

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program  
Comprehensive Examination  
Educational Specialist with Gifted Director Endorsement  
Policy and Procedure Statement**

**General Description**

Educational Specialist with Gifted Director endorsement degree students must pass a comprehensive examination as part of their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. The intent of the comprehensive examination is to assess: 1) Overall knowledge in educational leadership and gifted director administration, 2) Ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to cogent discussion of leadership problems or the resolution of significant educational issues, and 3) Skill in organizing and expressing ideas in a logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion. The examination is a take-home exam found at the end of this document.

**Eligibility and Scheduling of the Examination**

In order to take the examination, students must have done the following: (1) have been granted regular admission to the degree program, (2) have an approved plan of study on file with the Graduate School, (3) have completed 20 semester hours of work applicable toward the degree, not including the internship or practicum, (4) have maintained a grade average of at least 3.00 in the graduate degree program, and (5) obtained approval from their assigned advisor signifying that eligibility has been verified.

The “ELPS Comprehensive Exam Permit and Results Form” from the ELPS Forms webpage must be received by the administrative assistant in the ELPS office three weeks before the exam is due.

**Assessment and Evaluation of the Written Examination**

The examination will be read and evaluated by three faculty including at least two members of the ELPS faculty (One of which will be the student’s advisor). The following grading system will be used:

Pass--The student has responded to all questions on the examination in an acceptable manner.

Fail--The student has failed to respond in an acceptable manner to one or more of the questions asked.

**Examination Retake**

Students who fail the comprehensive examination may be allowed one retake of the exam. They will be notified by their advisor if a retake is permitted. This retake cannot be done until the next semester. A second “Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination” is required for the retake. If students fail the retake of the examination, their degree program will be terminated.

**Notification of Successful Completion of the Examination**

Students will be notified via email or in writing if they have successfully completed the exam within four weeks after the comprehensive exam has been turned in to the ELPS office. The ELPS administrative assistant will also send the results of the comprehensive exam to the Graduate School by the deadline each semester. Please note that, in order to graduate in the same semester that the exam is taken, the results of the exam must be submitted to the Graduate School by the published date. Thus, if a comprehensive exam is submitted after the due dates listed below, the results may need to be considered the following semester:

Fall semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in October

Spring semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in March

Summer term—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in June

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with Gifted Director Endorsement  
Comprehensive Examination  
Educational Specialist Degree Program**

The purpose of the Educational Specialist Degree with Gifted Director Endorsement comprehensive exam is to assess students' ability to synthesize and apply the theories, knowledge, concepts and skills that students have studied throughout their program in a practical, complex, and pertinent organizational change situation. To achieve this end, students are to identify a situation in their current or most recent organization that involves the need for complex change that addresses the learning and achievement of all students.<sup>1</sup> Students should view the comprehensive exam as a way to demonstrate their learning and integration of **all** of the coursework in their program (both ELPS and EDSE), as well as outside readings. This means that students should include leadership styles, strategies, and theories; change theories/process; relevant political, economic, and social forces; legal contexts and constraints; discussions of equity and diversity; relationship to and/or impact on instructional leadership, and other significant topics covered throughout their program of study. Students should be sure to fully explain all concepts that they introduce and apply. It is strongly advised that the paper be organized as outlined below with clear section headers. Be sure to address all parts of each question.

Students are to analyze the specific situation and develop a strategic action plan, assuming the role of leader (i.e., building or district level or as a director of gifted services, as appropriate to the individual student's major area of program focus), addressing the following elements:

**1. Identification and explanation of the current situation**

- Discuss key **decision-makers, followers, and stakeholders/constituents** of current situation
- Identify **key policy or personnel decisions** that have created the current situation
- Identify **values/epistemologies** of past leaders that have influenced the current situation
- Identify any **organizational structures** that have influenced the current situation
- Identify **resource issues** that may have contributed to the current situation (human resources, including skill and knowledge, as well as financial resources)

**2. Explanation of why the current situation is undesirable**

- Discuss why the current situation does not align with the **purpose, mission, and/or values** of the organization
- Discuss the **effect on members** of the organization of the current situation (e.g., morale, motivation, efficacy, etc.)
- Discuss why the current situation is **not acceptable to current stakeholders**

**3. Articulation of a more desirable situation**

- Explain the **goal** of the proposed change, **addressing the purpose/mission/values** of the organization
- Discuss the effect on members of the organization of the proposed change,
- Discuss how the situation will increase the inclusion of diverse people and lead to more equitable outcomes.
- Explain the **leadership qualities/behaviors/values** necessary to enact the proposed change
- Articulate the **benefits** of the change on external stakeholders

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<sup>1</sup> This does NOT duplicate the assignments that were completed in ELPS 603 and EDSE 681. Students may select the same topic but this paper should go much beyond the four frames in analyzing the situation and the change context and process in the ELPS 603 class; or the development of strategic planning components, logic model of planned change, evaluation plan, and identification of quality performance measures from the EDSE 681 class.

**4. Development of strategies to implement the proposed change**

- Identify and discuss **key structural, human resource, financial, and political elements** of the organization that are necessary for successful implementation of the proposed change. (Discuss any policy changes that would be necessary, as well.)
- Outline a **strategic plan** for implementing the proposed change, including approximate timelines and key personnel with rationales for each element of the plan
- Identify possible **challenges** to implementation and discuss **methods for dealing with those challenges**
- Discuss a possible plan for **monitoring and evaluating the change, with attention to a logic model of planned change, priority goals to be evaluated, and quality performance measures that provide evidence of impact on student results and learning**

**5. Students should critique responses (1-4) regarding how the Colorado Principal Standards and Director of Gifted Education Standards are illustrated by their analyses and proposed strategic plan.**

**Students must use both materials from ELPS and EDSE course content and outside resources.**

**APA style must be used.**

**References must be cited at end of exam.**

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies/Special Education Administration**  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Ed.S. in ELPS with Gifted Education Director Endorsement Degree Program**  
**Semester/year: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_**

Domains	Distinguished Command (4)	Strong Command (3)	Limited/Partial Command (2)	Weak Command (1)	Rating
<b>Identification and explanation of the current situation and why it is undesirable</b>	The organization is introduced, and undesirable situation is described using a variety of data. Explains policy, resource, personnel decisions, and leadership contributing to the situation and the impact on various stakeholders.	Undesirable situation is explained using data/evidence. Provides contributing factors and explains the impact of the situation on stakeholders.	Undesirable situation is explained but may lack data, explanation of contributing factors, leader characteristics, and impact on stakeholders.	Lack of clear definition of the organizational issue. Lack of data to support why the situation is undesirable.	4 3 2 1
<b>Articulation of a more desirable situation</b>	The proposed change(s) are clearly articulated. Intended effects, equity issues, and alignment to mission/vision/goals/values are explained.	The proposed change(s) are clearly articulated. Effects and alignment to organization are explained.	Changes are superficial or tangentially related to the situation. Lack of explanation regarding intended effects or alignment.	Changes are unrelated to issue and/or not explained.	4 3 2 1
<b>Development of strategies to implement and evaluate proposed change</b>	Strategies are comprehensive to address the complexity of the issue. Action steps are logical and contain sufficient detail to be implemented with timelines and person(s) responsible. Strategies to monitor and evaluate the changes are aligned and feasible.	Strategies address the issue. Action steps are logical and detailed; timelines and persons responsible are included. Strategies to monitor and evaluate the changes are included.	Strategies address the issue. Action steps, timelines, person(s) responsible, and methods to monitor and evaluate changes lack sufficient detail.	Strategies, action steps, timelines, and/or ways to monitor the changes may be missing or severely lacking in detail.	4 3 2 1
<b>Candidate demonstrates...</b>					
<b>Use of concepts and materials from ELPS and EDSE program courses in problem analysis and to support change strategies components</b>	Multiple connections to course materials and concepts from both the ELPS and EDSE program and leadership standards are integrated throughout exam. Other resources are cited.	Adequate connections to ELPS & EDSE course materials or concepts. Other resources are cited.	Minimal or superficial use of materials from the ELPS and EDSE program, relying mostly on one or two courses or outside resources.	Few connections to outside resources or ELPS course/program materials.	4 3 2 1
<b>Overall formatting, organization, and expression throughout the exam including use of APA.</b>	Skills in organizing and expressing ideas in a holistic, logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion. Consistent, correct use of APA style and formatting.	Skills in organizing and expressing ideas with clarity and persuasiveness. Generally consistent and correct use of APA style and formatting.	Presentation in discrete parts with little overall coherence. Inconsistent or incorrect use of APA style and formatting.	Disorganized or confusing discussion of problem and proposed changes. APA style and formatting contains errors that detract from paper or APA is not used.	4 3 2 1
<b>Overall Rating</b>	<p><b>Note:</b> A rating of "1" for any category above will result in overall failure on the exam.  An overall rating of "3" or higher from at least two readers is required to pass the exam.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4      3      2      1</p>				

## Colorado Quality Principal Standards (Revised 2019)

### QUALITY STANDARD I

**Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement.**

ELEMENT A: Principals collaboratively develop the vision, mission, and strategic plan, based on a cycle of continuous improvement of student outcomes, and facilitate their integration into the school community.

ELEMENT B: Principals collaborate with staff and stakeholders to implement strategies for change to improve student outcomes.

ELEMENT C: Principals establish and effectively manage systems that ensure high-quality staff.

ELEMENT D: Principals establish systems and partnerships for managing all available school resources to facilitate improved student outcomes.

ELEMENT E: Principals facilitate the design and use of a variety of communication strategies with all stakeholders.

### QUALITY STANDARD II

**Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and community.**

ELEMENT A: Principals create a professional school environment and foster relationships that promote staff and student success and well-being.

ELEMENT B: Principals ensure that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment that fosters a sense of safety and well-being.

ELEMENT C: Principals commit to an inclusive and positive school environment that meets the needs of all students and promotes the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.

ELEMENT D: Principals create and utilize systems to share leadership and support collaborative efforts throughout the school.

ELEMENT E: Principals design and/or utilize structures and processes which result in family and community engagement and support.

### QUALITY STANDARD III

**Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment, supporting professional learning, conducting observations, providing actionable feedback, and holding staff accountable for student outcomes.**

ELEMENT A: Principals establish, align, and ensure implementation of a district/BOCES plan of instruction, instructional practice, assessments, and use of student data that result in academic growth and achievement for all students.

ELEMENT B: Principals foster a collaborative culture of job-embedded professional learning.

ELEMENT C: Principals demonstrate knowledge of effective instructional practice and provide feedback to promote continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

ELEMENT D: Principals hold all staff accountable for setting and achieving measurable student outcomes.

### QUALITY STANDARD IV

**Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.**

ELEMENT A: Principals demonstrate high standards for professional conduct.

ELEMENT B: Principals link professional growth to their professional goals.

ELEMENT C: Principals build and sustain productive partnerships with key community stakeholders, including public and private sectors, to promote school improvement, student learning, and student well-being.

**Colorado Department of Education Standards: Director of Gifted Education Standards**

- 6.14(2) **Foundations for Leadership: The director of gifted education demonstrates knowledge about professional leadership and the responsibilities of ethical leadership, and provides support for educators, students, family and community members to effectively address outcomes for gifted learners. The director is able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of gifted education organization, programs, laws and best practices and the ability to set high standards and a positive direction for gifted education consistent with values, mission and vision of the state and administrative unit. The director of gifted education is able to:**
- 6.14(2)(a) demonstrate methods to develop vision, mission, goals and design for gifted education programs.
  - 6.14(2)(b) demonstrate the ability to bring together stakeholders to implement general program and gifted-student goals and best practices in gifted education.
  - 6.14(2)(c) implement collaborative decision-making strategies, as appropriate.
  - 6.14(2)(d) apply knowledge of models and practices in change theory for improvement efforts.
- 6.14(3) **Gifted Education and School Systems: The director of gifted education shall demonstrate knowledge of organizational culture, apply a systems approach to the development of gifted-education programs and implement processes in order to facilitate effective system change. The director of gifted education is able to:**
- 6.14(3)(a) demonstrate understanding of how systems within a district or administrative unit influence gifted-student instruction and performance.
  - 6.14(3)(c) apply a systems approach for developing gifted programs to enhance integrated support and service to gifted students and their families.
- 6.14(4) **Law and Policy: The director of gifted education shall have comprehensive knowledge and the ability to apply state and federal laws, regulations, case law and policies that impact all children, including those with exceptional academic and talent aptitude. The director of gifted education is able to:**
- 6.14(4)(a) demonstrate proficiency in gifted-education policy, regulations, case law and federal programs supporting key instructional needs of gifted students.
  - 6.14(4)(c) clarify law and regulations for all stakeholders.
  - 6.14(4)(d) ensure implementation of privacy laws and district policy regarding confidentiality of advanced learning plans, student records and data.
- 6.14(5) **Instructional Leadership: The director of gifted education shall be able to blend the resources of general and gifted education for the positive benefit of gifted students. The director shall be knowledgeable about best practices for gifted learners including specialized curriculum, effective instructional strategies, assessments, social-emotional/affective support and individualized instruction that most effectively address outcomes for individual gifted students. The director of gifted education is able to:**
- 6.14(5)(a) demonstrate knowledge of and support for current required identification methods and procedures.

- 6.14(5)(e) monitor standards-based advanced learning plans (ALPs) in order to ensure alignment of programming options to gifted student needs.
- 6.14(6) **Program Planning and Organization: The director of gifted education is able to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of gifted-education programing, delivery settings, services and monitoring systems and use evaluation data to improve the programs and services for all children, including those with exceptional academic and talent aptitude. The director of gifted education is able to:**
  - 6.14(6)(a) design and implement needs-assessments and use data to inform restructuring or adjustments to gifted programs.
  - 6.14(6)(b) develop and implement action plans for gifted education based upon student outcomes, challenges, root causes, improvement strategies and benchmarks.
  - 6.14(6)(c) demonstrate knowledge of effective, research-based gifted-education models and practices that have positive impacts on gifted students.
- 6.14(7) **Human resource Functions: The director of gifted education shall have the knowledge and ability to recruit, retain, supervise and evaluate qualified personnel in order to effectively implement programs and services for all children, including those with exceptional academic and talent aptitude. The director of gifted education is able to:**
  - 6.14(7)(d) demonstrate understanding of skills and knowledge necessary for educators to provide for specific needs of gifted and talented students through alignment of programming options and expectations to address individual gifts and talents.
- 6.14(8) **Parent, Family and Community Partnership: The director of gifted education is knowledgeable about effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies. The director shall have the knowledge and ability to facilitate partnerships and engage parents, families, educators, administrators, students and communities in the implementation of gifted-education programs and the delivery of gifted-education programming services. The director of gifted education is able to:**
  - 6.14(8)(c) apply methods and systems to maximize parent and family involvement in advanced learning plans and gifted school/district engagement.
- 6.14(9) **Budget and Resources: The director of gifted education shall be knowledgeable about and able to budget and allocate resources related to gifted education. The director of gifted education is able to:**
  - 6.14(9)(a) develop and manage a gifted education budget including the facilitation of stakeholders in a collaborative budget development process.
  - 6.14(9)(b) leverage resources for gifted education within school systems.
  - 6.14(9)(c) provide evidence of district budgeting procedures that address state requirements.
  - 6.14(9)(d) conduct research and needs assessments in order to accurately identify specific budget needs and promote initiatives for gifted education funding through grants and other funding opportunities.