) is provided in the Addendum to this Guide. Suggestions offered by the article should be given careful consideration for work with adult learners. While it is important to model strategies and activities with participants, it is imperative that they be treated as adults rather than school-age students. This article will assist when developing an in-house or blended professional development session. Suggestions for the instructor of adult learners are equally applicable to adults completing online sessions or courses.

ADULT LEARNERS' TRAITS

Christopher Pappas is the creator of the electronic community, elearning.com, designed to share articles related to on-line learning. While this website aims primarily at adult learning for corporate and industrial professional development, its principles of adult learning apply in any learning situation. In this article Pappas (2013) presents eight ways adults learn with a focus to on-line professional development.

1. Self-direction

2. Practical and results-oriented
3. Less open-minded/Resistant to change
4. Slower learning, yet more integrative knowledge
5. Use personal experience as a resource
6. Motivation
7. Multi-level responsibilities
8. High expectations

He offers definitions of each of the traits in the on-line article, “8 Important Characteristics of Adult Learners” (<https://elearningindustry.com/members/christopher-pappas/page/93>).

Draves in *How to Teach Adults* (2007) provides chapters on adult learning that include how to develop courses for adult learning and ways to improve teaching adults. He concludes the book with his formula “DIVE: **D**iscover your participants, **I**nvolve your participants, **V**ary your teaching techniques, **E**nergize your learning environment” (p.129). He adds that it is important to set a positive climate by getting to know the participants and having them get to know each other. His advice continues with relating learning to their experiences and using a variety of teaching methods to convey your message. As in any learning situation he includes evaluation of feedback that contributes to improvement for next teaching and learning steps.



QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ROLE OF THE COORDINATOR

THE COORDINATOR ensures access to appropriate professional development with the goal of student academic growth occurring because of quality of content, quality of delivery, quality of results, and collaboration and reflection.

Questions that guide selection and evaluation of professional development:

- What outcome do I want from the session(s)?
- What resources are available?
- Do I have the support I need to secure the success I anticipate?
- How can I evaluate the outcomes in terms of student academic growth?

These questions not only guide selection and delivery but also focus on continual professional development sessions and evaluation of professional development efforts.

QUALITY OF CONTENT

In what ways will coordinators ensure quality of content in professional development? The inclusion of the criteria offered above may not meet all criteria for quality. What additional objectives must be in place for quality outcomes? Other criteria include needs assessment, pre-assessment, local requirements, and state laws and regulations.

Assessment of Professional Development Needs

Needs assessment and pre-assessment of participants' understanding of a topic or concept remain essential to determining which professional development will influence student academic growth. VanTassel-Baska (2002) lists needs assessment as the first step in the professional development cycle. Johnsen and Clarenbach (2017) expand on VanTassel-Baska's insights about consequential needs assessments, saying the following:

Administration and analysis of a needs assessment: This should be conducted in relationship to overall goals for student learning in the district and in relationship to the specific goals for gifted students (p. 130).

To establish a topic for professional development, pre-assessment of participants' level of knowledge on the topic occurs. Once level of expertise is determined, content is selected to best meet personnel needs. For example, if a teacher or cadre of teachers have learned the basics of differentiation through Kaplan's Depth and Complexity, pre-assessment would involve the teachers providing evidence of its use in their classroom and its effect on student academic growth.

Local Requirements and State Laws

Another component of quality content relates to the inclusion of local requirements and state laws. Quality content meets the requirements set forth in the *Texas State Plan for the Education of the Gifted/Talented* (Texas Education Agency, 2009). Texas Education Service Centers offer insight into the requirements and provide professional development for the initial thirty-hours that meets state standards. Third party professionals and in-house coordinators also develop the thirty hours as defined in the State Plan.

In concert with state laws, professional development must meet local requirements and expectations. After the preliminary thirty-hour professional development, districts provide six-hour sessions that address depth, complexity, and pacing as a stand-alone or infused with local requirements. Six-hour professional development fills gaps in content differentiation and infuses new research that impacts student learning. When content area-specific sessions are required, differentiation skills and strategies connect with the content. Sessions that include content for twice exceptional reinforce pedagogy for all classroom and special education teachers.

QUALITY OF DELIVERY

The next area for consideration by educators relates to quality delivery of Professional Development. All PD is intentional with a goal of student growth. “One-Day Wonders” that check the box of six-hour Professional Development or a portion of the initial thirty-hour sessions may not ensure quality or influence student academic growth. After educators complete a needs assessment and pre-assessment of participants’ level of knowledge about a selected topic, the next step involves the selection of the best delivery system for the participants’ needs.

A multi-year, tiered system to meet needs and ensure continuing practice offers positive outcomes. As skills are developed, new skills are added according to level of need of each participant. A Professional Development system provides the educator with proven means of delivering PD toward improved student academic growth. Skills, practice, and successful sessions meet needs of participants and students alike (Johnsen & Clarenbach, Eds., 2017).

Johnsen & Clarenbach (2017) recommend “reading groups, observation of other teachers, teacher-led seminars, lesson study, collaborative curriculum planning, action research projects, and inviting external providers to deliver seminar, symposium, or workshops” (pp. 89-90) as important components of a system.

Once the Professional Development system is created, consideration is given to varied delivery types based on pre-assessed needs for development. Delivery selection is influenced by the elements of support of the campus/district administration, content knowledge of the educator, time for content and presentation development, participant’s level of knowledge and time to learn new skills, reflection on learning, participant learning styles and preferences, and technology integration goals.

QUALITY OF RESULTS

A third aspect for coordinators to consider relates to a follow-up phase to professional development session(s). Professional development is not a “One-Time Wonder.” In addition to on-going professional development, districts offer time for collaboration, reflection, and support as participants practice new strategies. Coaches or mentors remain essential in this phase. The educator provides feedback, time for reflection, and time for conversations to teachers with their grade level or content peers. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) offer the means to accomplish the quality of time spent before, during, and/or with professional development sessions.

For example, if a participant requires a review of depth and complexity, a follow-up professional development session provides a specific plan for reflection, administrative support in implementation, and peer collaboration. If the teacher is well-grounded in depth and complexity, an individualized session with time for reflection and development of new activities to facilitate student academic growth replaces the formal session.

COLLABORATION AND REFLECTION

Collaboration and reflection support successful professional development. Using the National Gifted Education Standards in Planning Professional Development: Ensuring Quality Services for Gifted and Talented Students (Johnsen & Clarenbach, Eds., 2017) offers an in-depth discussion of collaboration and reflection.

Collaboration and reflection are mirrored in practice. Both include formal or informal peer coaching and lesson study. Camburn and Han (2015) found that collaboration should lead to reflective practice and collaborative systems of support that facilitate reflection. The last section of this Guide, “Long Term Implications,” offers additional information about collaboration and reflection and includes a checklist.

Reflection on learning, collaboration with peers, and practice with new skills serve as an integral part of professional development. The time spent in learning begins the process. With collaboration and reflection, positive change occurs so that student academic achievement is enhanced and achieved.

Summary

Keeping all these strategies for effective professional development in mind, the role of the coordinator in any professional development opportunity, face-to-face, online, or blended, evidences itself as initiator, planner, presenter, facilitator, coach, and/or guide.

Leaders of gifted education who have the responsibility for Professional Development start with current research and pre-assessment of participants to support their choice of a PD system. Effective collaboration and reflection create change in participants and students which allows insight into continuous development of participants' Professional Development. The goal of all Professional Development rests in facilitating participants' classroom decision-making through research-based strategies to expedite growth in students. Whether face-to-face, online, or blended systems are adopted, decisions of the educator result in success of this goal.



QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CREATING THE SYSTEM

COORDINATORS INTENTIONALLY PLAN A HOLISTIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM. Professional development systems require prior thought and planning to achieve stated goals and proven means of delivering PD that creates a path to improved student growth. The systems encourage not only skills and practice of skills but also specific practices that encourage successful sessions that meet needs of participants and students alike.

A multi-year, tiered approach system that focuses on professional development to meet needs and ensure practice offers positive outcomes. As skills are developed, new skills are added according to level of need of each participant. The professional development system provides the coordinator with proven means of delivering professional development that creates a path to improved student academic growth. Skills, practice, and successful sessions are required to meet needs of participants and students alike (Johnsen & Clarenbach, Eds., 2017).

HOLISTIC SYSTEM MODELS

The Professional Development Model (Bland et al., 2010) emphasizes professional development that includes “a guided review of units, practice with the teaching strategies, planning time embedded within training, modeling strategies with students, observing teachers, implementing strategies and coaching, teacher and administrator reflections, and advanced training for teachers who have implemented the model” (p. 52). In addition to completion of the modules, teachers were observed implementing the curriculum units in their classrooms.

Johnsen & Clarenbach (2017) recommend “reading groups, observation of other teachers, teacher-led seminars, lesson study, collaborative curriculum planning, action research projects, and inviting external providers to deliver seminar, symposium, or workshops” (pp. 89-90) as important components of the system.

TYPES OF DELIVERY

Calvert (2011) relates that delivery methods vary, such as, “meeting... face-to-face, virtually or through a combination” (p. 26). Their suggested practices include:

- being sustained over time with peer groups meeting during the workday,
- structuring each meeting,
- engaging in inquiry,
- action research,
- data analysis,
- planning, implementation, reflection, and evaluation for continuous improvement
- providing opportunities for educators to exchange feedback about instructional practice,
- visit each other’s educational settings,
- share resources, and
- developing collective responsibility with peer accountability (p. 26).

These practices apply any delivery method. Delivery methods are determined by local needs and a recognition Calvert's suggested practices.

Face-to-Face Delivery

Face-to-face opportunities occur in-house or off-site. The coordinator, or a third-party consultant provides the training at the campus or other educational facility. Additionally, face-to-face professional development is offered offsite at a conference, an Education Service Center, or another campus/district.

In-house Providers

Coordinators often choose to address participants' needs by personally delivering the professional development session(s). In-house providers of professional development find favor because the coordinator accurately knows the level of expertise of the participants, understands the local expectations and needs of the students for academic growth, and provides follow-up and mentoring. The coordinator also provides guided peer coaching and lesson development more easily.

Third Party Providers

Education Service Centers (ESCs) and professional consultants offer services that include providing in-house professional development or access to professional development through a cooperative arrangement or on a pay-per-session basis. Professional consultants' fees vary according to location and expertise.

Offsite Delivery

Offsite professional development opportunities are available through Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented, Education Service Centers, professional consultants, conferences, and observations in recognized schools. The Coordinator must possess the expertise to determine if the offsite professional development is appropriate for the participants and that their new skills and concepts will lead to student academic growth.

Online Professional Development

Online professional development is accessed through a variety of sources. As with face-to-face, coordinators use all criteria for productive professional development that leads to student academic growth.

Blended Delivery: In-house and offsite, online, third party

Blended Professional development refers to a combination of in-house, off-site, or third party and online professional development. Refer to the section “Coordinating/Facilitating Online, Blended, and Face-to-Face Sessions” to see research-based recommendations for best student growth results.

SELECTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Once the professional development system is created, consideration of varied delivery types ensures pre-assessed needs for development are met. Method/session selection is influenced by support of the campus/district administration, content knowledge of the coordinator, time for content and presentation development, participant’s level of knowledge and time to learn new skills and reflect on their learning, participant learning styles and preferences, and technology integration goals.

Assessing Face-to-Face, In-house Providers

- Level of Knowledge of the Topic – Does the coordinator possess the depth of knowledge to deliver the six- and/or thirty-hour professional development to offer participants the most current research and practice? Does the coordinator possess the breadth of knowledge to answer local and law-related questions that arise?
- Time for Development of the Topic – Does the coordinator have adequate time to develop six- or thirty-hour professional development? For every hour of presentation, the coordinator must schedule at least one hour of preparation time. With established and required duties as coordinator, can he/she allow sufficient preparation time for the level of knowledge required to provide quality professional development specific to the local audience?
- Schedule for Delivery of the Session(s) – Is time available for participants to fully focus on the topic? Is time built into the schedule for reflection, practice, peer discussions, and follow-up to questions or concerns?
- Expertise of Participants – Is the coordinator able to develop a needs assessment? Is the educator able to follow with assessment of the level of knowledge of the participants to develop appropriate sessions? Is the level of expertise of the coordinator sufficient

to influence the participants' follow-up work for student academic growth?

- Support – Does the coordinator have the support of the administration? Will the administration support the time spent in development of sessions, provide adequate time and space for the session(s), and support the follow-up/mentoring time that researchers advocate? If the coordinator includes topics not supported by the administration, will the time spent be of value to participants?

Assessing Third-Party Providers

If the coordinator determines that he/she does not have adequate expertise or time to develop, present, and/or provide follow-up or mentoring, he/she considers a third-party provider for in-house or off-site professional development session(s).

When considering this option, the coordinator applies criteria as suggested for in-house sessions, particularly with the level of knowledge of the topic. For example, does the ESC contact/professional consultant have the depth of knowledge to work with participants? Does he/she possess the breadth of knowledge to answer local and law-related questions that arise? These questions apply to any third party professional development sessions provided in-house.

Another consideration for third party providers' professional development refers to the criteria of expertise for participants and support. Example questions: "Will the third party facilitate follow-up or mentoring efforts? Will the administration support a third party in this role?"

See Appendix "Evaluating Third Party Professional Development Options Check List."

Assess Online Options

There is a growing perception of the value of online delivery of professional development (Housand & Housand, 2012; Noonan, Erickson, Brussow, and Langham, 2015; and Shu & Shu, 2004). Online professional development addresses the problem of increased demands on decreasing time available for teacher development (Chen, Chen, & Tsai, 2009; Dede, 2006). In addition, online delivery expands the professional communities of participants, thus reducing their isolation and increasing potential for innovation (Johnson, 2011). Online programs fulfill multiple purposes, such as community building and sustainability, application of learning, and reflection of outcomes.

Effective Applications for Online Professional Development

In recent years, online professional development has successfully met specific needs in a range of contexts, such as, mentoring novice teachers (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007), online courses and workshops for discrete knowledge and skill acquisition (Guldberg & Pilkington, 2006), online professional development community (Sessums, 2009), and inquiry into effective teaching practice (Dana & Silva, 2010). Among the most promising and relevant forms of online professional development are Connected Learning Communities, which include professional learning communities (PLCs), personal learning networks (PLNs), or communities of practice (CoPs).

An in-depth discussion of online sessions is found in the section, “TAGT On Demand.”

The Appendix “Checklist for Selection of TAGT On Demand Courses” applies to all online professional development decisions.

Considering Blended Options

Online courses also are used with face-to-face or blended professional development opportunities. The benefits of this method:

- Provides reading, activities, and/or questions to think about prior to the session(s)
- Provides an agenda before or at beginning of the session or course
- Includes expert facilitation and directive prompts
- Facilitates addressing of misconceptions
- Guides collaborative learning for those without background knowledge
- Follows-up with opportunities for face-to-face activities
- Presents job-embedded and authentic situations
- Includes subject area content and pedagogy as well as student learning outcomes
- Recommends opportunities for peer feedback

FACILITATING ONLINE, FACE-TO-FACE, AND BLENDED SESSIONS

The following section suggests ways to facilitate delivery prior to sessions, during sessions, following sessions, and for long-term learning

implications for positive outcomes. See Appendix “Facilitating Checklists” for checklist format. Statements reflect best practices for effective professional development.

Prior to Sessions

- Supported by administration – Does the content meet outcome expectations as defined by the district? Is the professional development purposeful? Do course choices accommodate Campus and District Improvement Plan goals.
- Opportunities for intrinsic motivation – Acknowledges beliefs and practices and connects with participants’ daily work. Sessions address needs defined by participants through current campus/district Needs Assessment.
- Learning styles and preferences accommodated – Coordinators understand the learning styles and learning preferences of participants through pre-session surveys.
- Strong coherence of professional development initiatives with participants’ work assignments and with content standards – Sessions match participants’ work assignments and local and state content requirements.
- Reading, activities, and/or questions are provided to think about prior to the beginning of the course – Focus for sessions is presented through relevant reading, activities, and/or provocative questions that facilitate intrinsic motivation.
- An agenda is listed before or at beginning of professional development – Coordinator shares a preview of the course to create interest.

During Sessions

- Facilitates addressing of misconceptions – Coordinators monitor participants’ answers to ensure misconceptions are corrected as observed.
- Reflects on and engages in discussion around the connections to participants’ environments, concerns, and questions – Coordinator creates face-to-face or blended courses or sessions to facilitate participants’ understanding.
- Provides context across wide range of topics, issues, and/or learning goals – Coordinators illustrate how the course is connected to local and personal topics, issues, and learning outcomes for students.

- Supports technology integration goals in conjunction with course content – Coordinators include skills with course work to enhance participants’ proficiency with the tools of technology.
- Engages through active, ongoing content with open-ended learning – Coordinators ensure that activities are appropriate examples for use with a variety of content for gifted learners.
- Includes expert facilitation and directive prompts – Coordinators use expertise to facilitate course content through prompts that focus and direct participants’ new learning.
- Guides collaborative learning for those without background knowledge – Coordinators include time for participants to mentor and collaborate with grade/content-mates.
- Presents job-embedded and authentic situations – Coordinators match courses that are job-alike and reflect the population and culture of the campus/district.
- Includes subject area content and pedagogy as well as student learning outcomes – Coordinators ensure that courses reflect participants’ current teaching/work assignments and provide authentic situations that reflect participants’ current status.

Follow-up and Long-Term Implications

Post Assessment for professional development along with administrative and peer support remain vital for follow-up to courses or sessions and long-term learning. Suggestions below facilitate each one.

- Opportunities for collaboration – Coordinators ensure that participants are provided time to collaborate with other course-takers.
- Opportunities for follow-up – Coordinators offer follow-up conversations that allow for course reflection.
- Opportunity for learning results in products useful for classroom implementation – Coordinators observe in participants’ classrooms to see concrete examples of implementation.
- Opportunity for Follow-up with face-to-face activities – Coordinators offer extended learning through activities that build on course content.
- Opportunities are recommended for peer feedback – Coordinators evaluate course content through feedback from peers for the purpose of continued or discontinued use of course.



TAGT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

THE TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, Chapter 89.2, Gifted/Talented Education, Professional development, states that school districts shall ensure that: *Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education.*

The Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) recommendations for the required six-hour professional development are based on the assumption that the minimum 30 hours have been completed. The six-hour professional development provides in-depth study after completion of the 30 hours and address topics based on local and state requirements and the TAGT core areas.

Does your G/T professional development meet these criteria?

- Relate to at least one of the TEA/TAGT core areas and teacher competencies
- Show clearly in the description that the professional development activity relates primarily to gifted students and to one of the TEA/TAGT core areas
- Reflect the clock hours for each competency in the agenda, syllabus, or program
- Exhibit in the presenters' or facilitators' resume experience, university hours, and/or professional development in G/T education
- Provide proof that the content relates to current issues in gifted education
- Provide proof that the content is supported by research in gifted education

See Appendix "State and TAGT Core Knowledge Areas' Categories and Definitions"

Six-Hour Professional Development Topics Related to TAGT's Core Areas and Teacher Competencies can be found at <http://tagtondemand.com/> or <http://www.txgifted.org/professional-development>.



TAGT ON DEMAND

SELECTION OF ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

S **ELECTION OF COURSES** for the required basic 30 hours of G/T professional development and those for the six-hour professional development occur at the discretion of the local school district. In determining courses for the campus/district, the coordinator selecting *TAGT On Demand* courses asks the following questions to guide selection:

- In what ways does the course align with professional development requirements of the *Texas State Plan for the Education of the Gifted/Talented* (TEA, 2009) and *TAGT Core Knowledge Areas*?
- In what ways does the course align with local goals, Campus and District Improvement Plans (CIP/DIP)?
- How does online learning help the organization and participants meet their learning goals and requirements?
- What tools are utilized?
- How do these tools support collaboration among participants?

- How do these tools help participants take ownership of their selected professional development?
- How well do the courses translate into practice in the classroom, campus, and district?

See Appendix “Checklist for Selection of *TAGT On Demand Courses*”.



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PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

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Adults As Learners

Part of being an effective instructor involves understanding how adults learn best. Compared to children and teens, adults have special needs and requirements as learners. Despite the apparent truth, adult learning is a relatively new area of study. The field of adult learning was pioneered by Malcolm Knowles. He identified the following characteristics of adult learners:

- Adults are *autonomous* and *self-directed*. They need to be free to direct themselves. Their teachers must actively involve adult participants in the learning process and serve as facilitators for them. Specifically, they must get participants' perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests. They should allow the participants to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership. They have to be sure to act as facilitators, guiding participants to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts. Finally, they must show participants how the class will help them reach their goals (e.g., via a personal goals sheet).
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of *life experiences* and *knowledge* that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education. They need to connect learning to this knowledge/experience base. To help them do so, they should draw out participants' experience and knowledge which is relevant to the topic. They must relate theories and concepts to the participants and recognize the value of experience in learning.
- Adults are *goal-oriented*. Upon enrolling in a course, they usually know what goal they want to attain. They, therefore, appreciate an educational program that is organized and has clearly defined elements. Instructors must show participants how this class will help them attain their goals. This classification of goals and course objectives must be done early in the course.
- Adults are *relevancy-oriented*. They must see a reason for learning something. Learning has to be applicable to their work or other

responsibilities to be of value to them. Therefore, instructors must identify objectives for adult participants before the course begins. This means, also, that theories and concepts must be related to a setting familiar to participants. This need can be fulfilled by letting participants choose projects that reflect their own interests.

- Adults are *practical*, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work. They may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake. Instructors must tell participants explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them on the job.
- As do all learners, adults need to be shown *respect*. Instructors must acknowledge the wealth of experiences that adult participants bring to the classroom. These adults should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge and allowed to voice their opinions freely in class.

Motivating the Adult Learner

Another aspect of adult learning is motivation. At least six factors serve as sources of motivation for adult learning:

- **Social relationships:** to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships.
- **External expectations:** to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority.
- **Social welfare:** to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.
- **Personal advancement:** to achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors.
- **Escape/Stimulation:** to relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life.
- **Cognitive interest:** to learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind.

Barriers and Motivation

Unlike children and teenagers, adults have many responsibilities that they must balance against the demands of learning. Because of these responsibilities, adults have *barriers against participating in learning*. Some of these barriers include lack of time, money, confidence, or interest, lack of information about opportunities to learn, scheduling problems, “red tape,” and problems with child care and transportation.

Motivation factors can also be a barrier. What motivates adult learners? Typical motivations include a requirement for competence or licensing, an expected (or realized) promotion, job enrichment, a need to maintain old skills or learn new ones, a need to adapt to job changes, or the need to learn in order to comply with company directives.

The best way to motivate adult learners is simply to *enhance* their reasons for enrolling and *decrease* the barriers. Instructors must learn why their students are enrolled (the motivators); they have to discover what is keeping them from learning. Then the instructors must plan their motivating strategies. A successful strategy includes showing adult learners the relationship between training and an expected promotion.

Learning Tips for Effective Instructors

Educators must remember that learning occurs within each individual as a continual process throughout life. People learn at different speeds, so it is natural for them to be anxious or nervous when faced with a learning situation. Positive reinforcement by the instructor can enhance learning, as can proper timing of the instruction.

Learning results from stimulation of the senses. In some people, one sense is used more than others to learn or recall information. Instructors should present materials that stimulates as many senses as possible in order to increase their chances of teaching success.

There are four critical elements of learning that must be addressed to ensure that participants learn. These elements are

1. **motivation**
2. **reinforcement**
3. **retention**
4. **transference**

Motivation

If the participant does not recognize the need for the information (or has been offended or intimidated), all of the instructor's effort to assist the participant to learn will be in vain. The instructor must establish rapport with participants and prepare them for learning; this provides motivation. Instructors can motivate students via several means:

- **Set a feeling or tone for the lesson.** Instructors should try to establish a friendly, open atmosphere that shows the participants they will help them learn.
- **Set an appropriate level of concern.** The level of tension must be adjusted to meet the level of importance of the objective. If the material has a high level of importance, a higher level of tension/stress should be established in the class. However, people learn best under low to moderate stress; if the stress is too high, it becomes a barrier to learning.
- **Set an appropriate level of difficulty.** The degree of difficulty should be set high enough to challenge participants but not so high that they become frustrated by information overload. The instruction should predict and reward participation, culminating in success.

In addition, participants need specific knowledge of their learning results (*feedback*). Feedback must be specific, not general. Participants must also see a *reward* for learning. The reward does not necessarily have to be monetary; it can be simply a demonstration of benefits to be realized from learning the material. Finally, the participant must be **interested** in the subject. Interest is directly related to reward. Adults must see the benefit of learning in order to motivate themselves to learn the subject.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a very necessary part of the teaching/learning process; through it, instructors encourage correct modes of behavior and performance.

- *Positive reinforcement* is normally used by instructors who are teaching participants new skills. As the name implies, positive reinforcement is “good” and reinforces “good” (or positive) behavior.
- *Negative reinforcement* is normally used by instructors teaching a new skill or new information. It is useful in trying to change modes of behavior. The result of negative reinforcement is *extinction* – that is,

the instructor uses negative reinforcement until the “bad” behavior disappears, or it becomes extinct. (To read more about negative reinforcement, you can check out [Maricopa Center for Learning & Instruction Negative Reinforcement University](#).)

When instructors are trying to change behaviors (old practices), they should apply both positive and negative reinforcement.

Reinforcement should be part of the teaching-learning process to ensure correct behavior. Instructors need to use it on a frequent and regular basis early in the process to help the students retain what they have learned. Then, they should use reinforcement only to maintain consistent, positive behavior.

Retention

Students must retain information from classes in order to benefit from the learning. The instructors’ jobs are not finished until they have assisted the learner in retaining the information. In order for participants to retain the information taught, they must see a meaning or purpose for that information. They must also understand and be able to interpret and apply the information. This understanding includes their ability to assign the correct degree of importance to the material.

The amount of retention will be directly affected by the degree of original learning. Simply stated, if the participants did not learn the material well initially, they will not retain it well either.

Retention by the participants is directly affected by their amount of practice during the learning. Instructors should emphasize retention and application. After the students demonstrate correct (desired) performance, they should be urged to practice to maintain the desired performance. Distributed practice is similar in effect to intermittent reinforcement.

Transference

Transfer of learning is the result of training – it is the ability to use the information taught in the course but in a new setting. As with reinforcement, there are two types of transfer: *positive* and *negative*.

- Positive transference, like positive reinforcement, occurs when the participants use the behavior taught in the course.

- Negative transference, again like negative reinforcement, occurs when the participants do not do what they are told not to do. This results in a positive (desired) outcome.

Transference is most likely to occur in the following situations:

- *Association* – participants can associate the new information with something that they already know.
- *Similarity* – the information is similar to material that participants already know; that is, it revisits a logical framework or pattern.
- *Degree of original learning* – participant's degree of original learning was high.
- *Critical attribute element* – the information learned contains elements that are extremely beneficial (critical) on the job.

Although adult learning is relatively new as field of study, it is just as substantial as traditional education and carries and potential for greater success. Of course, the heightened success requires a greater responsibility on the part of the teacher. Additionally, the learners come to the course with precisely defined expectations. Unfortunately, there are barriers to their learning. The best motivators for adult learners are interest and selfish benefit. If they can be shown that the course benefits them pragmatically, they will perform better, and the benefits will be longer lasting.

Website: <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu//intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm>

EVALUATING THIRD PARTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS CHECK LIST

	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Are topics/examples offered that are a part of the local needs assessment?			
Are topics/examples appropriate to the grade level and/or content of the participants?			
Are the sessions specific to the needs of the local participants?			
Do the sessions meet local requirements and state regulations?			
Will the coordinator have the time and expertise for follow-up/mentoring after the session(s)?			
Will the coordinator have the expertise to evaluate participants' learning?			
Does the presenter for any and all sessions have the required expertise to address the topic?			
Have participants selected sessions for which they have been pre-assessed?			
Will the skills and concepts acquired in the session(s) facilitate student academic growth?			
Will the participants have opportunity for reflection?			
Will the participants have time for discussion with peers?			
How will the participants indicate or show the skills/concepts gained?			
Does the administration support the travel time and costs?			
Does the administration support the skills/concepts that will be applied in house?			

CHECKLIST FOR SELECTION OF TAGT ON DEMAND COURSES

Input from a variety of educators, including the TAGT On Demand User's Group, supports conclusions drawn from this Guide. Coordinators may use this checklist to select TAGT On Demand Courses appropriate for the district and campus.

DESCRIPTOR	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS	COMMENTS
Includes strong coherence of professional development initiatives with participants' work assignments and with content standards, Campus/District Improvement Plans			
Acknowledges beliefs and practices and connects with participants' daily work			
Reflects on and engages in discussion around the connections to participants' environments, concerns, and questions			
Provides context across wide range of topics, issues, and/or learning goals			
Supports technology integration goals in conjunction with course content			
Offers active, ongoing engagement with content			
Suggests opportunities for collaboration			
Provides opportunities for follow-up			
Includes support by administration			
Involves open-ended learning			
Contains opportunities for intrinsic motivation			
Accommodates learning styles and preferences			

FACILITATING CHECKLISTS

Prior to Sessions: Checklist Format

PRE-ASSESSMENT		YES	NO	COMMENTS
Shows support by administration through agenda that reflect CIP/DIP goals				
Provides reading, activities, and/or questions to think about prior to the training				
Accommodates learning styles and preferences				
Provides context across wide range of topics, issues, and/or learning goals				
Offer opportunities for intrinsic motivation				
Emphasize subject area content and pedagogy as well as student learning outcomes				

During Sessions: Checklist Format

SUPPORT		YES	NO	COMMENTS
Provide strong coherence of professional development initiatives with teachers' work assignments and with content standards				
Provides context across wide range of topics, issues, and/or learning goals				
Support technology integration goals in conjunction with course content				
Active, ongoing engagement with content with open-ended learning				
Includes expert facilitation and directive prompts				
Facilitates addressing of misconceptions				
Guides collaborative learning for those without background knowledge				
Presents job-embedded and authentic situations				
Reflects on and engages in discussion around the connections to participants' environments, concerns, and questions				
Includes subject area content and pedagogy as well as student learning outcomes				

Follow-up and Long-Term Implications: Checklist Format

FOLLOW-UP & LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS		YES	NO	COMMENTS
Opportunities for collaboration				
A reflection on and engagement in discussion around the connections to teachers' environments, concerns, and questions				
Learning results from classroom products				
Opportunities for follow-up with face-to-face activities				
Peer feedback and discussion				

STATE AND TAGT CORE KNOWLEDGE AREAS AND CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS

Suggested courses fall into these areas: Nature and Needs, Identification and Assessment, Social and Emotional Needs, Creativity and Instructional Strategies, Differentiated Curriculum, and Specific Subject Area.

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY STATE PLAN		TAGT CORE KNOWLEDGE AREA		CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS	
Nature and Needs of G/T Learners	1. Nature and Needs				Nature & Needs courses are those that describe and define the characteristics of the gifted. They may include topics such as Asynchronous Development, Overexcitabilities, etc.
	1.1.	Knows basic terminology, current definitions, theories, and models of giftedness.			
	1.2.	Identifies characteristics and their effects on academic and social settings.			
	1.3.	Identifies characteristics of under-represented groups of gifted and talented students, such as lower socio-economic status, physically challenged, African-American, Hispanic, and Limited-English proficient and/or learning disabled.			
	1.4.	Understands the implications of these characteristics on programs for the gifted and talented.			
	1.5.	Creates an environment in which gifted and talented students feel challenged and safe to explore and express their uniqueness			
Identification and Assessment	2. Identification and Assessment				Identification courses are those that provide insight and information to the identification process, including the processes used in referral and identification for services. The Identification category goes beyond identification of gifted/talented for services to include those courses that facilitate identification.
	2.1.	Uses broad-based, multifaceted identification procedures, including varied sources of information and qualitative and quantitative measures that match specific areas of ability.			
	2.2.	Interprets assessment results from both qualitative and quantitative measures to other professionals and parents for use in determining placement and in planning specific program activities for each gifted and talented student.			
	2.3.	Understands the characteristics of under-represented groups of gifted and talented students, such as lower socio-economic status, physically challenged, African-American, Hispanic, and limited-English proficient and/or learning disabled.			
	2.4.	Understands how to provide equal access to programs for gifted and talented students.			

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY STATE PLAN		TAGT CORE KNOWLEDGE AREA	CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS
Nature and Needs of G/T Learners	3. Social and Emotional Issues 3.1. Identifies individuals (family members, teachers, peers, and others) and environments (school, home, and community) that influence the social and emotional development of gifted and talented students. 3.2. Identifies how characteristics of under-represented groups of gifted and talented students influence their social and emotional development. 3.3. Uses strategies for nurturing the social and emotional development of gifted and talented students at home and in school. 3.4. Understands approaches for educating and involving parents, the community, and other professionals in supporting gifted and talented children.	<p><u>Social/Emotional</u> courses are those that address those courses related to the characteristics of the gifted which are particular to the gifted in social contexts, but are unrelated to curriculum. Motivation and Underachievement fall in this category. Underachievement is a term used to describe the discrepancy between a student's performance and his or her potential or ability to perform at a higher level.</p>	
	4. Creativity and Instructional Strategies 4.1. Understands the characteristics of gifted and talented students and the influence of these characteristics on instructional strategies used in classrooms for the gifted and talented. 4.2. Designs lessons within and across disciplines that teach strategies for nurturing creative and critical thinking in the gifted and talented students. 4.3. Locates and develops resources for assisting gifted and talented students in the fulfillment of their creative potential. 4.4. Adapts the classroom to the learning differences of each gifted and talented learner including the management of large and small groups and independent learning. 4.5. Identifies strategies from gifted education that can be used in the regular classroom.	<p><u>Creativity</u> courses address the strategies that support the field's definition of creativity, creative thinking, and/or creative problem-solving. They include a curriculum and instruction model that asks student to solve real-world, complex, or open-ended problems by using research, decision-making, creative and critical thinking, and other 21st century skills</p>	
Curriculum			

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY STATE PLAN		TAGT CORE KNOWLEDGE AREA	CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS
5. Differentiated Curriculum	<p>5.1. Applies the basic principles of a differentiated curriculum to the cognitive, affective, and physical development of each gifted and talented student.</p> <p>5.2. Demonstrates knowledge of cognitive and affective content as related to each academic discipline, to multiple disciplines, and to broad-based themes, issues, and problems.</p> <p>5.3. Develops activities to encourage original research, independent study, and problem solving that are authentic to each discipline.</p> <p>5.4. Includes meaningful products in the curriculum that engage the gifted and talented student in real life experiences and promote lifelong learning.</p> <p>5.5. Collaborates with general education professionals in the development and coordination of programs for gifted and talented students.</p>	<p>5. Differentiated Curriculum (continued)</p>	<p><u>Differentiation</u> courses are those which offer strategies for differentiating or modifying regular curriculum that are specific to the needs of the gifted. They may include, but not be limited to strategies for Twice Exceptional learners. Differentiation consists of all those courses that offer appropriate services and strategies appropriate for gifted learners.</p> <p><u>Four Core Content</u> courses with this designation fall into the four core areas as required by the <i>Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented</i>: Mathematics, English Language Arts, including Reading, Science, and Social Studies. These courses relate directly to curriculum for the gifted in the specified content area.</p> <p><u>Twice Exceptional (2E)</u> courses are those that approach differentiation of content with specific strategies to meet the needs of the Twice Exceptional (2E). The 2E terms applies to students who have dual exceptionalities. Examples are gifted and autistic, learning disabled, second language learners, ADHD/ADD, and/or Asperger's Syndrome.</p> <p>Courses that address Depth & Complexity as defined by Texas Education Agency/Advanced Academics, Gifted/Talented.</p> <p>Any of the courses categorized above and</p>
Curriculum	<p>6. Additional Clock Hours in a Specific Subject Area</p> <p>This category is primarily used for those seeking TAGT Enrichment Credit for content related to specific disciplines, fine and performing arts, leadership, and other topics that may not fit into one of the five Core Knowledge Areas.</p> <p>7.1. Develops activities to encourage original research, independent study, and problem solving that are authentic to each discipline.</p> <p>7.2. Includes meaningful products in the curriculum that engage the gifted and talented student in real life experiences and promote lifelong learning.</p> <p>7.3. Collaborates with general education professionals in the development and coordination of programs for gifted and talented students.</p>	<p><u>Other</u> courses are those that do not fit the categorized courses or that are particular to the field, but not particular to curriculum or characteristics of the gifted.</p> <p><u>Technology</u> courses are those that include uses of the tool of technology, websites appropriate to curriculum for the gifted, and current technology hardware.</p> <p><u>Four Core Content</u> courses with this designation fall into the four core areas as required by the <i>Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented</i>: Mathematics, English Language Arts, including Reading, Science, and Social Studies. These courses relate directly to curriculum for the gifted in the specified content area.</p> <p><u>Other</u> courses are those that do not fit the categorized courses or that are particular to the field, but not particular to curriculum or characteristics of the gifted.</p>	
Curriculum	<p>Curriculum - OTHER</p>	<p><u>Other</u> courses are those that do not fit the categorized courses or that are particular to the field, but not particular to curriculum or characteristics of the gifted.</p>	