Description of how the proposed program has been revisioned to reflect the Standards for Graduate Teacher Candidates and the 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions embedded in them and the rationale for the changes.

As a result of the revisioning process, the Master of Education program at Elon University made a fundamental conceptual change: we made inquiry the centerpiece of the program. While inquiry has been one of the major concepts of the M.Ed. conceptual framework since 2002, we now see it as the central concept that underlies and guides all the work we propose to do with our graduate students. That one conceptual change guides two programmatic changes: one in the sequencing and structure of graduate coursework, and the second in the products graduate students will develop and submit as evidence of meeting the Standards for Graduate Teacher Candidates approved by the State Board of Education in January 2009. Some of the changes will be obvious, others will be subtle. Overall, we believe the changes will be transformative.

The graphic below provides a visual depiction of the revisioned program at both the conceptual and the programmatic level:

The decision to make inquiry central to graduate education at Elon comes from our recognition that the complexities and challenges of living and learning in the 21st century call for educational programs to produce thoughtful questioners and life-long learners. Teaching needs to be reconfigured to enable students to generate their own questions and new ideas, to pursue their own answers, and to put their knowledge to use (Falk & Blumenreich, 2005). In teacher education, it is doubly important to teach within an inquiry framework since we work with teachers themselves. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) write, “The concept of inquiry as stance permits closer understanding of knowledge-practice relationships, how inquiry produces knowledge, and what practitioners learn from inquiry within communities” (p. 126). As such, inquiry provides us with new insights into teaching, learning, and leading in an educational setting. Our goal is to model and exemplify the skills and habits of mind to become inquirers, problem-solvers, creative/critical thinkers, and collaborative leaders who will enable all learners to meet the challenges of working and living successfully in a global society.
Programmatic Changes

In the revisioned program, three pieces of evidence will replace the portfolio as graduate candidates’ culminating product of learning. Currently, candidates in Gifted Education submit a portfolio with five sections, each containing artifacts that provide evidence of meeting current graduate standards and a written rationale for the inclusion of those artifacts. In the revised program, graduate candidates submit three distinct evidences of meeting the 2009 standards: a research product, a curriculum product, and a leadership product. Inquiry will direct the approach taken to each of the products graduate candidates submit as evidence of meeting the standards. The research product will be the outcome of a planned inquiry that has the potential not only to answer a question of practice but also to generate what Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) call “local knowledge of practice.” The curriculum product will be the result of a directed inquiry into how to make the general curriculum particularly relevant and challenging for students with high intellectual or academic ability. The leadership product will address the very practical but fundamental question, “So what?” In other words, “What are we to do with the knowledge and skills we have gained? How can we act upon our findings to bring about needed change, for our students, our schools, our society?” In answer to this question, graduate candidates will design a product that takes the results of their research and/or curriculum inquiries and translates them into practice. Each product and its underlying inquiry is thereby surrounded by the overall goal of taking leadership in the creation of respectful learning environments for all learners, as shown in the visual depiction on the previous page.

That respectful learning environment is one that values diversity and extends beyond the school environment to include families and communities. A respectful learning environment is inclusive, collaborative, and global in perspective. In such an environment, students learn about different cultures and recognize that global issues must be viewed from multiple perspectives. While high expectations are held for all students, there is the recognition that different instructional strategies and differentiated curricula may be required for students with special strengths and needs if they are to remain engaged and appropriately challenged.

Coursework changes are seen both within courses and in the arrangement of courses in the program as a whole. Each course will have one or more questions that guide its content and delivery. By using questions as frames for courses, we hope to model the inquiry stance we espouse, making that stance apparent in all we do in the program. The courses will be arranged in a planned sequence and grouped according to the focal inquiry of a block of courses. (At Elon we have a three-summer, two academic year cohort program with a set sequence of coursework in each of our concentration areas.) The first summer and academic year will focus on inquiry for and about practice and will culminate in the research project. The second summer and academic year will focus on inquiry involving curriculum content and differentiation and result in the curriculum product. The third summer will focus on leadership inquiry. How might the knowledge generated in the research and curriculum projects serve as a catalyst for change and continued learning?

The rationale for the programmatic changes is to facilitate the overall conceptual change, which we believe will in turn facilitate meeting the Standards for Graduate Candidates and the 21st century knowledge, skills, and dispositions embedded in them. Teacher leadership is demonstrated in the leadership (“Agent of Change”) project; content knowledge and curriculum expertise is shown in the curriculum project; student learning is the ultimate goal of the research project; and all are directed at establishing respectful learning environments. The reflection comes with considering how these pieces are brought together using a lens of inquiry, how teachers are empowered by asking important questions about their practice and applying the knowledge they gain in the creation of vital, joyful environments for learning.
SECTION B

Describe how public school partners were involved in the revisioning of the program and how they will be involved in the delivery and evaluation of the program. (1-2 pages maximum)

In fall 2009 a task force was established to assist in the revisioning of the M.Ed. program. This task force was charged to review data, provide feedback, generate ideas, and help plan “a newer, better, stronger, more ‘21st century’ M.Ed. program.” It included representatives from each of our graduate programs (Elementary Education, Special Education, and Gifted Education) and consisted of 6 teachers and 3 administrators from local school districts, 3 Ph.D. candidates (graduates of our program), and 6 Elon faculty members. Five school districts were represented in the group, the largest number from the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS), our partner district. This task force met four times during the fall and spring of 2009-2010. The meetings were scheduled for 5:00-7:00 p.m. and included a light supper. The sessions were lively as well as productive; they rarely ended at 7:00. All the ideas contained in this blueprint reflect the thinking that originated with this group, but probably the biggest contribution the group made was to describe what leadership looks like in schools today and how we should be preparing graduate students to be teacher leaders tomorrow. They stressed the importance of communication and collaboration and the use of data in decision-making. They suggested the “Agent of Change” project and provided several ideas for what those projects could entail. They also emphasized the need to keep research as a central piece, as it is in our current program, but they thought it, too, could be more collaborative, perhaps growing out of a need identified by their school’s professional learning community. They thought it important that the results of the research be brought back and shared at their schools. It was this task force that came up with the question, “so what?” to emphasize the need to use what is learned in graduate work for the improvement of schools and classroom practice.

There were two other groups who contributed ideas and ultimately the framework for the revision. One was the Elon M.Ed. faculty, comprised of faculty from the School of Education and from the College of Arts and Sciences and adjunct faculty who teach in public school settings or who are in other graduate programs. The second was the Elon Teacher Education Committee, which has oversight of all teacher education programs, including the M.Ed. program. The Teacher Education Committee is comprised of all program coordinators, the chair of the Education Department, the Director of the M.Ed. program, 2 students, and 2 representatives from ABSS. Several members of these two groups were also members of the task force and so brought back ideas generated there. It was the M.Ed. faculty that most carefully considered course structure and using questions to give focus to course content. The aim was to have a sequence of courses that was smooth and coherent and brought the overarching concept of inquiry into sharp focus. The Teacher Education Committee heard reports on the progress of M.Ed. revisioning and approved the direction it was taking.

The evaluation of the program, or more specifically the candidates’ evidences, will be done in much the same way as we currently evaluate candidates’ portfolios. The system has worked well for us, and it involves our public school partners in a meaningful way. Each evidence will be evaluated by two people, one a faculty member and the other a public school person, a teacher or administrator. They will use the same rubric and independently rate the quality of the evidence. In cases of disagreement, a third evaluator will be brought in to assist the two original evaluators to come to agreement. This process works well in several regards: it provides an opportunity for public school personnel to join with faculty in examining products that originate in graduate work but will be used in school practice; it provides an opportunity for our public school partners to keep apprised of the knowledge and skills being provided by our graduate program; and it gives the M.Ed. faculty opportunities to get regular feedback on the viability of the projects being assigned. In addition, it provides us with a good source of reliability data.
### SECTION C

#### SECTION C-I: Key Evidence(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Evidence</th>
<th>Brief Description of Evidence</th>
<th>Standards Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Research Project</td>
<td>This evidence is a research report describing a research project candidates design and carry out using either an experimental or naturalistic approach.</td>
<td>#4 Student Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Curriculum Project</td>
<td>This evidence describes a curriculum development project that features a differentiated approach to curriculum. Candidates design a scope and sequence or a unit of study especially designed to challenge students who are academically advanced.</td>
<td>#2 Respectful Educational Environment #3 Content and Curriculum Expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Leadership (“Agent of Change”) Project</td>
<td>This evidence describes a leadership project that springs from the candidate’s research or curriculum project. The project is designed to be collaborative and to promote initiatives that lead to school improvement or extend student learning.</td>
<td>#1 Teacher Leadership #5 Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## SECTION C-2: Relationship of the Evidence to the Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER STANDARD</th>
<th>KEY EVIDENCE FROM SECTION C-1 DEMONSTRATING THE STANDARDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

NOTE: ONLY 1 EVIDENCE SHOULD BE MARKED FOR EACH STANDARD. IT SHOULD BE THE EVIDENCE WHICH PRIMARILY DEMONSTRATES THE STANDARD IS MET.

### 1. TEACHERS LEADERSHIP

Teacher leaders assume the roles and responsibilities of collaborative leaders in schools and communities. Teachers demonstrate leadership in their classrooms, schools and professional organizations; they advocate for students and effective educational practices and policies; and they are role models for ethical leadership. Teacher leaders will know and be able to:

- Demonstrate effective ongoing communication, collaboration, and team-building among colleagues.
- Facilitate mentoring and coaching with novice teachers.
- Set goals and establish priorities while promoting educational initiatives that positively affect student learning.
- Participate in professional learning communities.

### 2. RESPECTFUL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Teacher leaders model leadership by establishing a positive and productive environment for a diverse population of students, their families, and the community. Teachers are knowledgeable about cultures and global issues and how they are contextualized locally. Teachers help colleagues develop effective strategies for students with special needs. They encourage positive, constructive relations among colleagues and students. Teacher leaders:

- Facilitate the development of inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible educational communities.
- Create collaborative partnerships with families, schools, and communities to promote a positive school culture.
- Facilitate and model caring and respectful treatment of individuals within the learning community.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of diverse world cultures and global issues.
- Encourage high expectations for all students.
- Collaboratively design and implement curriculum and instruction that is responsive to learner differences.

We also see this one as permeating all, providing direction and cohesion to the three “evidences” and preventing them from becoming three isolated products.
### NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER STANDARD

| KEY EVIDENCE FROM SECTION C-1 DEMONSTRATING THE STANDARDS |

#### 3. CONTENT AND CURRICULUM EXPERTISE

Teacher leaders have a deep knowledge of the subjects they teach and understanding of curriculum theory and development. They value collaboration and the interconnectedness of disciplines. They understand the importance of curriculum relevance in engaging students in content. Teacher leaders:

- Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Model the integration of 21st century content and skills into educational practices.
- Develop relevant, rigorous curriculum.

#### 4. STUDENT LEARNING

Teacher leaders facilitate student learning through evidence-based practice informed by research. They understand and apply research in child and adolescent development, cognitive development, and general and specialized pedagogy. They encourage critical reading, writing and thinking in the learning process. They foster instructional and evaluation methods that embrace variety and authenticity. They promote student reflection and self-assessment. They encourage colleagues and students to take on leadership roles and work in teams. Teacher leaders:

- Seek out and use existing research to inform school practices.
- Design action research to investigate and improve student learning and school policies and practices.
- Model technology integration that supports student learning.
- Critically analyze student and school performance data to determine needs and plan instruction that is rigorous, coherent, and substantiated within a theoretical and philosophical base.

#### 5. REFLECTION

Teacher leaders contribute to systematic, critical analysis of learning in their classrooms and beyond. They are lifelong learners who model and support ongoing professional development. Teachers embrace critical thinking, problem solving, and innovation. Teacher leaders:

- Promote an educational culture that values reflective practice.
- Model the development of meaningful professional goals.
- Model personal and professional reflection to extend student learning and school improvement
SECTION C-3: Detailed Description of Key Evidence(s)

Evidence #1

Name: Research Project
Specific Artifact(s): Written Research Report
Standard(s) Addressed by the Evidence: #4 Student Learning

The research project that M.Ed. candidates in Gifted Education complete as part of their program requirements is the first, and perhaps most essential, inquiry in which candidates engage while in graduate school. At its essence research is inquiry, setting the stage well for the habit of mind we want M.Ed. candidates to develop over the course of the program. The research that candidates are required to conduct as part of the Elon graduate program is rigorous but broadly conceived. We tend to call it “action research,” though candidates do not always conduct research that completely fits the description of that type of investigation. Ferrance (2000) says action research is “a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research” (p. 1). She points out that it frequently is a collaborative activity among colleagues addressing school problems and seeking ways to solve those problems and make change. Though action research involves disciplined inquiry and systematic research techniques, as do other forms of research, action research is distinguished by its clear intent to lead to a change in practice, to take an action (hence the name). Though there are different types of action research, they all specify a cycle of identifying a problem area, posing a question, gathering and organizing data, interpreting the data, and deciding on a course of action based on the data. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) distinguish action research from what they call “practitioner research” by their end goals, the goal of action research being local action; the goal of practitioner research being knowledge production. Either type of research would be acceptable for this evidence since, regardless of intent, each involves disciplined inquiry about educational practice. That is, it is particularly appropriate for teachers.

The approach to the research the candidates elect to do can be either experimental or naturalistic (Falk & Blumenreich, 2005). Using an experimental, or quasi-experimental, approach, candidates lay out a research design to control conditions and investigate the effect of a single variable. The naturalistic approach focuses on the field and examines variables in their natural setting. The purpose of experimental research is usually to generate knowledge, to generalize; the purpose of naturalistic research is to gain deeper understanding. Quantitative methods are typically used in experimental research while qualitative methods are used with the naturalistic approach. Regardless of approach, candidates are expected to design their research carefully and have it approved before proceeding to carry out their project.

Candidates develop a prospectus during the fall research course taken in the first year of the program. The research is conducted the following spring, usually in their own classrooms or schools. The following summer they participate in a seminar designed to assist them in data analysis and interpretation, and they begin to write their reports at that time. They will be provided with the following requirements for the development of the prospectus and the subsequent final report.

Requirements for the evidence provided to the candidates

For this evidence you will prepare two documents, a prospectus and a final report. These documents are not actually completely separate since the prospectus “rolls over” into the final report. The prospectus outlines what you plan to do, and the report tells what you actually did. You will submit the prospectus as a final product of the research course. You will submit the final report as evidence of completing the
project and meeting program completion requirements. The prescribed components of your prospectus are given below. You will develop each as part of the research course:

I. Introduction
   A. Statement of the topic
      Discussion of the background and rationale for the study
      Explication of the underlying theory or conceptual model of the inquiry
   B. Review of the literature
      Consideration of what is known and what is not know about the topic
   C. Statement of hypothesis (for quantitative research) or research questions (for qualitative research)

II. Method of Inquiry
   A. Participants
      Description of participants and setting of the study (including a description of the social/familial/institutional context)
   B. Instruments and/or data collection tools
      Descriptions of the specific measures to use or the data sources to collect for the study
   C. Design
      Descriptions of the basic structure of the study and the specific research design chosen
   D. Procedures
      Detailed descriptions of all the major steps that will be followed in conducting the study,
      assumptions of the study, and limitations of the study
      Description of appropriate (and perhaps innovative) use of technology
   E. Data analysis
      Descriptions of the techniques that will be used to analyze the data, including application
      of appropriate statistical procedures to analyze numerical data and/or the appropriate
      procedures to interpret narrative data

III. Timeframe
   A detailed timeline for carrying out your research

After you conduct your research project and analyze your results, you will write the final report. In that report, you write what actually occurred, using the same sections as the prospectus (except for the timeframe) and adding two additional sections: a Results section and a Discussion section. In the Results section you report the findings of the data analysis, and in the Discussion section you speculate on the meaning of the results, the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, etc.

How the evidence addresses Standard 4

This evidence, the research report, addresses Standard 4 by having graduate candidates demonstrate that they can “facilitate student learning through evidence-based practice informed by research.” It does this by having them find existing research that informs school practice, by having them design a research project aimed at enhancing student learning, then actually conducting the research in their own school or other educational setting. Perhaps more importantly, it demonstrates candidates’ ability to recognize areas that have not yet been investigated, for which there is no evidence base. The ability to recognize what is not known combined with the skill and disposition to find out using systematic inquiry is an important and powerful quality in an accomplished teacher leader. This quality enables teacher leaders to become not only consumers of knowledge, but producers of knowledge that contributes to student learning.

The successful completion of the report further demonstrates candidates’ ability to think and write critically, which increases their ability to recognize and develop those skills in their students. It enables
them to act, to become change agents, and to make improvements in their own learning environments and that of others.

**How the evidence will be evaluated by the institution**

The prospectus will be evaluated first by peers and then by the professor teaching the research class, both using the same rubric. After the research is conducted and results are analyzed and the final report is written, the candidate will submit it to his/her advisor for comment. After the advisor comments and the candidate responds with any needed revisions, the report will be submitted as Evidence #1 to two evaluators, one a faculty member (neither the research course professor nor the advisor) and one outside evaluator, a representative of the public schools. These two evaluators, using the same rubric, will independently judge the project as to whether it is an acceptable evidence of proficiency for Standard 4.
Evidence #2

**Name:** Curriculum Project  
**Specific Artifact(s):** Curriculum document  
**Standard(s) Addressed by the Evidence:**  
#2 Respectful Educational Environment  
#3 Content and Curriculum Expertise

In “Curriculum for the New Millennium,” Glatthorn and Jailhall (2000) write, “For the 21st century, a new curriculum is needed – one that has the power to make a difference in the lives of the young and in the society where they live” (p. 108). We agree and believe it is crucial for teacher leaders to understand the far-reaching implications of decisions made in regard to curriculum, both for students and for society. It is our goal to prepare candidates in Gifted Education who can recognize and develop high quality curricula that will prepare students to live successfully in a fast-changing and complex global society. The second project of Elon’s M.Ed. program in Gifted Education addresses this competency by involving candidates in an inquiry about curriculum and how it can be modified to meet the needs and abilities of advanced learners.

In terms of structure, Glatthorn and Jailhall (2000) suggest that a millennial curriculum should focus on meaningful goals rather than activities, have depth rather than superficial coverage, focus on problem-solving, emphasize both knowledge and skills, and be relevant and carefully articulated both horizontally (across subjects) and vertically (across levels). Curriculum specialists in the field of gifted education (e.g. James Gallagher, Sandra Kaplan, June Maker, and Carol Ann Tomlinson) have long advocated for concept-based content and high-level thinking skills for advanced learners. Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) Understanding by Design (UbD) model, now often used as the basis for curriculum development in gifted education, emphasizes the use of essential understandings as the basis for the knowledge component of curriculum. UbD also emphasizes the importance of closely aligning curriculum and assessment in its “backwards design” approach. Many of these ideas are now being embraced in high quality general education curriculum, so advanced learners can thrive as long as the highest standards of the general curriculum are promoted.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills ([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)) has identified specific content as being important in the 21st century, including global awareness; financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy; civic literacy; and health and wellness awareness. This content suggests important and relevant themes for concept-based curricula as advocated in gifted education. Information and communications technology literacy is also important so that students develop the ability to use technology to develop 21st century content knowledge and skills.

The curriculum project that graduate candidates complete in Elon’s M.Ed. program in Gifted Education is expected to exemplify many of these characteristics.

**Directions and requirements for the evidence provided to candidates**

Curriculum answers the fundamental questions, “What should students know and be able to do when they exit high school?” and “How will we know they have that knowledge and skill?” For this project you will consider these questions and design a curriculum product that provides a segment of K-12 curriculum that is especially relevant and challenging for advanced learners. You may choose from among the following types of products:

- A scope and sequence for one or more core subjects (across grade levels)
- A unit of study around an interdisciplinary theme (either within or across grade levels)
- A unit of study built around a major disciplinary concept or principle (either within or across grade levels)
- A “parallel curriculum” unit based on the model proposed by NAGC (Tomlinson, et al. 2001) using parallel ways of thinking about course content

Your product must include the following elements:
- Knowledge and skill goals (what students should know and be able to do)
- Assessment (how you will know they know and can do what is specified in the goals)
- Differentiation making this product is especially appropriate for academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) learners
- An innovative or appropriate use of technology
- A rationale addressing each of the elements above

Unless a particular template is required by the professor of your curriculum course, you may select one that you think fits your particular product, or you may design one of your own. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) take an inquiry approach and highlight the essential relationship between curriculum and assessment in their “backwards design” curriculum. Tomlinson, et al. (2001) feature a differentiated “parallel” curriculum. The revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) provides a good template for combining content and cognitive/affective skills. Erickson (1998) is a good source for concept-based curriculum. Other writers address different aspects of curriculum development and should be referenced when relevant to the approach you take.

Regardless of which type of product you choose you will include a rationale for the structure (overall organization) and the content (knowledge and skills) of your curriculum. The rationale will address why students should know and be able to do what is specified in the goals, why they are sequenced as they are, and how technology will be utilized. It will also provide support for the assessment component, making it clear how the assessment is an appropriate way to evaluate whether advanced students have mastered the knowledge and skills included in the goals. You will include in the rationale an explanation of why your curriculum is especially appropriate for the AIG population. In addition, you will include in the rationale an explanation of how your curriculum promotes a respectful learning environment. This part of the rationale should extend beyond a consideration of the differentiation you have built in for AIG students; it should include an explanation of how this curriculum establishes a positive and productive environment for a diverse population of students.

The product may be presented in whatever format you choose. It may be a written product, a multimedia product, or a product utilizing another medium that can be submitted electronically.

**How the evidence addresses Standards 2 and 3**

The curriculum product will provide evidence that candidates can establish a positive and productive environment for a diverse population by building in differentiation for students who have academic or intellectual strengths or different ways of interacting with learning environments. The differentiation will reflect planned, respectful adjustments to core content and skills and call for a qualitative approach to differentiation, as opposed to a quantitative approach that often results in “adding on.” High quality differentiation is rigorous and demonstrates deep understanding and critical analysis of the core knowledge and skills. The content includes issues that are global in scope and involve different cultural perspectives.

The curriculum product provides evidence of content and curriculum expertise by including content that represents the essential understandings of disciplinary or interdisciplinary concepts. The rationale section will identify the theory underlying the curriculum. The selection of skills and content will demonstrate
relevance, while the sequencing will demonstrate an understanding of development. Differentiation will demonstrate an understanding of students who are advanced academically or intellectually.

How the evidence will be evaluated by the institution

This project will be evaluated first by the professor teaching the curriculum class, using a rubric developed for the project. After the professor evaluates the project, it will be submitted as Evidence #2 to two evaluators, one a faculty member (one other than the course professor) and one outside evaluator in the area of gifted education, a representative of the public schools. These two evaluators, using the same rubric, will independently judge the project as to whether it is an acceptable evidence of proficiency for Standards 2 and 3.
Evidence #3

Name: Leadership (“Agent of Change”) Project
Specific Artifact(s): Product appropriate to project
Standard(s) Addressed by the Evidence: #1 Teacher Leadership
#5 Reflection

“Inquiry means internalizing norms, habits, and techniques for continuous learning... Teachers as change agents are career-long learners, without which they would not be able to stimulate students to be continuous learners.” (Fullan, 1993)

The “Agent of Change” project demonstrates that graduate candidates can use the knowledge and skills gained in their research and curriculum projects, as well as other graduate work, to contribute to their classrooms, their schools, and their profession. It answers the questions in the minds of graduate students soon to receive their M.Ed. degree: “OK, I’ve learned how to conduct research, I’ve learned how to structure and differentiate curriculum, I’ve deepened my understanding of content, and I’ve learned about theory and effective practice. So what? What do I do with this deepened knowledge and these refined skills now? How can I share what I know and can do?”

In an interview with Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council, for the Journal of Staff Development, Michael Fullan said, “Leaders who are effective operate from powerful concepts, not from a set of techniques” (Sparks, 2003). The M.Ed. program in Gifted Education at Elon is designed to give graduate candidates powerful concepts, and we want graduates to carry those concepts into their classrooms and into the profession at large. Though having a set of techniques for becoming an effective leader may not be sufficient, certainly having practice in developing a thoughtful project plan will help budding leaders along their way. This leadership project asks candidates to develop such a plan; it provides an opportunity for them to step into a leadership role and share their newfound expertise.

The directions for the project given to candidates:

Choose a topic that reflects an outcome of either your research or your curriculum development project, or both, and that you believe will be of value to your colleagues at school, or in the community, or in the field of gifted education at large. It should be something you want to share with other teachers or school personnel, some knowledge or skill that you believe will contribute to a culture of professionalism and reflective practice. The project should involve a collaborative process, perhaps through a professional learning community. It should promote, either directly or indirectly, educational initiatives that positively affect student learning.

Projects might include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- Getting to know the demographics of the neighborhood in which you teach
- Developing a drop-out prevention program especially aimed at learners who are gifted
- Investigating the impact and future implications of globalization
- Initiating a mentoring and coaching program for novice AIG teachers
- Designing a peer tutoring program for your school
- Developing meaningful professional goals for teachers
- Designing a plan for increased collaboration with parents in the education of their children
- Investigating summer camps, or college and career choices, for AIG students
- Developing a plan for interdisciplinary teaching
• Writing units of study that feature 21st century content and skills (e.g. economic literacy, health and wellness, civic literacy, problem-solving, ethics, information and media literacy)
• Writing a grant proposal to provide summer enrichment programs for the students at your school
• Investigating the research base for instructional models for AIG students
• Generating data to determine effectiveness of new instructional programs, especially for advanced learners
• Working with parents to provide “lunch bunch” book discussions with interested students
• Involving students in community service learning opportunities
• Making a presentation at a professional conference
• Conducting a workshop for your school or school district

Your evidence may be a media presentation, a written document, or other appropriate documentation. All will be evaluated using a similar rubric and all must be available electronically. The product should include the following:

Part I: Project Proposal
   Part I: Project Proposal
   A. A brief description of the project and of the intended participants
   B. A list of goals and objectives, both for you and for the participants
   C. An assessment plan outlining how you will determine whether goals have been met
   D. A rationale for your choice of project, including references supporting the significance of the topic
   E. A brief review of the underlying principles of collaborative leadership applicable to your project
   F. A plan for implementation including a projected timeline
   G. A plan for the sustainability of outcomes
   H. An innovative or appropriate use of technology
   I. A list of resources you will need
   J. Any handouts/information you will provide as part of the project

Part II: Reflection
   A. A reflection on how this project will extend student learning and school improvement
   B. A reflection on how this project will contribute to a respectful educational environment

How the evidence addresses Standards 1 and 5

This project provides evidence that candidates meet Standard 1 Teacher Leadership by showing they can act as change agents, leading an effort in their school or other professional venue to bring about an improvement in student learning or in school conditions. They collaborate with colleagues to gather data and put the plan into action.

The project also provides evidence that candidates meet Standard 5 by demonstrating they can analyze learning in their classrooms and beyond and develop a plan of action to bring about a needed change, a school improvement or an enhancement of student learning. It demonstrates they are life-long learners through their commitment to ongoing professional development.
How the evidence will be evaluated by the institution

This project will be evaluated first by the professor teaching the leadership class, using a rubric developed for the project. After the professor evaluates the project, it will be submitted as Evidence #3 to two evaluators, one a faculty member (one other than the course professor) and one outside evaluator, a representative of the public schools. These two evaluators, using the same rubric, will independently judge the project as to whether it is an acceptable evidence of proficiency for Standards 1 and 5. In cases of disagreement, an independent evaluator will assist in bringing about consensus.

SECTION D

The timeline for implementation that includes a transition plan for currently enrolled/admitted candidates.

The following chart shows the progression of implementation of the revised graduate program. The cohort graduating in summer 2011 (Cohort 9) will finish out the current program. The cohort of students who begin the program in 2010 (Cohort 10) will also finish out under the current program. The courses scheduled for Cohorts 9 and 10 in current programs of study will continue to be offered in their current configuration; no transition plan will be necessary. The cohort that enters the program in summer 2011 (Cohort 11) will begin with the new program and complete it in summer 2013.

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<tr>
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<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
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<td><strong>Cohort 9</strong> (entered program in 2009)</td>
<td>Summer 3 / graduating old program</td>
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<td><strong>Cohort 10</strong> (entered program in 2010)</td>
<td>Summer 2 old program</td>
<td>Summer 3 / graduating old program</td>
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References


