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Educators of the Gifted in Pennsylvania: A Quantitative Study of Educational Beliefs

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EDUCATORS OF THE GIFTED IN PENNSYLVANIA:
A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL BELIEFS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the educational beliefs of educators of the gifted in the state of Pennsylvania and if these beliefs are congruent with best practices. At the time of this study, educators in the state of Pennsylvania did not need special certification to instruct gifted students. All that was required was a valid teaching certificate in any subject area. Therefore, it is possible that some educators may not have any specialized training related to teaching gifted students. A comprehensive database of all educators of the gifted did not exist in Pennsylvania which made this a difficult population to contact.

One hundred fifty-four individuals completed an online survey. This study revealed experience levels of educators in gifted education and overall professional teaching, educational beliefs regarding gifted education, professional development practices in the field of gifted education, belief in self as gifted, and teaching duties related or not related to gifted education.

This study found that there was no statistical significant difference in beliefs between educators whose only responsibility is gifted education services and educators who are responsible for gifted education and at least one other educational responsibility not related to gifted education. There were some statistically significant differences between amount of professional development pertaining to gifted education and educator

beliefs. Extensive experience as an educator of the gifted resulted in beliefs that are better aligned to the research as opposed to having more years of total teaching experience. Some statistical significance was found between belief in self as gifted and awareness of student needs.

This study is encouraging because it reveals a group of educators with diverse teaching backgrounds who are informed about gifted student needs. These educators of the gifted engage in professional development in gifted education regardless of the fact that, at the time of this study, was not mandated by the state of Pennsylvania. Further research should be conducted in other locations on educators of the gifted and educational beliefs. More studies need to be done to determine if educators of the gifted are able to put gifted educational theory into practice.