



TEAM Observation Considerations Gifted Education

A gifted education (GE) classroom allows an observer the opportunity to gather evidence of instructional practice in a setting where student work may look or sound different than a traditional classroom setting. Gifted educators serve children whose intellectual abilities, creativity, and potential for achievement are so outstanding that the child's needs exceed general education programming, adversely affect educational performance, and require specifically designed instruction or support services.

Research indicates that gifted students:

- benefit from within-class grouping, which often involves teachers assigning students to small homogeneous groups for instruction based on prior achievement or learning capacities.
- benefit from being grouped across grade levels for specific subjects particularly when that includes other high-achieving and gifted students.
- outperform their non-accelerated peers when their learning is progressed through various methods such as skipping grades or entering school/college earlier.

Strong instructional practice leads to improved student outcomes, and GE classes are no exception. In a GE classroom, an observer should be prepared to see a variety of students and approaches to instruction. In a gifted classroom, an observer might see:

Instruction for Knowledge Acquisition

- Emphasizes the didactic instructional strategy – the acquisition of knowledge and information through lecture, texts, images, etc.
- Pursues the goal of acquiring additional knowledge derived from the content.

Instruction for Skill Attainment

- Emphasizes the instructional strategy of coaching.
- Pursues the goal of enhancing skills derived from the performance components.

- Requires teacher and student to be interactive in this instructional process, one-on-one as the behavior in executing the skill is modified and improved through successive attempts until success is attained.

Instruction for Product Development

- Emphasizes the instructional strategies of inquiry and Socratic or maieutic questioning strategies.
- Pursues acquisition of in-depth understanding that is derived from the interplay of the content with the critical thinking/creative thinking/research/problem-solving skills.
- Not only promotes but requires self-directed study on a self-selected topic.
- Requires development of professional-level standards or rubrics on which to base the evaluation of the product.
- Requires the teacher to be receptive while the student is actively engaged in the pursuit of the solution to the problem at hand.

Through the collaborative process of observation, feedback, and support, every teacher can see areas where he/she can improve student learning, and every observer can support a rigorous vision of excellent instruction throughout a school. While this document focuses on GE specific connections, the approach to using the TEAM rubric remains the same for any content area.

In this document you will find information on:

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- [Teacher Considerations: Pre-Conference](#)
- [Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection](#)
- [Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference and Using the Performance Level Guide](#)

Observer Considerations: Pre-Conference

The educator's lesson plan should serve as the foundation for the pre-conference. Using the planning and environment rubrics to guide pre-conference questions helps focus the conversation on student outcomes and provides evidence for instructional practice. Encourage educators to discuss the components of the plan and how that plan supports successful student outcomes. Observers should consider the pre-conference the first stage of collecting evidence on instructional practice.

Possible Pre-Conference Question on Instructional Practice	Planning or Environment Rubric Connection	Instructional Rubric Connection
How do you plan for GE instruction that addresses the individualized needs of the student while challenging the group as a whole? On what data do you base your decisions?	Instructional Plans	Standards and Objectives Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Lesson Structure and Pacing Activities and Materials Grouping Students Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students
In a GE classroom, student work is often performance- or project-based. In what ways have you planned for students to demonstrate skills like analysis, drawing conclusions, and interpreting information? How do you develop professional-level standards or rubrics on which to base the assessment of student products?	Student Work Assessment	Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Activities and Materials Questioning Academic Feedback Teacher Content Knowledge Thinking Problem Solving
What are some techniques you use to establish the environment of your GE classes? How do you help your gifted learners manage their expectations? What strategies do you use to help gifted students navigate the tendency toward intense engagement with classmates and adults?	Expectations Managing Student Behavior Environment Respectful Culture	Motivating Students Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Academic Feedback Grouping Students Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students

Teacher Considerations: Pre-Conference

During a pre-conference, GE teachers should be prepared to share the lesson alignment to interdisciplinary standards, the reasoning behind the plans for instruction, larger goals of the instructional plans, considerations for IEP goals, and how student success will be measured.

Considerations for Lesson Plans	Rubric Connections
Alignment and Rigor of Content and Standards	Instructional Plans Assessment Standards and Objectives Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students
Instructional Plan	Student Work Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Activities and Materials Teacher Content Knowledge Assessment
Instructional Technique	Managing Student Behavior Environment Expectations Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Grouping Academic Feedback Presenting Instructional Content Teacher Knowledge of Students
Differentiation/Access Points	Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students Questioning Grouping Academic Feedback Expectations Respectful Culture
Student Engagement	Student Work Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Teacher Knowledge of Students Thinking Problem Solving

Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection

Evidence for practice performance levels may come from pre-conference conversations, classroom observation, or conversations with the teacher after the observation but prior to the post-conference. In all cases, the observer should seek to understand the teacher's approach to instruction and, more importantly, the students' responses to the instructional practices implemented during instruction. Observers should gather evidence on how the learning lift is managed between the teacher and the students.

Indicator	Possible Evidence
Instructional Plans	Pre-conference notes should provide evidence on how the instruction leverages knowledge acquisition, skill attainment, and/or product development. Notes should reflect how skillfully the teacher articulates each student's knowledge/skill set as they enter the lesson and the unique support planned for each learner. Observers should note how frequently the teacher indicates opportunities for students to reflect and provide/be provided feedback for skill improvement.
Student Work	Pre-conference notes should capture the planned student work, which in GE classes may be project-based, therefore at multiple stages of completion or the observer may see completely different projects. Notes should reflect methods the teacher plans to use to support students as they draw conclusions about how accurately they are applying techniques/strategies/skills to meet the desired learning goals. In a GE class, this might center around self-directed learning or through self-assessment based on professional standards. Evidence should reflect how effectively the teacher has planned and aligned the student work.
Assessment	Pre-conference notes should capture the ways students can demonstrate mastery of the standard(s). Capture evidence on how skillfully the teacher includes low- or high-tech assessments, cross-disciplinary products, or self-assessments against a pre-determined standard.
Expectations	Observer notes should reflect how the teacher creates entry points for each student. Observers should seek evidence of opportunities for every student to have successful engagement with both the content and classmates. Seek evidence from grouping, in the way the teacher provides support and guides students toward success. Note how effectively students independently manage themselves in the instructional space.
Managing Student Behavior	Observer evidence might include notes on how students engage in moments of competition, deal with loss/frustration, and interact with other students at different skill levels. Seek information on how students monitor selves, space, and disruptions. Note how effectively the teacher interacts with students in each situation. Seek evidence of self-directedness through the task and self-monitoring of behavior so that all students engage in the activity and can use their voices.
Environment	Seek evidence that students know how their space may be used for individual and group work. Capture evidence on student-to-student engagement and how they support one another's attempts at progression. Capture evidence of how well students understand the rules of the

	classroom and abide by them. Note if students demonstrate a growth mindset, empathy, and the ability to effectively make good decisions.
Respectful Culture	Seek evidence on student interactions. Look for the frequency of accurate and useful student-to-student feedback and the level of student-to-student support in all aspects of the activity. Note when students aid or critically support classmates. Note the teacher's engagement with members of the classroom.
Standards and Objectives	Capture evidence of how well students connect the assigned task to broader ideas. Seek evidence of creative connections between disciplines, enhanced insight, or synthesis of ideas from students. Note how effectively the teacher integrates multiple standards/disciplines in the daily plan.
Motivating Students	Capture evidence of how often students engage, especially outside of their comfort zone. Seek evidence for how effectively the teacher supports students to see relevance to other parts of their lives, including personal responsibility, empathy, the ability to risk-take, and/or decision-make. Capture evidence on how the teacher and/or classmates reinforce and reward individual effort. Capture evidence that indicates the level of student independence and/or interdependence as they engage with the lesson.
Presenting Instructional Content	Note places in the lesson where students can engage in authentic situations to solve problems or face challenges that require a team approach. Note where success is achieved through creative thinking, problem solving, and teamwork. Note if students are encouraged to access their inner faculties, voice, and beliefs. Note how effectively students engage with the teacher during direct instruction and how modeling is used to support student learning. Seek evidence of individual student engagement with the lesson or task.
Lesson Structure and Pacing	Seek evidence for student and teacher awareness of time needed vs. time spent in transitions such as grouping and regrouping for activities, and distribution/return of class supplies/equipment. Seek evidence that students are encouraged to assess their own skill set, reflect, and make timely adjustments to ensure successful completion of the objective. Note when GE students are working with individualized or self-determined timelines for completion. Note if quiet time is strategically and effectively used to ensure ideas and thoughts are given time to germinate.
Activities and Materials	Look for evidence that the tasks are aligned to the rigor of integrated standards. Seek evidence that students are given multiple ways/opportunities to demonstrate progress toward skill mastery. Seek evidence that students are interacting and providing feedback/support to each other that leads to group improvement. Capture data on the appropriateness of the technology/equipment being used to meet the requirements of the task/project.
Questioning	Capture question and answer sessions between teacher and students for evidence of the question types that are being used. Look for signs of student understanding that may be demonstrated through leaps in logic or ah-ha moments. Capture evidence of teacher wait time and purposeful application of student knowledge to answer questions. Capture the types of

	<p>questions students ask as an indicator of how deeply they understand the topic. Note how the teacher encourages students to wait for each other. Seek evidence that students authentically connect to each other and the topic through discussion.</p>
Academic Feedback	<p>Capture evidence of the corrections and adjustments provided by the teacher as well as interactions in which students are supporting each other's improvement. Capture frequency of feedback, types of feedback, and repetitiveness of the feedback shared. Note if the instructor provides more or different feedback to different teams or individuals. Seek evidence that the feedback aligns to the rigor of the standards. Note when feedback is motivational only. Capture evidence of the effectiveness of performance cues to self-correction and/or improvement in outcomes.</p>
Grouping Students	<p>Note the composition of the student groups and their applicability to ensuring group and/or individual success. Seek evidence that all students have a role in the group and that the expectations of all roles are met. Note how students engage with each other and if the team members work in tandem to meet the goal of the day's activity. Note how efficiently conflicts are resolved among classmates. Note how the whole group time is used to support student progress to the standards.</p>
Teacher Content Knowledge	<p>Note how the teacher condenses, modifies, or streamlines the regular curriculum to reduce repetition of previously mastered material. Seek evidence of how the teacher leverages different strategies to ensure students with high potential are both supported and allowed to explore independently. Capture evidence of how effectively the teacher is adjusting the pace of the lesson to reflect the learners needs and providing opportunities for students to use more refined skills sets vs. simply adding volume. Seek evidence that the teacher provides opportunities for students to apply insight and use more complex logic to address problems. Note how the teacher challenges the learners but provides support to encourage the learner to risk take, wonder, and possibly be incorrect.</p>
Teacher Knowledge of Students	<p>Seek information on how the GE teacher supports students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, not only with academic needs but also social-emotional needs. Seek evidence that the teacher designs lessons that enhance creativity, acceleration, depth, and complexity for each student in the classroom. Note the techniques used by the teacher to ensure each student remains highly engaged.</p>
Thinking	<p>Capture evidence of how successfully students self-analyze their progress and self-identify areas of improvement. Seek evidence that students are exploring different ways to accomplish a task for better results such as unique or creative solution-finding. Look for evidence of how effectively a teacher helps students generate alternate strategies to achieve success. Capture evidence around the students' abilities to understand why they are focused on a given task and why they might choose one strategy over another. Seek evidence of how well students can connect the activities of the day to broader concepts. Capture evidence of the specific types of thinking taught by the teacher to promote a deeper understanding of concepts and content.</p>

Problem Solving	Seek evidence of how well a teacher provides students the opportunity to engage in several types of problem solving, which might include students self-identifying non-solutions along with solutions. Note how effectively the teacher supports or allows time for students to abstract reasoning, encourages drawing conclusions based on evidence, justifying leaps of logic, or the creation of a final product.
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Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference and Using the Performance Level Guide

After the observation, observers should ask clarifying questions as needed **prior** to the post-conference. These questions might happen immediately after the observation or occur later after reviewing evidence notes. Questions might include:

- How were the groups created for this lesson and how often do they change?
- How do you determine the speed of acceleration or compacting of the curriculum for gifted students?
- How do you engage students in determining mastery of their own learning?
- How do you ensure gifted students are engaging in social and emotional skills effectively?
- What types of individualized support do you include in your classes? How do you determine what strategies to use when?
- How did you select the projects/tasks for the students? How do you involve them in that selection process?
- How do you measure the impact of this work on overall student outcomes?

Observers should **always** analyze student work after every lesson in any classroom. For a GE class, this analysis might involve reviewing pictures or videos of students in action. Consider:

- Do the activities in which students were engaged assess the standards presented, which may vary across the classroom?
- To what extent does the student work provide evidence of individual mastery of the lesson's objectives?
- To what extent does the student work require thinking and/or problem solving?
- How does the educator use the data from student work to inform future lessons?
- How does the teacher capture data on the progression of each student?
- How does the student work reflect the needs of gifted learners to engage in accelerated or enhanced learning?

Using the Performance Level Guide

Observers should use the performance level guide and appropriate general educator rubric to support alignment of evidence (coding) to scores. Each performance level has nuanced differences, described below. This guide helps identify the expertise with which practice is implemented. Note that both consistency and impact are considered when determining performance level.

Performance Level Guide

1	Significantly Below Expectations: A teacher at this level has limited knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and struggles to implement them. He/she has little to no impact on student outcomes .
2	Below Expectations: A teacher at this level demonstrates some knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric but implements them inconsistently . His/her impact on student outcomes is below expectations .
3	At Expectations: A teacher at this level understands and implements most of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric. His/her impact on student outcomes is meeting expectations .
4	Above Expectations: A teacher at this level comprehends the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them skillfully and consistently . He/she makes a strong impact on student outcomes .
5	Significantly Above Expectations: A teacher at this level exemplifies the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them adeptly and without fail . He/she meets ambitious teaching and learning goals and makes a significant impact on student outcomes . Performance at this level should be considered a model of exemplary teaching .

After evidence gathered throughout the observation process has been coded and scored, the observer will **design the post-conference**. This conference should focus on three things:

- Identified areas of reinforcement and refinement.
- Resources for the teacher to use as they hone their refinement area practice.
- A follow-up plan for the leader to support teacher progress and success.

More detailed support for post-conferences may be found in the [Teacher Evaluation Handbook](#).

With additional questions, please contact TEAM.Questions@tn.gov.