Identifying and Accommodating the Highly Gifted

In the following report we explore the identification and accommodation of highly gifted students, whose specific needs vary from those of other gifted students. We review the literature concerning this group of students and provide an overview of how they can best be accommodated in a non-specialized school setting.
Introduction

Highly gifted children are not typically well-accommodated at school. The majority of teachers have little training in identifying and meeting the needs of highly gifted children, and in many instances where teachers do hold adequate training they face institutional rigidity in trying to plan for the education of these children. Some assume that interventions that are successful with moderately gifted children will suffice for the highly gifted, which is not universally the case.

The terms highly, exceptionally, or unusually gifted are not exact, and the degrees of giftedness to which they correspond are not precisely defined, even when derived from IQ scores. It is clear, however, that a child with an IQ of over 160 is notably different from a child with an IQ of 130. In fact, the gulf is comparable to that between a child with an IQ of 130 and a same-age peer of average IQ (100). Due to the unique needs of these highly gifted students, they are particularly vulnerable in the standard classroom. Highly gifted children require certain accommodations and instructional flexibility to thrive in the educational system.

In order to meet the needs of the brightest children, it is necessary to first identify them. This is no simple task, as giftedness shows in the earliest years of child development and can manifest in a variety of ways. Additionally, because these children develop asynchronously, with their physical age lagging behind their mental age, parents and teachers can discount their early achievements. IQ testing is a common way of attempting to identify the highly gifted, though some argue that this method is “elitist” and can be unreliable.

Once the highly gifted are identified, it is important to devise an educational plan that will continuously challenge and motivate the child to continue learning. If stuck in a traditional classroom, highly gifted children tend to “go underground,” hiding their abilities due to a sense of difference from their peers. Sometimes, schools cannot meet the needs of their highly gifted children, at which point alternatives such as early college programs or gifted magnet school programs should be considered.

In this report, we discuss identifying and accommodating the highly gifted. We attempt to restrain the scope of the report to private independent schools; however, in some cases we find it beneficial to widen our scope to include content pertaining to public independent schools. First, we offer some of our key findings.

Key Findings

- IQ tests are typically reliable methods of measuring a child’s level of giftedness. If a child’s full scale IQ score on the WISC-IV test falls between 138-145, he or she is labeled “highly gifted.”
Standardized test scores can also reliably indicate whether a child is gifted, though levels of giftedness are more difficult to capture in this way.

Schools too often equate high performance with giftedness. Giftedness is the potential for high performance. The most highly gifted students often perform poorly in school due to boredom and frustration.

Parents should be able to identify their children as highly gifted very early on in their development. Gifted children do not wait until school age to begin demonstrating their differences.

Teachers are at a disadvantage when it comes to identifying the highly gifted since, as stated above, this cannot always be gauged through academic achievement. Gifted children often present themselves as difficult, disobedient, and obstinate, either due to differences in how they perceive the world or due to their frustration with a non-challenging environment.

The highly gifted are also adept at masking their giftedness, recognizing their differences from same-age peers. These students often attempt to fit in to establish a social connection with their peers. For example, highly gifted children will often stand on the sidelines during a given activity and follow the example set by their age-peers so as not to stand out.

Other characteristics that may identify highly gifted children is a focused interest in particular topics, early language and mathematical understanding, powerful imagination, interest in philosophical issues, and an unusually clear memory.

Teachers and administrators do highly gifted children a disservice by assuming that these students will flourish in any environment because they can learn on their own. Highly gifted children require appropriate accommodations in school to succeed.

Acceleration of some kind is often the best choice for accommodation. Either students are skipped ahead multiple grade levels (one grade is often not sufficient), or they are allowed to take out-of-grade courses in certain subjects while still enrolled in their age-based grade. This accommodation only requires testing to identify the level at which the student should learn, and flexibility on the part of the school.

When a child is identified as highly gifted from an early age, early entry to kindergarten or first grade should be offered. This is a similar strategy to grade acceleration, except that it is implemented from the outset of a child’s education.
Within the classroom, highly gifted students may be frustrated by the pace of traditional learning. When possible, ability-based groupings should be considered for highly gifted students, so they can learn alongside their mental-ability peers. Flexible pacing and allowing gifted students to move through a curriculum faster while using extra time for independent study can represent a fruitful set of accommodations as well.

If infrastructure allows, schools can consider developing a “school within a school” just for highly gifted students. This allows these students to experience an accelerated curriculum and adopt learning strategies geared toward their particular learning styles.

For older students, schools should provide information on college programs and early college entry options available to highly gifted students. Often by late middle school, highly gifted students will be nearing completion of a typical K-12 curriculum and will seek further challenges.
Identifying Highly Gifted Children

There are two primary ways to identify highly gifted children: administering standardized intelligence tests and observing precocious developmental patterns and behaviors. Each has its benefits and limitations, as discussed below.

**Testing**

A high score on an IQ test is generally accepted as an **almost certain indication of extreme intelligence**, as it is agreed to be highly unlikely that a child will accidentally test high. However, modern IQ tests may not be as reliable for the highly gifted as they have been in the past, as recent revisions of these tests have “virtually eliminated” the high-range scores that would identify such children.¹ Children who might naturally fall above the upper limit of a test’s score range will instead only reach as high as the test allows—resulting in **highly intelligent children being grouped with less intelligent, though gifted, individuals**. Removing the upper ranges of these scores can leave evaluators without a precise quantitative measurement of a child’s ability.

So how does one classify a child as “highly gifted,” versus other levels of giftedness? There are generally-accepted boundaries drawn through IQ score ranges which will identify a child as falling under one of four levels of giftedness depending on which version of IQ test is taken, as follows:²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Giftedness</th>
<th>Full Scale IQ score WISC-IV, WPPSI-III</th>
<th>Extended IQ score WISC-IV</th>
<th>Full Scale IQ score SB-5</th>
<th>Full Scale IQ score WISC-III, WPPSI-R, SB-4, SB L-M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gifted or Moderately Gifted</td>
<td>130-138</td>
<td>130-145</td>
<td>120-129</td>
<td>130-145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally Gifted</td>
<td>145-152</td>
<td>160+</td>
<td>130-140</td>
<td>160-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profoundly Gifted</td>
<td>152-160</td>
<td>175+</td>
<td>135-141+</td>
<td>180+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools themselves continually test students to measure their achievement and performance. Educators have come to equate high achievement with giftedness, although **giftedness primarily translates into potential for high performance**, not necessarily the execution of it. When test scores indicate potential beyond that which is reflected in academic achievement, **students are often labeled as underachievers**. Educators assume these children have emotional problems or learning disabilities, which may be present in some cases. However, more common amongst gifted children is the discrepancy between a child’s cognitive abilities and the mental requirements of the school work he or she is asked to produce.

In the middle years, however, standardized tests prove to be the best method of identifying the highly gifted, as long as the tests have a high enough ceiling to capture students at different levels of giftedness. Some researchers believe that testing during the middle grades is more indicative of a student’s actual giftedness than is testing at the lower grades, with some going so far as to question whether early test results are reliable indicators of future achievement at all.

However, simply because tests are more reliable in the middle grades is no reason to postpone all testing until a student is older. Some early proof of giftedness can help guide early educators in meeting the general needs of a given student at a young age. Then, retesting can occur in later years when the tests are more reliable, to pinpoint specific areas and levels of giftedness.3

Some schools choose to use standardized test scores instead of IQ tests to determine the level of a child’s giftedness. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, students who are applying to attend the district’s highly gifted magnet school can demonstrate their giftedness by meeting certain benchmarks by subject level on the California Standards Test, averaging to placement in the 85th percentile or above.4 These tests are administered starting in 2nd grade. It is interesting to note, however, that no further specifications are made by the district as to “levels” of giftedness. All students scoring above the 85th percentile are labeled as gifted and grouped together, which falls short of ideal.5 Research shows that this can be an ineffective method of treating gifted students, as their needs vary widely depending on their level of giftedness.

**Observation**

There is a general consensus that highly gifted children are most easily identified by parents in the early years of development. During the early years, cognitive development occurs quickly, which leads to dramatic changes in how a child interacts with his or her environment. Parents will note that certain developmental milestones are reached earlier than average—early walking, early speaking, and advanced communication abilities, for instance. Gifted children do not wait until school age to begin demonstrating their abilities.6

In the nineties, a group of theorists, practitioners, and parents in Columbus, Ohio (thereafter called the “Columbus Group”) proposed that giftedness is marked by asynchronous development rather than high levels of achievement, as noted below:

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony

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5 Ibid.
increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.\(^7\)

This shift away from defining giftedness solely based on achievement persists today. **Many internal markers which shape the way a child interacts with the world are ultimately used to recognize the gifted in homes and schools.** Asynchronous development presents challenges in a school setting, however. Even if a child is presented with material and activities appropriate for his or her cognitive needs, the child’s social needs can remain unmet. When a gifted child is in class with children his age, he is forced to relate to peers who are cognitively less developed in many ways, and when he is in class with mental-ability peers, he often has to relate to children much older.\(^8\) **Asynchronous development of highly gifted children represents an obstacle to offering such individuals a comfortable school experience.**

Teachers are at somewhat of a disadvantage in attempting to identify highly gifted children, as they often present themselves as difficult, obstinate, and willfully disobedient. One researcher provides the example of a child in pre-kindergarten who was asked to “pass a cup,” with the intention being that all the cups be sent over to the teacher. The child was struck with the double meaning of the word “pass,” and instead repeatedly and deliberately walked by the cup. When asked why he did not pass the cup as instructed, he responded that he had, in fact, passed the cup several times! The teacher, only desiring to clean up the space, marked the child as being disobedient.\(^9\)

Another common roadblock to a teacher’s identification of gifted children is that these students often desire to just “fit in” to such an extent that they successfully mask their talents. Highly gifted children can feel socially isolated and recognize the difference between themselves and their peers. In aiming to develop friendships and social connections, they can purposely fail to complete work and not answer questions in class, hiding the common markers a teacher might use to identify a student as gifted.

One classic study by Gordon and Thomas highlights the skill with which highly gifted students are able to mimic the behavior of their class group. In the study, teachers were asked to describe their students’ behavior when faced with a new activity, using one of four descriptors:\(^10\)

- **Plungers:** Children who plunged into new activities or situations quickly and positively.
- **Go-alongers:** Children who went along with the group in a generally positive manner but who rarely took the initiative or adopted a leadership role.

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\(^10\) Ibid.
- **Sideliners**: Children who preferred to wait for a bit until a new activity was established and then gradually became involved.

- **Nonparticipators**: Children who remained negative to new situations for weeks or months, or even indefinitely.

The teachers were also asked to make a professional judgment of each child’s intelligence. The teachers overwhelmingly asserted that the plungers were of above average intelligence, but upon formal testing, the highly gifted children were more likely to appear amongst the sideliners and go-alongers. These children were seen to stand back and examine their classmates’ actions before committing to the activity. As this demonstrates, teachers commonly mistake motivation and confidence with high ability. Teachers also tend to over-estimate the ability of children who are agreeable, helpful, and cooperative in class.  

Teachers may notice, however, one prominent characteristic of the highly gifted: “In optimal circumstances they demonstrate a penchant for sustained focus in any area of intense interest.” This focus may not carry over into other areas of work.

Some other general characteristics of highly gifted children, identified by either parents or teachers, include:

- Very early language development, large and precise vocabulary, complex sentence structure
- Very early manipulation of numbers
- High levels of energy
- Extreme levels of curiosity and highly connective mental processing
- Capacious and clear memory, observable early
- Early reading and comprehension and use of other written symbol systems (e.g., numbers and musical notation)
- Precocious sense of humor
- Powerful imagination
- Unusual levels of empathy and connectedness to other children and other life forms
- Precocious interest in moral, ethical, and philosophical issues
- Desire for close friendships, often a preference for a few deep relationships rather than many short or shallow ones

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11 Ibid.
Accommodating the Highly Gifted

The exceptional nature of highly gifted children is such that, in order for them to flourish in a school environment, certain accommodations must be made. Not all schools may have the infrastructure available to separate the highly gifted and place them in ability-based groups, but there are other ways to support these children’s development as well.

Research out of the Daimon Institute for the Highly Gifted identifies three core needs for the development of highly gifted children, which serve as theoretical guidelines for identifying strategies for accommodating these students. A highly gifted child has a deep need for the following:14

- **Communion**: Meaningful reciprocal spiritual, emotional, and intellectual exchange. Experienced by the child as a feeling of “I am known and I am connected and I am connecting.” Highly gifted children experience the world differently from their peers, which can complicate a sense of communion.

- **Knowledge**: To know and comprehend the nature and the meaning of phenomena from the material to the metaphysical. Self-knowledge is also essential to development; agency is necessary for the communion exchange.

- **Expression**: Transforming ideas into words, art form, thing, or movement. The act of manifesting perception of experience internally or externally for self or others.

Propagation of common myths about gifted children can lower the chances that they will be offered appropriate accommodations. It is important, according to the National Association for Gifted Children, that such myths be dispelled. Myths regarding gifted students and their education include:15

- Gifted students do not need help, they can learn on their own
- Teachers challenge all the students, so gifted students will be fine in a regular classroom
- Gifted students make everyone else in the class smarter by providing a role model or a challenge
- Acceleration placement options are socially harmful for gifted students
- AP courses are sufficient for gifted children

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Such beliefs are at odds with the unique needs of gifted and highly gifted students. Below, we discuss several strategies for allowing highly gifted children to learn at an appropriate level and pace, either within a school or outside of it.

**Grade Level Acceleration**

In a school with no special programs for highly gifted students, some accommodation can still be achieved through acceleration. **Acceleration is often necessary for gifted children.** Moving a child ahead in grade levels acknowledges the child’s level of understanding and high capability for rapid learning. Testing can identify the level at which a student should be placed for each subject, and the child can be appropriately placed according to available opportunities.

**Grade skipping is often the best choice,** as it places the child with older children who are more socially and intellectually matched. It may also result in a more appropriate curriculum for the gifted child, and can offer a simple and economical solution for the school. Research notes that skipping a single year is seldom helpful, as the difference between single grade levels is too small. Perceived gaps in a gifted child’s knowledge relative to curriculum can be overcome and are preferred to a deficient curriculum.

**Subject Matter Acceleration**

Subject matter acceleration involves **placing gifted children in classes of varying grade levels,** depending upon a child’s level of ability. This may result in a child taking a math class with 6th graders, a reading class with 4th graders, and a physical education class with 2nd grade peers. This accommodation requires a high level of parent and school flexibility, as it is an unconventional method of moving through the school system.16

Some scheduling and logistics problems may prevent children from fully utilizing available opportunities for acceleration, when appropriate placement may require that a child travel from an elementary to a middle or high school for part of the day. In cases such as these, whole grade acceleration may be preferred to the more tailored subject matter acceleration arrangement.

**Early Entry to Kindergarten**

**Gifted children who are permitted early entry to kindergarten or first grade typically perform as well or better than their classmates.** Decisions about early entry arrangements can be made on the basis of intellectual, academic, and social

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readiness. For some students, however, particularly the highly gifted, early entry may be insufficient to address their needs. Research suggests that schools consider some form of “ability grouping” in addition to early entry, so that students are grouped with intellectual peers.

Students at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina who reach their fourth birthday by mid-April are allowed to enter kindergarten early so long as they demonstrate an “extraordinary” level of academic ability and maturity. This is measured by two standardized tests, student work, and two letters of recommendation. Students must score in the 98th percentile on the Stanford-Binet or Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence and the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Work demonstrating outstanding ability in reading, math, science, writing, art, or creative pursuits must be submitted. And finally, two letters of recommendation from teachers, pediatricians, or child care workers must be submitted, documenting the child’s physical and social maturity. The principal of the school evaluates each application and determines if sufficient advancement has occurred to allow the child early entry into kindergarten.17

In-Class Provisions

Highly gifted children typically learn both faster than and differently from other children. Standard teaching methods break down large concepts into small digestible packages, which will often frustrate the gifted child who is accustomed to consuming large amounts of information at one time. Giving gifted children small bits of information will result in boredom and poor performance. In fact, when forced to learn at the same pace as same-age peers, gifted children may appear less capable than their classmates.18

One remedy to this problem is to utilize flexible pacing strategies such as skill grouping, curricular compacting, contracting, and credit by examination. Options such as original research, independent studies, and mentorships allow students to explore topics in depth.19

The Mirman School, a private school for gifted students in Los Angeles, recognizes that highly gifted students learn differently and require a specific type of learning environment to thrive. Students at the Mirman School are often presented opportunities for reflective thinking, problem solving, and critical evaluation. These students are encouraged to engage in creative expression and both divergent and

18 Ibid.
convergent thinking. Individualized learning plans are created for each student, as the highly gifted student learns at a unique pace in a unique manner. Plenty of time is reserved for independent study and pursuit of individual interests.20

Separate Gifted Programs

If adequate resources are available, a school can consider developing a separate gifted learning program to accommodate highly gifted students. Children who do not flourish in a regular classroom may find a wholly gifted classroom more productive. For instance, at Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools, highly gifted students in grades 2 through 7 can enroll in the Quest Program, which is a tuition-free “school within a school.” The program covers the four core subject areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The Quest program utilizes curriculum acceleration in order to support the learning of highly gifted students.21 More information on the Quest program is found in the “Case Profiles” section of this report.

Special College Programs

Colleges are continually searching for the best up and coming talent in middle and high schools for later recruiting purposes. These programs benefit the highly gifted, as they provide an opportunity for these children to interact with others at their intellectual level. Typically after a student takes the SAT and scores high enough—in the seventh grade or earlier, depending on the student—colleges invite qualifying individuals to attend on-campus programming with other gifted children. Many participants find just as much value in the social interaction with likeminded students as in the programming itself.22

Not only can highly gifted students benefit from programs designed to introduce them to college-level coursework, some colleges also allow for early entry. Colleges allowing younger students to apply for entry provide gifted students an opportunity to enroll before completing high school. Schools can support this option for their highly gifted students by allowing them to fast-track through courses. Age and grade level limits should be removed, as they present barriers to a highly gifted student’s ability to gain the final high school credits required to apply for college. Highly gifted students can use the early college experience to meet their needs for a more challenging academic environment.

Information on opportunities such as these can represent a valuable resource for highly gifted children, who may be uncertain where they “fit” amongst their student

22 Ibid.
peers. Examples of specialized college programming designed for young students include the following (active hyperlinks):  

- Boston University Academy
- Bard High School Early College
- Early College at Guilford
- Florida Atlantic University High School
- Mary Baldwin College – Program for the Exceptionally Gifted
- National Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering – University of Iowa
- Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science – University of North Texas
- University of Pittsburgh Accelerated High School

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23 “Early Entrance College Programs.” Hoagies Gifted Education Page.  
http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/early_college.htm
Case Profiles

Pflugerville Independent School District (Pflugerville, TX)

Pflugerville Independent School District offers opportunities for gifted students through a two-tiered, multifaceted design which includes the PFLEX (Pflugerville Learning Extensions) program and the HG (Highly Gifted) program. Students are offered opportunities to participate in enrichment, extension, and acceleration, depending on their individual needs. All teachers involved in gifted education are trained in meeting the needs of gifted children.24

The Highly Gifted program is full-time and allows students to experience accelerated learning. Material is covered in greater depth and complexity than it would be in a traditional classroom. Elementary HG students are placed in one class together for all subjects, while at the secondary level HG students are separated into math and science classes. Some students attending the HG program must travel to a different location from their geographical peers.

A district-level Admission and Review Committee evaluates students for admission into the HG program, which is available to students in grades 4 through 8. The committee consists of administrators, counselors, and teachers trained in gifted education. In order to determine eligibility for attending the program, the following criteria are used:

- Educational need for the learning environment provided by classes for the highly gifted
- Evidence that the student is functioning in the top 1% of the district’s population when compared to peers
- Ability to function in an environment which requires students to work at an accelerated pace on above-grade-level curriculum, self-motivation and independence
- At least one test score at or above 140 for math or verbal on a district-approved assessment
- Achievement test scores at or above grade level in all core areas
- Classroom performance indicating highly gifted level
- Teacher inventory indicating highly gifted level
- Expressed desire to participate in the program
- Student interview

24 “Gifted and Talented Programs.” Pflugerville ISD. http://www.pflugervilleisd.net/dept/curriculum/gt/index.cfm
Students must be first participating in the regular gifted and talented program (PFLEX) before they can be considered for entry to the HG (Highly Gifted) program.

Additional details regarding Pflugerville Independent School District’s HG program can be accessed through the following active hyperlinks:
- Curriculum Scope and Sequence
- Identification Process
- Nomination Form and Checklist
- GT Requirements for Teachers
- K-8 GT Objectives and Activities

**Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools** (Buffalo, MN)

Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose (BHM) Schools’ Quest program for highly gifted students is open to all students in grades 2 through 7. Priority is given to students in the BHM school district, but gifted students from outside the district can apply. The program features **multi-age classrooms** combining grades 2 and 3, and 4 and 5. In the upcoming school year, the program will be expanded to highly gifted students in grade 8.25

Highly gifted students are defined by the program as those in the **top two to three percent of their class**. These students will have consistently achieved Measures of Academic Progress or other achievement test scores in the mid-90th percentiles in both math and reading, and in the mid-90th percentile on the Cognitive Abilities test. For those students who are so young as to have not yet taken these tests as part of their regular curriculum, these tests are administered at the time of application. Parents and teachers are also asked to provide information that is used in the committee-led admissions process.

The curriculum is **accelerated and enriched** across the core subject areas, and the overall program is delivered in a tuition-free, “school-within-a-school” structure. Students follow a nationally-recognized curriculum developed for gifted learners. Quest students at the elementary level receive instruction in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in addition to the accelerated curriculum implemented program-wide. Students in the Quest program return to their grade levels for instruction in music, art, technology, and physical education.26 Instructors involved in the program are trained to teach highly gifted students. Students are not required to re-apply to the Quest program each year as long as they are able to demonstrate...
success (as measured by a student’s ability to complete assignments, participate sufficiently in-class, and exhibit progress based on established achievement measures)

Additional information regarding the Quest program can be accessed through the active hyperlinks below:
- Program Brochure
- Program Application
- Program Q&A
- Parent Recommendation
- Teacher Recommendation

**Independent School District of Boise City** (Boise, Idaho)

Boise City ISD offers a **wide range of options** for accommodating highly gifted students, demonstrating that a school need not rely on only one type of accommodation to support its gifted population. The options for gifted students at Boise City ISD include:**

- Acceleration/Grade skipping
- Curriculum compacting/Independent study
- Cluster grouping
- Credit for prior learning
- Cross-Grade/Cross-age grouping/Leveling
- Dual enrollment
- Extracurricular opportunities
- Full-time gifted classrooms
- Highly gifted program
- Grade telescoping
- Independent study
- Pull-out program
- Subject matter acceleration; Accelerated classes
- Talent/Ability grouping
- Advanced placement classes
- Early admission to college

The **Highly Gifted program is an “extreme intervention”** to meet the needs of the most gifted students. The curriculum in the program emphasizes “research, making connections, methodology of various disciplines, and clearly stating and supporting [one’s] assertions.”28 The highly gifted program is available to students in

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28 “Elementary Gifted Services.” Boise City ISD. http://www.sd01.k12.id.us/gifted/elem.html
grades 1 through 8, and the district provides busing to the designated location for elementary and junior high students, respectively.

The highly gifted curriculum is based on standards set by the State of Idaho. Each student receives his or her own independent curriculum designed around prior knowledge, which allows students to pursue subjects in greater depth and at more advanced levels. Instruction features the following components:29

- Group and individualized instruction
- Socratic questioning and discussion
- Use of classic and contemporary literature
- Grammar and etymology study
- Mathematical and arithmetical thinking
- Exploration and application of academic principles and concepts to real world issues
- Discovery and pursuit of individual passions through research and exploration

Students may additionally require individual mentorship in specific content areas, online instructional programs in areas of particular interest, or participation in instruction at higher/lower school level for specific areas.

As expected, the program emphasizes the involvement of parents in the decision-making process regarding program acceleration and other potential accommodations, as noted above. Parents are encouraged to participate in various capacities (e.g., field trip driver/chaperone, small group facilitator, etc.) and are expected to maintain frequent communication with the program/school.

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Appendix - Gifted Education Programming Standards

The National Association for Gifted Children has developed a set of programming standards for gifted education from PreK-12. These standards can help teachers take the needs of gifted children into account when planning curriculum, instruction, assessment, programs, and services. Many of the standards treat not only intellectual development but development linked to self-understanding and social awareness as well. The practices associated with each standard below are not exhaustive, and only represent a selection of NAGC’s supported practices.

**Standard 1:** Educators, recognizing the learning and developmental differences of students with gifts and talents, promote ongoing self-understanding, awareness of their needs, and cognitive and affective growth of these students in school, home, and community settings to ensure specific student outcomes.

*Evidence-Based Practices*

- Educators engage students with gifts and talents in identifying interests, strengths, and gifts and in developing identities supportive of achievement.
- Educators develop activities that match each student’s developmental level and culture-based learning needs.
- Educators provide research-based grouping practices for students that allow them to interact with individuals of various gifts, talents, abilities, and strengths.
- Educators identify out-of-school learning opportunities that match students’ abilities and interests.
- Educators develop specialized intervention services for students with gifts and talents who are underachieving.
- Teachers enable students to identify their preferred approaches to learning, accommodate these preferences, and expand them.

**Standard 2:** Assessments provide information about identification, learning progress and outcomes, and evaluation of programming for students with gifts and talents in all domains.

*Evidence-Based Practices*

- Educators develop environments that encourage students to express diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness.
- Educators establish procedures for identifying and serving talented students. These include informed consent, committee review, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures for entry to and exit from gifted program services.
Educators select multiple assessments that measure diverse abilities, talents and strengths.
Assessments provide qualitative and quantitative information from a variety of sources, including off-level testing.
Educators interpret multiple assessments and understand the uses and limitations of assessments in identifying the needs of gifted students.
Educators use differentiated pre- and post- performance-based assessments to measure the progress of gifted students.

Standard 3: Educators apply the theory and research-based models of curriculum and instruction related to students with gifts and talents and respond to their needs by planning, selecting, adapting, and creating culturally relevant curriculum and by using a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to ensure specific student outcomes.

Evidence-Based Practices

- Educators design a comprehensive and continuous scope and sequence to develop differentiated plans for PK-12 students with gifts and talents.
- Educators adapt, modify, or replace the core or standard curriculum to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents and those with special needs such as twice-exceptional, highly gifted, and English language learners.
- Educators design curricula in cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social and leadership domains that are challenging and effective for gifted students.
- Educators provide opportunities for students with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest and talent.

Standard 4: Learning environments foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership in the 21st century to ensure specific student outcomes.

Evidence-Based Practices

- Educators maintain high expectations for all students with gifts and talents as evidenced in meaningful and challenging activities.
- Educators create environments that support trust amongst diverse learners.
- Educators provide examples of positive coping skills and opportunities to apply them.
- Educators understand the needs of students with gifts and talents for both solitude and social interaction.
- Educators assess and provide instruction on social skills needed for school, community, and the workplace.
Educators promote opportunities for leadership in community settings to effect positive change.

Educators provide structured opportunities to collaborate with diverse peers on a common goal.

**Standard 5:** Educators are aware of empirical evidence regarding the cognitive, creative, and affective development of learners with gifts and talents, and programming that meets their concomitant needs. Educators use this expertise systematically and collaboratively to develop, implement, and effectively manage comprehensive services for students with a variety of gifts and talents to ensure specific student outcomes.

*Evidence-Based Practices*

- Educators regularly use multiple alternative approaches to accelerate learning.
- Educators regularly use individualized learning options such as mentorships, internships, online courses, and independent study.
- Educators regularly engage families and community members for planning, programming, evaluating, and advocating.
- Administrators track expenditures at the school level to verify appropriate and sufficient funding for gifted programming.
- Educators provide professional guidance and counseling for individual student strengths, interests, and values.

**Standard 6:** All educators build their knowledge and skills using the Teacher Standards for Gifted and Talented Education and the National Staff Development Standards. They formally assess professional development needs related to the students, develop and monitor plans, systematically engage in training to meet the identified needs, and demonstrate mastery of standards. They access resources to provide for release time, funding for continuing education, and substitute support.

*Evidence-Based Practices*

- Educators systematically participate in ongoing, research-supported professional development that addresses the foundations of gifted education, characteristics of students with gifts and talents, assessment, curriculum planning and instruction, learning environments, and programming.
- Educators participate in ongoing professional development addressing key issues such as anti-intellectualism and trends in gifted education.
- Educators use their awareness of organizations and publications relevant to gifted education to promote learning among gifted students.
- Educators assess instructional practices and continue their education in development, professional organizations, and higher education settings.
Project Evaluation Form

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