DIGGING **DEEPER**

Students with a History of Higher Achievement

Questions at the LEA/District, School, and Teacher Level

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Contents

Note: This document addresses the needs of students with a history of higher achievement. Many of the questions included in this document reference students with GIEPs. It is important to note, however, that students with a history of higher achievement are not limited to those with GIEPs, but also include students from all student groups including, but not limited to students with IEPs, English Language Learners, economically disadvantaged students and other demographic groups.

Background

This *Digging Deeper Guide* focuses on all students with a history of higher achievement, including but not limited to students with GIEPs. The questions are not specific to grade levels or content areas, but are related to variables known to be important to students with a history of higher achievement.

This supplemental guide may be most helpful when used in conjunction with one or more of the *Digging Deeper into Content Areas* guides, which are available in *Math/Algebra I*, *ELA/Keystone Literature*, and *Science/Keystone Biology*. These guides can be accessed by clicking on the *Digging Deeper* link found on the PVAAS website login page.

Visit https://bit.ly/DiggingDeeper-Word for an editable version of this resource.

Navigating This Guide

This guide is divided into two sections:

- **Variables (questions) at the LEA/School level** – Appropriate for LEA/district administrators, school principals, department chairs, content leaders, teacher leaders, teachers, and data team members.
- **Variables at the teacher level** — Appropriate for use by individual teachers who are engaging in self-reflection of their own data and their own practice.

A divider page between the two sections allows one to refer to their relevant work section.

Within each of the two sections, the variables are also organized under four categories or "buckets", as follows:

- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment
- Organization

Alignment

Additionally, an alignment coding for each question is provided at each level, illustrating a crosswalk between the items in these guides and other PDE frameworks.

PA's Essential Practices for Schools

The LEA/School level section's variables/questions align with the conditions of **PA's Essential Practices for Schools**. The questions in the guide are coded with the condition number(s) that is the most relevant fit, i.e., EP Condition 1, 2, 3, or 4.

EP Condition 1: Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction

- Aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- Collaborative instructional planning
- Variety of assessments to monitor student learning Identify and address individual student learning needs
- Frequent, timely feedback and support on instructional practices

EP Condition 2: Empower Leadership

- Culture of high expectations for success
- Collective vision for teaching and learning
- Empowered staff
- Needs-based organization and allocation of resources
- Continuous monitoring of school improvement plan implementation

EP Condition 3: Provide Student-Centered Supports

- Positive school environment where all members feel welcomed, supported, and safe schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports
- Multi-tiered system of supports for academics and behavior
- Family engagement to support learning
- Partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies

EP Condition 4: Foster Quality Professional Learning

- Professional learning responsive to teacher and student needs
- Multiple professional learning designs
- Evaluating the impact of professional learning

View more information about PA's Essential Practices for Schools >

PA Observation and Practice Framework (Act 13)

Each teacher-level section's variables/questions align with the **PA Observation and Practice Framework (Act 13)** domains and are coded with initials as shown below.

The Framework for the Evaluation of Classroom Teachers is adapted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education from Charlotte Danielson's 2011 "Framework for Teachers" and adapted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education from Charlotte Danielson's 2020 "Framework for Remote Teaching."

Planning and Preparation (PP)

- Knowledge of content and Pedagogy
- Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
- Setting Instructional Outcomes
- Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
- Designing Coherent Instruction
- Designing Student Assessment

Classroom Environment (CE)

- Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- Establishing a Culture of Learning
- Managing Classroom Procedures
- Managing Student Behavior Expectations
- Organizing Physical and Digital Space

Instruction (I)

- Communicating with Students
- Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- Engaging Students in Learning Activities and Assignments
- Using Assessment in Instruction
- Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

Professional Responsibility (PR)

- Reflecting on Teaching
- Maintaining Accurate Records
- Communicating with Families
- Participating in a Professional Community
- Growing and Developing Professionally
- Showing Professionalism

Learn more about PA's Observation and Practice Framework on the SAS Website >

How to Use This Guide

Effective use of this school-level guide requires collaborative reflection on the variables, as well as responses to the variables using evidence (rather than a "yes" or "no").

This guide is also not a checklist. Rather, it is a listing of contributing factors to explore deeply. It requires careful selection of where to start and which of the questions to use in the discussion. Responding to the question(s) requires deep discussion, honest reflection, and identification of evidence of practice. It is not necessary to ask all of the questions at one time. Schools may find it more effective to start with a few key questions from each section (Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Organization) to ensure solid, core foundational practices are established in all areas. The focus and starting point are dependent on the school's current data and needs.

Where to Start

A good starting point is to examine the variables/questions considered to be foundational and of high priority. The information below highlights those variables typically indicative of high priorities—or, possible starting points—allowing for discussion of foundational variables in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and organization. Using these questions as starting points may prove helpful in designing and implementing practices that are of high impact for students with a history of higher achievement. It is suggested to keep this in mind as you review all variables and questions in this guide.

Suggested Prioritization of Key Questions

Foundation variables are considered high-priority contributing factors that can serve as a possible starting point for a Digging Deeper discussion. It is important to note that the questions below are suggestions only. These are not the only questions that can be used as a starting point, and they are *not* intended to be in a prescribed order to follow. Each LEA must determine the best starting points, i.e., which questions/variables to explore. The starting point and the subsequent choices of which variables to explore is dependent on the context of the LEA/school and the LEA/school's data.

CURRICULUM

Start with:

- **C-1.** Does the written curriculum address higher levels of cognition as described in Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Level 3 and 4)? Is it analyzed on an ongoing basis to ensure rigor? (EP Condition 1)
- **C-3.** Does the written curriculum include enrichment strategies? (EP Condition 1)

Rationale: These two questions address the importance of the need for rigor in the written curriculum, including higher levels of cognitive demand in what students are to know and be able to do that extends and enriches the PA Core Standards. An effective written curriculum that addresses students with a history of higher achievement requires an ongoing analysis of the implementation of the curriculum to ensure rigor in tasks and assignments.

INSTRUCTION

Start with:

- **I-1.** Are enrichment opportunities provided, based on individual student strengths, interests, and needs? (EP Condition 1, EP Condition 3)
  Examples: curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, study guides, independent learning contracts, etc.

- **I-2.** Is acceleration through grade levels and courses appropriate to the individual student or cohorts, and is acceleration implemented with consistency? (EP Condition 1, EP Condition 3)

Rationale: These variables represent fundamental practices in the effective delivery of instruction for students needing enrichment or acceleration opportunities. Therefore, they represent an effective starting point to "dig deeply" to determine root causes of the data observations and patterns. Once these key variables are addressed, other instructional variables can be addressed and discussed for probing further.

ASSESSMENT

Start with:

- **A-1.** Are pre-assessments used to plan instruction for students with a history of higher achievement? (EP Condition 1)
- **A-11.** Through strategic use of assessments, are students with a history of higher achievement provided with the opportunity to access content earlier or faster than typically accessible? (EP Condition 1, EP Condition 3)

Rationale: These variables are key to the access of the enriching written curriculum in a timely fashion and allows for enrichment and acceleration opportunities to be based on students' needs on a regular basis at the beginning and throughout the school year. It represents a starting point for discussion about the health of your assessment system within the context of students with a history of higher achievement.

ORGANIZATION

Start with:

- **O-1.** Does the school schedule address the needs of students with a history of higher achievement? (EP Condition 1, EP Condition 3)

  Examples:
  - Students who have a history of higher achievement receive enrichment during intervention period.
  - Students with a history of higher achievement have opportunities for extension classes and/or acceleration.
  - Strategic grouping allows for learners to have a peer group for learning.
- **O-5.** Are teachers trained in how to compact the curriculum to meet the needs of students with a history of higher achievement? (EP Condition 4)
- **O-7.** Are educators provided with professional learning opportunities on strategies for enrichment? (EP Condition 4)

Rationale: While there are many important variables in the organizational structures of a school, these three questions may represent good starting points for discussion. A school schedule that meets the needs of students with a history of higher achievement is a fundamental building block. Additionally, it is key to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers that explicitly address instructional approaches and strategies for enrichment and acceleration when needed.

Note: Again, these are only suggestions for starting points, representing fundamental practices and structures typically needed to move forward in enhancing the learning outcomes for all students. Choosing the questions to discuss, and the order in which to discuss them, is an important local decision to arrive at the best plans of action for current students.

System-Level Questions
(LEA/District and School)

THINK ABOUT: How might our system structures and practices at the LEA/district and school level related to Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Organization contribute to our achievement and growth results for **students with a history of higher achievement?**

These questions are offered as a vehicle to guide purposeful reflection and should be considered and answered with clear evidence. This list is not exhaustive and is not a checklist. Note: The questions do not need to be discussed in the order in which they are numbered; they are numbered to reference specific items and for ease of use.

The questions are intended to help generate thinking specific to the LEA/school-level program. Through the information provided by PVAAS, along with other assessment data, this document is intended to assist in determining potential root causes leading to plans of action (looking back and looking forward). School-level administrators, teacher leaders and teachers may find these reflection questions helpful in analyzing data at a system level for the school.

Essential Practice Key:

Each question indicates the related PA Essential Practices conditions:

EP Condition 1
Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction

EP Condition 2
Empower Leadership

EP Condition 3
Provide Student-Centered Supports

EP Condition 4
Foster Quality Professional Learning

CURRICULUM | SYSTEM LEVEL | Students with a History of Higher Achievement

C-1. Does the written curriculum address higher levels of cognition as described in Webb's Depth of Knowledge (Level 3 and 4)? Is it analyzed on an ongoing basis to ensure rigor? *EP Condition 1*

C-2. Do all teachers, core and supplemental, have access to the written curriculum? *EP Condition 1*

C-3. Does the written curriculum include enrichment strategies? *EP Condition 1*

C-4. Does the written curriculum allow for a vertical trace of skills to provide for acceleration (e.g., telescoping, continuous progress, subject acceleration)? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 2*

C-5. Is differentiated instruction an expectation, and is it specified in the written curriculum? *EP Condition 1*

C-6. Is there enough stretch in the scope and sequence of courses to provide for higher-achieving students who need enrichment or acceleration? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 3*

C-7. Does the curriculum allow for concurrent/dual enrollment? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 3*

C-8. Does the curriculum allow for credit by examination? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 2*

C-9.   Is the curriculum written in a way that identifies how curriculum compacting may occur?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

C-10. Is there a generally accessible pathway for any learner to access Advanced Placement courses?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

INSTRUCTION   `SYSTEM LEVEL`   Students with a History of Higher Achievement

I-1.   Are enrichment opportunities based on individual student strengths, interests, and needs (ex. curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, study guides, independent learning contracts, etc.)?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

I-2.   Is acceleration through grade levels and courses appropriate to the individual student or cohorts, and is acceleration implemented with consistency? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

I-3.   Are students with a history of higher achievement engaged in continuous progress/self-paced instruction to progressively move forward in content? *EP Condition 1*

I-4.   Are students enriched though resource materials at higher/more complex reading levels? *EP Condition 1*

I-5.   Are students enriched through student-guided and/or self-selection of texts and genres that match academic strengths or interests? *EP Condition 1*

I-6.   Are students enriched through practice in non-fiction reading and writing assignments aligned to content areas or beyond what is offered in grade-level setting? *EP Condition 1*

I-7.   Is homework differentiated to provide meaningful and challenging work? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

I-8.   Is within-class flexible grouping used as an instructional strategy to provide enrichment and/or acceleration? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

ASSESSMENT   `SYSTEM LEVEL`   Students with a History of Higher Achievement

A-1.   Are pre-assessments used to plan instruction for students with a history of higher achievement?
EP Condition 1

A-2.   Are task-appropriate rubrics used to encourage stretch for students with a history of higher achievement? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

A-3.   A-3. Do assessments match the level of complexity of the assigned task? *EP Condition 1*

A-4.   Are PVAAS projections used to identify individual student's projections to an Advanced level of performance on upcoming PSSA/Keystone? *EP Condition 1*

A-5.   Are PVAAS projections used in conferencing with students and families relative to course selection, goal setting, career focus, etc.? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

A-6.   Are projections to AP exams used to guide individual students and their families in AP course selections? *EP Condition 1*   *EP Condition 3*

A-7.   Are projections to PSAT, SAT, and ACT used to inform students' likelihood of scoring above established targets? *EP Condition 1*

A-8. At the school level, are PVAAS projections used to plan for AP course scope and needs for alternate options for students, such as dual enrollment, online courses, etc.?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

A-9. Are formative assessments administered and analyzed to allow for adjusted pace and potential rapid movement through planned units of study? *EP Condition 1*

A-10. Do summative tasks address higher levels of Webb's Depth of Knowledge? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 2*

A-11. Through strategic use of assessments, are students with a history of higher achievement provided with the opportunity to access content earlier or faster than typically accessible?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

ORGANIZATION   SYSTEM LEVEL   Students with a History of Higher Achievement

O-1. Does the school schedule address the needs of students with a history of higher achievement?
EP Condition 1   *EP Condition 3*

Examples:

a. Students with histories of higher achievement receive enrichment during an intervention period.

b. Students with histories of higher achievement have opportunities for extension classes and/or acceleration.

c. Strategic grouping allows for learners to have a peer group for learning.

O-2. Are gifted services (enrichment, acceleration, or a combination of both) aligned to the curriculum and tailored to the academic strengths of each identified student? *EP Condition 1* *EP Condition 2*

O-3. Are opportunities in place for collaboration between the general education teacher and the gifted support teacher? *EP Condition 1*

O-4. Are all teachers provided ongoing support in understanding the characteristics of the gifted learner and how to address their needs? *EP Condition 4*

O-5. Are all teachers trained in how to compact the curriculum to meet the needs of students with a history of higher achievement? *EP Condition 4*

O-6. Are materials and resources available to meet the needs of students receiving enrichment and/or accelerated instruction? *EP Condition 1*

O-7. Are educators provided with professional learning opportunities regarding strategies for enrichment? *EP Condition 4*

O-8. Are educators provided with professional learning opportunities on strategies for acceleration?
EP Condition 4

O-9. Is there an articulated acceleration protocol for students with a history of higher achievement to maintain consistency across schools? *EP Condition 1*

O-10. Are multiple data sources analyzed to determine and communicate the overall effectiveness of enrichment and/or acceleration? *EP Condition 1*

Teacher-Level Questions
(Classroom)

THINK ABOUT: How might my practices and knowledge level related to Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Organization contribute to the growth and achievement results of my **students with a history of higher achievement?**

These questions are offered as a vehicle for individual teachers to guide self-reflection in a purposeful and systematic manner. Each question/probe should be thoughtfully considered, reflective of data findings, and answered with clear evidence.

Teachers: As you consider each question/probe, ask yourself, *"What is my evidence?"*

Framework Key:

Each question in the teacher section(s) are coded to show the related domain(s) from The Observation and Practice Framework (Act 13):

PP
Planning and Preparation

CE
Classroom Environment

I
Instruction

PR
Professional Responsibilities

This list is not exhaustive, and it is not a checklist. The questions do not need to be discussed in the order in which they are numbered; they are numbered to reference specific items and for ease of use. The questions are intended to help generate thinking as a teacher considers classroom/student level data on an annual basis. Teachers are encouraged to use all the data available to them, such as PVAAS teacher-specific reports, attendance data, summative data, and benchmark data.

These questions, when considered through the lens of data available through PVAAS and other assessments, are intended to guide the self-reflection process to assist in identifying root causes and in developing action plans for the current group of students.

Teachers are encouraged to access PDE's Self-Reflection Guides:
- Teacher Self-Reflection Guide (Data Available Teachers) (PDF)
- Teacher Self-Reflection Guide (Non-Data Available Teachers) (PDF)

CURRICULUM | TEACHER LEVEL | Students with a History of Higher Achievement

C-1.   Do I know how to access and use the written curriculum to plan for students with a history of higher achievement? *PP*

C-2.   Am I knowledgeable about levels of cognition as described in Webb's Depth of Knowledge and can I identify where this is addressed in the written curriculum? *PP*

C-3.   Am I aware of areas in the written curriculum that address enrichment? *PP*

C-4.   Am I able to identify and trace vertical skills across grade levels and courses to provide acceleration (e.g., telescoping, continuous progress, subject acceleration)? *PP*

C-5.   Do I know the scope and sequence of courses at the secondary level in order to provide for students who require enrichment and/or acceleration? *PP*

C-6.   Am I knowledgeable about where the written curriculum includes differentiation strategies? *PP*

C-7.   Can I use the written curriculum effectively to: *PP*

    a.   Compact when appropriate?

    b.   Consider credit by examination?

    c.   Recommend dual enrollment?

    d.   Plan for Advanced Placement options?

INSTRUCTION | TEACHER LEVEL | Students with a History of Higher Achievement

I-1.   Am I routinely providing enrichment opportunities for my students based on individual strengths, interests, and needs (ex. compacting, tiered assignments, study guides, independent learning contracts, etc.)? *PP* *CE* *I*

I-2.   Am I knowledgeable and skilled as to when acceleration through grade levels and courses are appropriate, and am I consistent in this practice? *PP* *I*

I-3.   Do I ensure that students with a history of higher achievement are engaged in continuous progress/self-paced instruction to progressively move forward in content? *PP* *I*

I-4.   Am I providing materials at higher/more complex reading levels? *I*

I-5.   Am I enriching students through student-guided and/or self-selection of texts and genres that match academic strengths or interests? *PP* *CE* *I*

I-6.   Are my students enriched through practice in non-fiction reading and writing assignments aligned to content areas or beyond what is offered in grade-level setting? *PP* *I*

I-7.   Am I differentiating homework to provide meaningful and challenging work? *PP* *I*

I-8.   Am I using flexible grouping to provide enrichment and/or acceleration? *PP* *I*

ASSESSMENT TEACHER LEVEL Students with a History of Higher Achievement

A-1. Do I use pre-assessment to plan instruction for students with a history of higher achievement? *PP* *I*

A-2. Do I use task appropriate rubrics to encourage stretch for students with a history of higher achievement? *PP* *I*

A-3. Do my assessments match the level of complexity of the assigned task? *PP* *I*

A-4. Am I knowledgeable about how to use PVAAS projections to identify individual student's projections to an Advanced level of performance on upcoming PSSA/Keystone? Do I use those projections in my planning and instruction? *PP* *I* *PR*

A-5. Am I skilled and using PVAAS projections in conferencing with students and families relative to course selection, goal setting, career focus, etc.? *PP* *I* *PR*

A-6. Am I using PVAAS projections to Advanced Placement exams to guide individual students and their families in AP course selections? *PP* *I* *PR*

A-7. Am I using projections to PSAT, SAT, and ACT to inform students' likelihood of scoring above established targets? *PP* *I* *PR*

A-8. Am I using PVAAS projections in discussions with students and families for dual enrollment, online courses, etc.? *PP* *I* *PR*

A-9. Do I use a variety of formative assessment techniques to allow for adjusted pace and potential rapid movement through planned units of study? *PP* *I*

A-10. Do I design summative tasks that address higher levels of Webb's Depth of Knowledge? *PP* *I*

A-11. Through strategic use of assessments, are my students with a history of higher achievement provided with the opportunity to access content earlier or faster than typically accessible? *PP* *I*

ORGANIZATION TEACHER LEVEL Students with a History of Higher Achievement

O-1. Do I ensure that the needs of students with a history of higher achievement are scheduled for support? *PP* *I*

   a. To receive enrichment during intervention period?

   b. To have opportunities for extension classes and/or acceleration?

   c. To strategically group students for learners to have a peer group for learning?

O-2. Do I ensure that gifted services (enrichment, acceleration, or a combination of both) are aligned to the curriculum and tailored to the academic strengths of each identified student? *PP* *CE*

O-3. Do I closely collaborate with other teachers who are also providing instruction to my students? *PP* *I* *PR*

O-4. Do I understand the characteristics of the gifted learner, know how to address their needs, and seek professional development as needed? *PP* *CE* *I* *PR*

O-5. Am I skilled in how to compact the curriculum to meet the needs of students with a history of higher achievement? *I*

O-6. Do I ensure that appropriate materials and resources are used to meet the needs of students receiving enrichment and/or accelerated instruction? *PP* *I*

O-7. Do I have a range of knowledge and skills in providing strategies for enrichment for my students? Do I seek professional development as needed? *PR*

O-8. Do I seek out professional learning opportunities on strategies for acceleration? *PR*

O-9. Do I use multiple data sources to determine and communicate the overall effectiveness of enrichment and/or acceleration for my students? *PP* *I*

Explore these other

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Guides & Resources:

Digging Deeper into Content Areas: English Language Arts (ELA)
Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, Keystone Algebra I

Digging Deeper into Content Areas: Mathematics
Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, Keystone Algebra I

Digging Deeper into Content Areas: Science
Grades 4 & 8, Keystone Biology

Digging Deeper Resource Guide

**Digging Deeper: Students with a History of
Lower Achievement**

at [education.pa.gov >](https://education.pa.gov)

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