

Ocean City School District



Gifted and Talented Education

G.A.T.E. Program Handbook

Revised June, 2020

Ocean City School District Mission Statement

"We are committed to excellence in the Ocean City School District. We provide a learning environment in which all students learn the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to become responsible contributing citizens in a changing global community."

Excerpt from the New Jersey Commission on Programs for Gifted Students

Our society values equality and is often uncomfortable with social or intellectual distinctions or hierarchies. Exceptional ability may be viewed as a valuable human resource when it develops a practical solution, tool, or application—but that same talent may be viewed as a troublesome expression of eccentricity when looked at simply as the possession of high levels of thinking or creativity. In a society that continues to value "beauty and brawn" more than "brain," making a case for gifted education is often difficult.

According to a national telephone survey conducted in June 2000 by the National Education Association, New Jersey is one of six states that do not provide funding for gifted education and the only state of those six that mandates identification and services (Robinson, 2002). This situation has not gone unnoticed by local education agencies as they attempt to deal with budget shortages, increased accountability in language arts, science, and mathematics, and the demands of standards-based and whole school reform initiatives. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) focuses attention on eliminating educational disparities by providing supportive services to low performing students and schools. Achieving annual yearly progress becomes paramount. While gifted and talented students may not be left behind academically, NCLB threatens the very existence of programs and resources to support programs for high achieving students.

Education of gifted and talented students is at a critical juncture. Even though New Jersey consistently ranks among the top states in SAT scores and the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses, challenging coursework may not be available to all students, especially those attending high poverty, low achieving schools or those attending small schools with limited resources. Failing to identify gifted and talented students early, especially those from high poverty schools may perpetuate the cycle of failure. New Jersey must rise to the challenge of maximizing the potential of all children regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or ethnicity.

-January 2005

Despite a lack of funding from the Federal and State governments, Ocean City is committed to excellence in all programming. OCSD has done extensive research and data analysis to make its G.A.T.E. program the best that it can be based on best practices that produce results in the realm of student achievement. We are committed to providing gifted education programs for intellectually gifted students in our schools. These programs are designed to meet the individual needs of gifted students and shall be in addition to and different from the regular program of instruction provided by the district. We pride ourselves in going above and beyond any and all state and federal suggestions to provide the best education we can do all of our different populations.

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District Goals

Engage: Our School District empowers learners to assume an active role in their community, face local, national, and global challenges, and to contribute intellectually as members of a rapidly changing world.

Innovate: Our School District is a beacon in our innovative 360° approach, inclusive of all stakeholders, characterized by a safe, secure learning environment and positive relationships that support the health and wellness of our students, while instilling a sense of purpose for 21st Century learning.

Achieve: Our School District ensures that the educational programs promote student success, achievement, growth and academic excellence while preparing our students to contribute to a dynamic society.

We Believe

- All students can learn. The goals, expectations, and aspirations to be realized through the schools are the same for all students. However, all students are not the same. They have different talents and abilities, interests and emotions, strengths and weaknesses. For each individual, we desire an educational system that will both stimulate and urge the full development of potential. We must, therefore, provide considerable choice and flexibility for each student together with basic requirements.
- All teachers share in the responsibility for developing an educational system that stimulates and nurtures the full development of all students.
- An important purpose of education is to instill a life-long desire to learn. Learning enriches the quality of life.
- Positive attitudes produce positive results.
- High expectations foster greater student achievement.
- Students learn best in a trusting, caring, nurturing, and safe environment.
- Effective teaching provides a variety of learning experiences.
- The acquisition of life skills and higher order thinking is essential to prepare the student for the challenges of adulthood in a technological society.
- Parents, educators, and all community members are partners in the education of the community's children.
- The understanding and acceptance of diversity contributes to the enhancement of society.
- Education is worth the investment.

Definitions

There are many different definitions of a gifted and talented student. The District's working definition of giftedness mirrors the state definition as well as that more recently cited in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Under these definitions, gifted students are those who:

"Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities."

New Jersey Department of Education – N.J.A.C. 6A:8

"Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment."

United States Department of Education

"The term 'gifted and talented,' when used with respect to students, children, or youth, means students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities."

No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110 (Title IX, Part A)

Other complementary perspectives are provided by groups of respected professionals in the field of Gifted who suggest a definition based on the gifted child's difference from the norm below.

"Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports.)"

National Association for Gifted Children

Regardless of which definition is used, one thing is clear- gifted children are a population who has different educational needs, thanks to their unique intellectual development.

***Neither the USDOE nor the NJDOE provide funding for gifted and talented programming.**

New Jersey Gifted and Talented Requirements

On June 1, 2005 the State Board of Education readopted with amendments N.J.A.C. 6A: 8, Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement, which includes more specific requirements for gifted and talented programs. In addition to the definition on the previous page, a summary of the regulations are highlighted below.

- All public schools must have a board-approved gifted and talented program.
- Students are to be compared with their peers in the local school district.
- District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures, including but not limited to, achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, parent, student and/or teacher recommendation, and other appropriate measures.
- The regulations do not establish state-level criteria for giftedness (such as an IQ score or grade point average). Specific tests are not required to be used to identify gifted and talented students.
- Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology used is developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered (e.g., use math achievement to identify students for a math program).
- N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1(a)5 ii requires local district boards of education to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten.
- The rules require district boards of education to develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted students. Programs must address appropriate content, process, products, and learning environment.
- District boards of education shall take into consideration the *Pre-K through Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)* in developing programs for gifted and talented students. The NAGC standards establish requisite and exemplary gifted program standards and can be accessed at NAGC Standard.
- Each curriculum framework developed by the department provides general as well as content-specific information on gifted education (e.g., terminology, examples of appropriate practices). The frameworks can be accessed at <http://www.nj.gov/education/archive/frameworks/> <http://www.nj.gov/education/aps/cccs>.
- Local school districts will continue to be monitored as part of the regular school district evaluation process. Board-approved policies and procedures must be made available.

In January, 2020, the State of New Jersey Passed a new law (CHAPTER 338) governing Gifted and Talented Education.

An Act concerning gifted and talented students and supplementing chapter 35 Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

Be It Enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.18A:35-34 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act.”

C.18A:35-35 Definitions relative to gifted and talented students.

2. As used in this act:

"Gifted and talented student" means a student who possesses or demonstrates a high level of ability in one or more content areas when compared to his chronological peers in the school district and who requires modifications of his educational program if he is to achieve in accordance with his capabilities.

"Instructional adaptation" means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling a student who is gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and demonstrate knowledge and application of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in one or more content areas at the instructional level of the student, not just the student's grade level.

C.18A:35-36 Instructional adaptations, educational services for gifted and talented students.

3. a. A board of education shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations and educational services are provided to gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12 to enable them to participate in, benefit from, and demonstrate knowledge and application of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at the instructional level of the student.

4. A board of education shall:

- (1) ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed for students who are gifted and talented;
- (2) make provisions for an ongoing kindergarten through grade 12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity, or a specific academic area. School districts shall ensure equal access to a continuum of gifted and talented education services. The identification process shall include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans;
- (3) develop and document appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment, and including, but not limited to, additional education activities such as academic competitions, guest speakers, and lessons with a specialist;
- (4) take into consideration the Gifted Programming Standards, Position Statements, and White Papers of the National Association for Gifted Children in identifying and serving gifted and talented students;
- (5) provide the time and resources to develop, review, and enhance instructional tools with modifications for helping gifted and talented students acquire and demonstrate mastery of the required knowledge and skills specified by the standards at the instructional level of the student; and
- (6) actively assist and support professional development for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders in the area of gifted and talented instruction.

C.18A:35-37 Coordinator for gifted and talented services.

4. a. The Commissioner of Education shall appoint a coordinator for gifted and talented services. The coordinator shall have teaching experience and specialized knowledge in gifted and talented education. The coordinator shall be responsible for providing support by identifying and sharing research and resources to school districts as they develop, implement, and review their local gifted and talented services. The coordinator shall be responsible for reviewing the information about gifted and talented services provided by each school district to support implementation of the provisions of this act.
5. Each school district shall file with the coordinator a report by October 1, 2020 and thereafter on a schedule that coincides with the school district's New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum review pursuant to section 11 of P.L.1975, c.212 (C.18A:7A-11). The report shall include, but not be limited to:
 - (1) the gifted and talented continuum of services, policies, and procedures implemented in the school district;
 - (2) the total number of students receiving gifted and talented services in each grade level kindergarten through grade 12 disaggregated by race, gender, special education designation, and English language learner designation;
 - (3) the professional development opportunities provided for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders about gifted and talented students, their needs, and educational development; and
 - (4) the number of staff employed by the school district whose job responsibilities include identification of and providing services to gifted and talented students.

C.18A:35-38 Complaint for noncompliance.

5. a. An individual who believes that a school district has not complied with the provisions of this act may file a complaint with the board of education. The right to file a complaint shall be set forth in the board's policy on gifted and talented education. The policy shall be linked to the homepage of the board's Internet website. The board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the district's action in the matter.
6. The individual may then file a petition of appeal of the board's written decision to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.

C.18A:35-39 Information available on website.

7. A school district shall make detailed information available on its website regarding the policies and procedures used to identify students as gifted and talented and the continuum of services offered to gifted and talented students. The information shall include the criteria used for consideration for eligibility for the gifted and talented services, including the multiple measures used in the identification process to match a student's needs with services, and any applicable timelines in the identification process.
8. This act shall take effect in the 2020-2021 school year.

Approved January 13, 2020.

OCSD Board of Education Policy

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to identify gifted and talented pupils within the school district and to provide these pupils appropriate instructional adaptations and services. To that end, the Board directs each such pupil in the school district be identified and offered an appropriate educational program and services.

For purposes of this policy, gifted and talented pupils will be defined as those exceptionally able pupils who possess or demonstrate high levels of abilities, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

The Board will develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications to be used for gifted and talented pupils indicating content, process, products and learning environments.

The Superintendent or designee will develop procedures, using multiple measures, for an ongoing identification process and appropriate educational challenges for gifted and talented pupils initiated in Kindergarten and reviewed annually through grade twelve. The identification methodology will be developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory and related to the programs and services offered by the district. These procedures will be reviewed annually.

The educational program offered to gifted and talented pupils will encourage and challenge them in the specific areas of their abilities, but will not replace the basic instructional program of the various grades of this district. The program offered to a gifted and talented pupil may be infused into the pupil's regular instructional program, provided that a written description of the infusion has been prepared and filed in the pupil's record.

Programs for the gifted and talented will be periodically evaluated for their continuing efficacy and adjusted accordingly.

The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of any pupil identified as gifted or talented shall be consulted regarding any program designed to address the pupil's particular needs.

2464- GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS (M)

OCS D Philosophy of Gifted and Talented Education

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are characteristically different from the norm. This asynchrony 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. (The Columbus Group, 1991).

All children have unique strengths and talents and require opportunities to learn, grow, and be challenged to strive for excellence. However some children have intellectual skills and abilities that significantly differ in degree and dimension from their chronological age peers and, therefore, require the challenge of a differentiated curriculum both in depth and scope, in order to provide them with the opportunity to maximize their potential. With careful nurturing and appropriate education, gifted students have the capability to make unique contributions to the community and world.

Gifted and talented children exist at all age levels and in all ethnic and socioeconomic groups. These are the children whose learning styles and varied interests demand experiences beyond those currently available in the educational program. There are many kinds and many ways through which gifted and talented children display outstanding performance in creative, academic, psychomotor and leadership areas.

Studies of the gifted and talented focus on their unusual capability, and research consistently shows the gifted learner differs in his/her ability to acquire new information and make use of it. Failing to meet the needs of the gifted learner can be detrimental. Many gifted students develop negative or apathetic attitudes toward formal education. These attitudes leave long lasting undesirable consequences. On the other hand, the early identification of gifted and talented students, along with appropriate programs can foster optimal motivation and growth.

The Ocean City School District recognizes the unique interests, needs, and talents of students with advanced abilities and is committed to special programming for these students to help them develop their extraordinary abilities. Our mission is to provide optimal development of the advanced students' intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and to honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated and challenging curriculum. The district offers a variety of gifted services for students from primary through high school level designed to offer students a continuing experience of support, challenge, and success. From early level curriculum differentiation to the primary gifted and talented in conjunction with pull-out programs to the advanced placement classes offered in the high school, the wide range of gifted opportunities in district are many and varied.

District

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The Board will develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications to be used for gifted and talented pupils indicating content, process, products and learning environments. The Superintendent or designee will develop procedures, using multiple measures, for an ongoing identification process and appropriate educational challenges for gifted and talented pupils initiated in Kindergarten and reviewed annually through grade twelve. The identification methodology will be developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory and related to the programs and services offered by the district. These procedures will be reviewed annually.

The educational program offered to gifted and talented pupils will encourage and challenge them in the specific areas of their abilities, but will not replace the basic instructional program of the various grades of this district. The program offered to a gifted and talented pupil may be infused into the pupil's regular instructional program. Programs for the gifted and talented will be periodically evaluated for their continuing efficacy and adjusted accordingly.

The Ocean City School District in accordance with the philosophy that all children be educated to their full potential provides special opportunities for gifted students in addition to those already being offered in the regular classroom. These opportunities add a new dimension to the education of the gifted rather than merely extend classroom activities.

Gifted students are generally defined as those represented by the top 3-5% of the student population. The Gifted & Talented Program may provide services to up to 10% of the student population. This would include the highest achieving students that have shown leadership and creative giftedness.

Because early discovery of a gift or talent is important, it is essential that the identification of these students be carried on as a continuing process, since special abilities and skills appear at different times in the development of many children. The students identified with the highest cognitive abilities probably will not change, but the second 5-10% of the students admitted into the program as gifted may change during annual re-evaluations.

Primary School

The Primary School offers differentiated curricula for *GATE* students. Students will be identified for their eligibility and will be cluster grouped with other *GATE* identified students in the regular classroom setting. Teachers have been extensively trained in differentiating instruction for all learners, including the accelerated learner. Their lessons and instruction will be differentiated and accelerated to meet the needs of the *GATE* students. Once a week, the entire second and third grade will participate in a Power Hour Activity where *GATE* students will be placed together to engage in project based learning. The projects will be above and beyond grade level curricula. Exiting third grade students will also be invited to participate in an extended school year experience through the 21st Century Summer Enrichment Program. Other experiences and opportunities will be investigated and utilized as deemed appropriate by the staff and administration.

Intermediate School

The Intermediate school offers differentiated curricula for *GATE* students. Students will be identified for their eligibility and will be cluster grouped with other *GATE* identified students in the regular classroom setting. Teachers have been extensively trained in differentiating instruction for all learners, including the accelerated learner. Their lessons and instruction will be differentiated and accelerated to meet the needs of the *GATE* students. *GATE* students will also be placed in an exclusive accelerated Enrichment class for English Language Arts (ELA) and/or Math based on their eligibility. Specific content *GATE* enrichment classes will meet for two of the four marking periods throughout the year. During this graded enrichment period, they will engage in project based learning that will challenge them above and beyond the normal grade level curricula. Seventh and Eighth grade *GATE* students will be placed in an accelerated mathematics class if they meet the District's placement criteria (this course will serve as the mathematics *GATE* class for that grade level: 7th grade: Compact and 8th grade: Algebra). Students will also be invited to participate in an extended school year experience through the 21st Century Summer Enrichment Program. Other experiences and opportunities will be investigated and utilized as deemed appropriate by the staff and administration.

High School

Students will be placed in Advanced, Honors or Advanced Placement (AP), and/or dual credit classes if they meet the District's placement criteria for those classes. For more information on those classes and their criteria, please contact your child's academic advisor at the high school. Other experiences and opportunities will be investigated and utilized as deemed appropriate by the staff and administration.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Ocean City School District Gifted and Talented Education Program is to provide an educational program which will allow gifted students to develop their talents and skills to as great an extent as their abilities, interests, and available resources will allow.

GATE services can include both inclusive and pull-out formats. All of the courses and special activities are designed to provide challenge and rigor for students at all levels to expand their learning and creativity in their particular area of interest. In addition to curriculum based programming, OCS D students take part in a variety of building enrichment and project-based learning activities. The district also offers numerous extra- and co-curricular activities which encourage advance learning and challenging activities. When it comes to instruction and learning, one size does not fit all. Gifted children have different abilities, talents, and interests, making them a very diverse group of individuals. What they share in common are advanced abilities, but advanced in different ways.

Ocean City School District will:

- provide opportunities for students to pursue individual interests and develop talents;
- help students determine excellence and be aware of their responsibility to their gifts and talents to improve themselves and society;
- provide for the cognitive and academic development through challenging learning experiences;
- provide support for the social and emotional needs of gifted students;
- provide scheduled opportunities for students to meet with intellectual peers;
- provide a learning environment in which instructional strategies appropriate to the unique learning characteristics of the intellectually gifted are utilized;
- provide opportunities for individuals and/or small groups to utilize advanced research/study skills in designing and conducting independent investigations on topics of student interest.

The Student will:

- acquire advanced competencies in:
 - higher level thinking skills
 - research skills
 - study skills
 - communication skills
 - college and career readiness

Programming Options

Listed below are potential programming options that may be implemented in the education of your child depending on their identification and/or grade level. The utilization of these programs is at the discretion of the district and/or building administration.

Accelerated/Honors classes: Advanced classes offered in any discipline at the middle or high school level.

Alternate assignments: Assignments given to a particular student or small group *instead of* the assignment given to the rest of the class. The assignments are designed to be more challenging and/or to capitalize on a student's special interests or skills.

Change in content/process: Modification of what is taught or studied, or how it is taught or studied, in order to better match the learning styles or needs of talent pool students.

Choice in the content, the process of learning or the product of the learning: Choice may be offered by varying according to different types of intelligence or levels of thinking.

Cluster groups/classes: An arrangement in which a group of students with similar talents and interests is assigned to a classroom teacher in order to facilitate modifications and extensions of the curriculum.

Compacting: Allowing students to spend less time learning a topic, chapter, or unit by either: 1) pretesting for mastery so some material can be eliminated, or 2) creating a study guide or other procedure for students to cover material at a faster pace or in less time than the rest of the class. The purpose of compacting is to move on more quickly to new material or to create class time for more challenging enrichment or accelerated activities.

Creative thinking skills: Specific instruction in techniques that encourage the development of fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality, complexity, curiosity, imagination, and risk taking.

Electives in a talent or interest area: Courses that are not required but which students may choose to take.

Enrichment: A curricular choice that expands the learning beyond the existing curriculum.

Extracurricular activities: Activities that are available outside of the regular school day such as student council, debate, school newspaper, art clubs, math clubs, etc.

Flexible grouping: Grouping talent pool students together within a classroom or between classrooms in order to provide instruction or activities at an appropriate level for the students' talent areas. Groupings may be short-term or long-term and will change depending on the educational needs of the students.

Higher level thinking: Activities or assignments that require the students to operate at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The activities may be enhanced by teaching students the differences between the levels of thinking and by discussing the thinking levels/skills used in various activities.

Independent projects: Projects that provide the opportunity to explore a topic of personal interest to the student when the classroom content is already mastered. These may be accompanied by a learning contract that indicates the goals of the learning, how they will be accomplished, and the expected product that serves as evidence of the learning.

Independent study: A programming option in which students pursue an extensive study of an area of interest, or complete a course independently rather than by attending a class. In some cases, students may earn credit for the independent study program.

Individual groups/guidance: An arrangement through which the student receives individual guidance related to issues of talent, including, for example, help with underachievement, college and career planning, and social/emotional issues arising from giftedness.

Mentorship: An option in which students are paired with a teacher, parent, or community volunteer in an area of expertise or interest. It is usually done on a one-to-one basis for an extended period of time to enable a student to develop knowledge and skills in a specific area and/or to develop a product from the experience.

Open-ended projects: Projects that allow students to create their own options and that encourage problem-solving, higher level and/or creative thinking.

Pretesting for mastery: Assessment in which students demonstrate mastery of basic skills, knowledge, and concepts that are planned for instruction with the regular class in order to eliminate some work and allow students to move on to new, more challenging material.

Pull-outs: Programming in which students meet once or twice a week over a period of several weeks to a year to participate in specific enrichment activities in their talent areas.

Research projects: Activities in which students may identify a topic or subject for study, narrow the focus of study, gather resources, locate information through reading or other means (e.g., surveys, interviews, audiovisual material) and/or create a product or

presentation. Such projects may be used to pursue an area of interest either related or unrelated to the grade-level curriculum.

Social/emotional groups: A school-based discussion and/or counseling program that provides small groups of students with the opportunity to interact and discuss issues that specifically pertain to giftedness. These may be facilitated by a guidance counselor.

Youth options: Opportunity to access college classes once the student has exhausted the curricular opportunities the school has to offer.

Workshops: Programming in which students participate for a block of concentrated time, generally from a half day to a full day.

Differentiated Instruction

Our school district understands that a differentiated curriculum is the best way to meet the day-to-day needs of our students. A differentiated curriculum provides developmentally appropriate material for children giving them the optimum opportunity to learn and to grow. Your child's classroom teacher provides many challenging and stimulating activities every day that directly address each child's academic needs.

Differentiated instruction is how teachers in Ocean City meet academic needs of our gifted learners within the classroom. Our teachers understand that not every child must be doing the same activity at the same time as every other student in his/her class. Different learners have different needs, and teachers design learning opportunities for students according to each student's needs, readiness, and interests. Differentiated instruction allows teachers to provide those opportunities without labeling or obviously isolating individual learners in the classroom.

"Differentiated teaching is responsive teaching. It stems from a teacher's solid understanding of how teaching and learning occur, and it responds to varied learners needs for more structure or more independence, more practice or greater challenge, a more active or less active approach to learning, and so on. Teachers who differentiate instruction are quite aware of the scope and sequence of curriculum prescribed by their state, district, and school. They are also aware that the students in their classrooms begin each school year spread out along a continuum of understanding and skill. The teacher's goal is to maximize the capacity of each learner by teaching in ways that help all learners' bridge gaps in understanding and skill." (Tomlinson and Edison, 2003)

Differentiated instruction is...

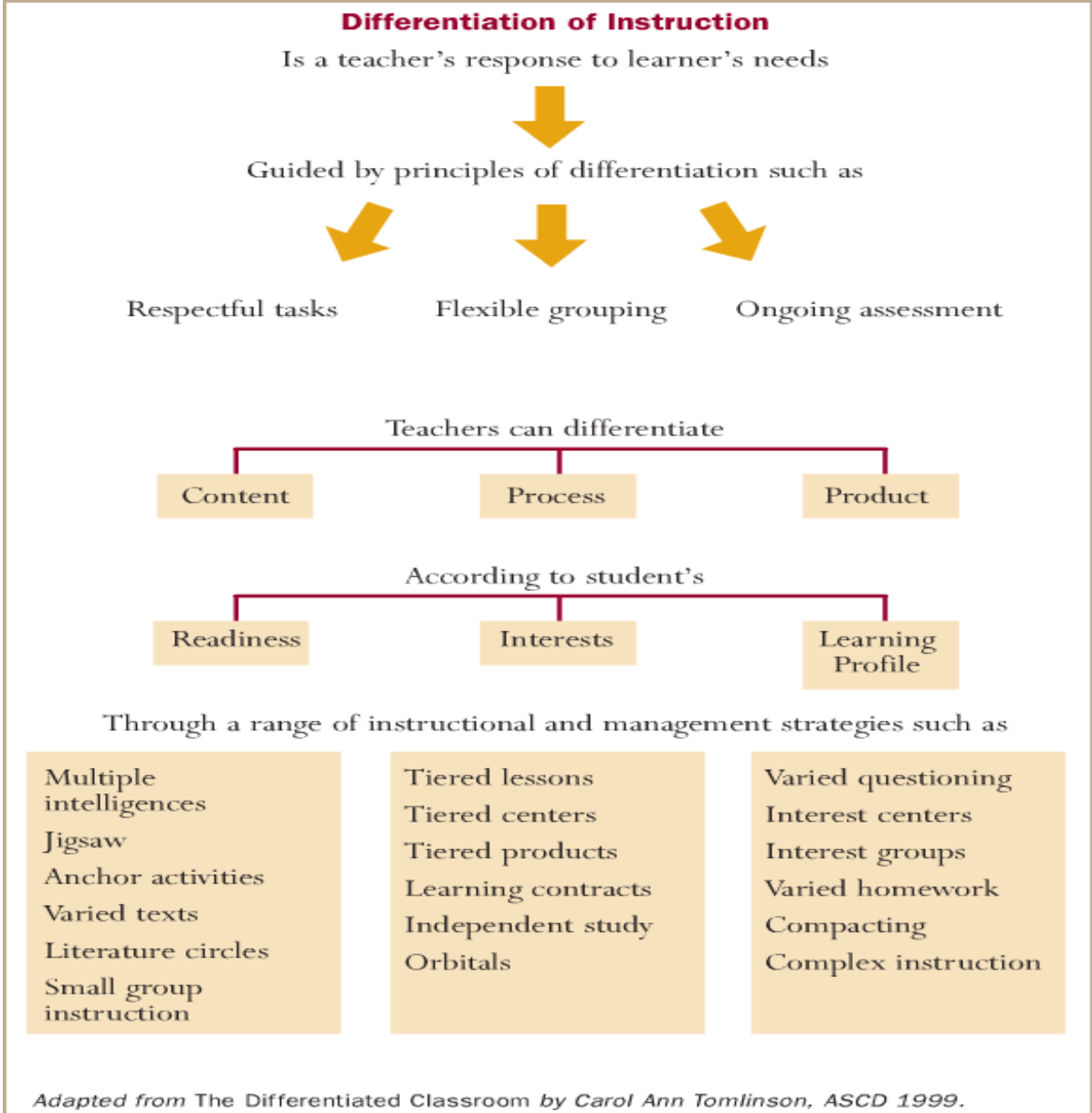
More qualitative than quantitative. Students are offered learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate. In other words, instruction is "different, not more."

Student-centered. Because teachers believe that learning experiences are most effective when they are engaging, relevant, and challenging, and because they accept that all students come to the classroom with differing levels of readiness, teachers actively seek to provide appropriate and challenging learning experiences for all their students.

A blend of whole class, small group, and individual instruction. To best meet the needs of all children, students often begin a study as a whole group, move out to pursue learning in small groups or individually, then come back together to share or to make plans for further investigation, move out for more work, come together again, and so on.

Fluid and flexible. In differentiated classrooms, as children grow and gain from learning experiences, teachers continually assess students' needs, interests, and readiness. Grouping is changed often and instruction is adjusted in anticipation of and response to these changing needs.

A method that uses a variety of teaching strategies. Teachers in a differentiated classroom challenge, extend, enrich and accelerate students in many ways. For example, teachers may use curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, group investigations, learning centers, independent study, or learning contracts.



The Differentiated Classroom

By differentiating the curriculum a teacher can make curricular modifications, extend learning opportunities, and adjust assignments to match the learning needs of a diverse population of students. There are no predetermined ways to differentiate the curriculum for gifted students; the possibilities are endless. D.I. involves three steps: assessing the students' needs, designing activities to address those needs, and assessing the results.

What the Teacher Does:

- The teacher identifies essential content (knowledge, concepts, skills) that he or she wants everyone in the class to master.
- The teacher assesses student readiness with a variety of tools, e.g. pre-tests, observations, previous performance.
- The teacher adjusts content, process, and products in response to students' readiness, strengths, area of weakness, and interests.
- The teacher employs a range of strategies for differentiating such as learning centers, curriculum compacting, tiered instruction, cluster groups, and so forth.
- The teacher maintains a high level of flexibility in modifying aspects of the curriculum to create maximum growth and learning for each child.
- The teacher assesses individual student achievement and the effectiveness of the differentiated material and instruction.

What the Students Do:

- Students move flexibly from one level of complexity to the next.
- Students actively participate in their own learning and make choices within structured activities and assignments.
- Students focus more on their own growth and work, rather than on how they compare to other students.
- Students become knowledgeable about how they learn, what they do well, and where they need more practice.

Examples of Differentiated Strategies:

Needs of the Child	Strategy	Activity Example
Accelerated Pace	Compacting	A child who demonstrates mastery of simple addition can move on to more complex problems.
More Cognitive Challenge	Higher Level Thinking	Based on the analysis of historical facts, a child explores all the steps for establishing a pilgrim village and designs a new village.
Problem Solving	Clustering	A child collaborates with others who have similar talent and ability to solve complex problems.
More Depth	Independent Study	A child with a strong desire to investigate and learn more about a topic, with teacher guidance, designs and completes a project with goals, objectives, and a timeline.

The Rational for Differentiating Instruction

- Each student must make meaning of what teachers seek to teach. This process is influenced by a student's prior understandings, interests, beliefs, and attitudes about self and school. (National Research Council, 1990)
- Learning takes place most effectively in classrooms where knowledge is clearly and powerfully organized, students are highly active in the learning process, assessments are rich and varied, and students feel a sense of safety and connection. (National Research Council, 1990; Wiggins and McTighe, 1998)
- Learning happens best when a learning experience pushes a learner a bit beyond his or her independence level. When a student continues to work on understandings or skills already mastered, little if any learning takes place. On the other hand, if tasks are far above a student's current point of mastery, frustration results and learning does not. (Howard, 1994; Vygotsky, 1962) Motivation to learn increases when we feel a kinship with, interest in, or passion for what we are attempting to learn. (Piaget, 1978)
- Students learn in a wide variety of ways, influenced by our culture, our gender, and how our individual brains are wired. (Delpit, 1995; Gardner, 1983; Heath, 1983; Sternberg, 1985; Sullivan, 1993)
- Self-esteem is important. The surest path to self-esteem for all learners is to continuously be successful at learning tasks they perceived would be difficult. Each time we "steal a student's struggle," we steal the opportunity for him/her to develop high self-esteem. (Sylvia Rimm)
- The degree to which students perceive they are in control of the learning situation is positively correlated with motivation, productivity, and self-esteem. (Barbara Clark, *Growing Up Gifted*) All students have a right to learn as much as they can learn. Of all the students in a mixed-ability class, those who learn the least during a school year are the most capable. Many already know much of what is presented in a mixed-ability classroom. If teachers fail to try to discover what students already know before teaching a unit, these students will be held back, waiting for the majority of the class to learn what they have already mastered. (Winebrenner)

Differentiated Instruction Web Links

Differentiated Instruction: Internet4Classrooms

<http://www.internet4classrooms.com/di.htm>

Includes links related to instructional theory, practical tips, sample units and other documents that are useful in applying D.I. techniques in the classroom.

Differentiated Instruction: New Horizons for Learning

http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/differentiated/front_differntiated.htm

Provides links to articles that offer principles and tools designed to not only help students to learn more effectively but to also help them to enjoy the process and be interested in continuing to learn throughout life.

Differentiated Instruction: A Tool for All Students and Tools for Schools

New York State Education Department

<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/sate/resourcesdiffinstr.pdf>

Includes materials developed for the Tools for Schools teleconference series, which was designed to support schools in improving student achievement.

Differentiated Instruction Resources: Staff Development for Educators

<http://www.sde.com/conferences/Differentiated-Instruction/DIResources.htm>

Offers more than 50 PDF files for downloading; organized around the following four areas: Differentiating Textbooks, Understanding Expository Textbooks, Differentiated Instruction, and Poverty.

Differentiated Instruction (Strategy of the Week): Education World

http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy042.shtml

Discover how research into how students learn led to the changes in how teachers adapt educational content, process, and product according to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

How to Differentiate Instruction: Teach-Nology

<http://www.teach-nology.com/>

A tutorial that offers strategies for using technology to differentiate instruction. Links to definitions of terms, sample strategies, and lessons are provided.

Teacher-to-Teacher Digital Workshops: U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.paec.org/teacher2teacher/>

Free online courses developed for teachers as a means of sharing research-based best practices. Each course is delivered in segments--usually about 15 minutes long--of video interspersed with reflective questions and small tasks that foster understanding. An entire program, including activities, is about 2 hours long.

Is My Child Gifted?

All children are special and have their own areas of strength. However, some children have unusually advanced abilities that benefit from special adjustments at home and school to help them grow and learn to their fullest potential. As you watch your child grow and develop, you may notice skills or characteristics that are quite different from those of other children the same age. For example, your child may:

- Be very curious and observant
- Use adult-sounding words and reasoning
- Think of many unusual ideas
- Recognize complex patterns or relationships
- Come to surprising solutions to problems
- Show a strong memory
- Ask unusual questions
- Demonstrate advanced talent in a certain area (such as mathematics, language, art, writing, music, or drama)
- Learn letters or numbers early and read before being formally taught

Children can demonstrate giftedness in a variety of ways, and often parent(s)/guardian(s) are the first to notice special abilities. If you are seeing a number of these traits, skills and behaviors in your child(ren), it might be a signal that their development could be advanced.

Characteristics of Gifted Students

Gifted students represent from **three to five percent of the entire population**, for general intellectual abilities. They are individuals, with unique qualities, but still sharing some common characteristics.

From an early age, gifted and talented students demonstrate exceptional ability. They tend to walk and talk earlier than other children. They are generally more independent. They show a better than average ability to evaluate facts and arguments and to solve complex problems and puzzles. They learn to read easily, try more complex reading materials, and tend to read higher quality books. They are more likely to have collections, multiple hobbies, and play complex games. They see unusual relationships and combine ideas into new relationship patterns. They are easily bored with repetition and need only 60% of the time that average children take to master material. Gifted and talented children do not possess all of the above characteristics to the same degree, but most demonstrate these traits to a greater extent than do other children.

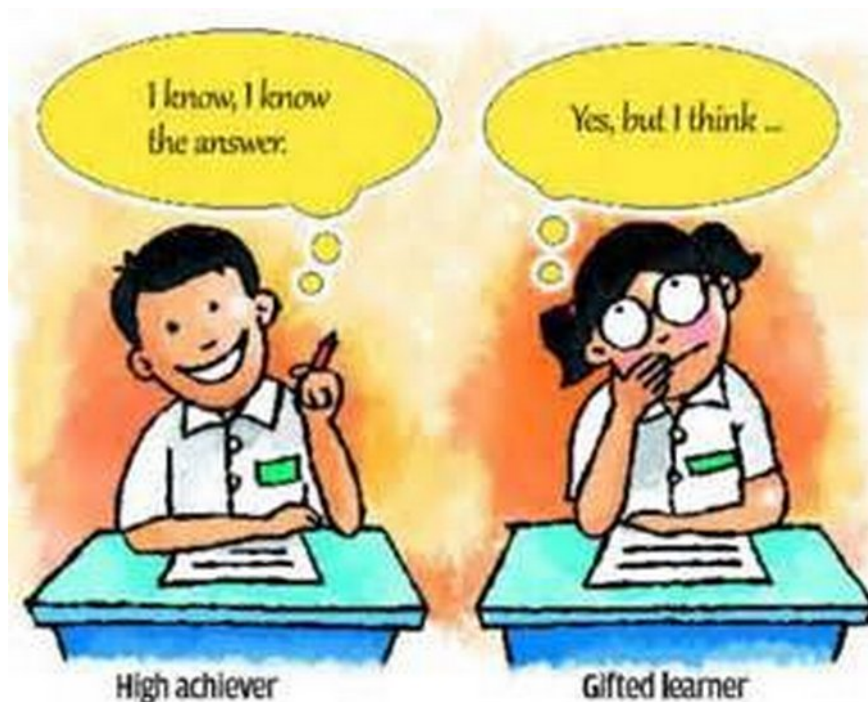
IS MY BRIGHT CHILD A GIFTED LEARNER?

“Talent is something rare and beautiful and precious, and it must not be allowed to go to waste.”

– George Selden, said by Tucker Mouse in *The Cricket in Times Square*

Both parents and educators know that all children have special talents, but it can be difficult to determine whether a child is a bright, hardworking student who is being challenged effectively within his/her learning environment or a gifted child who would benefit from something beyond the level of their learning environment. Making all "A's" isn't always an indicator of giftedness- it indicates hard work and motivation and other factors but not necessarily what is recognized as "giftedness."

The following table of characteristics is helpful in distinguishing between bright learners and gifted learners. These descriptions may overlap and are not mutually exclusive. The bright learner may be more readily identifiable in the classroom setting and considered to be "gifted." The gifted learner may well be underachieving and not readily recognized. It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time. This table is meant to give you an idea of what these two types of learners are like.



Original source: Szabos, J. (1989). Bright child, gifted learner. *Challenge*, 34. Good Apple.

<i>Bright Child</i>	<i>Gifted Learner</i>
Knows the answers.	Asks the questions.
Is interested.	Is highly curious.
Is attentive.	Is mentally and physically involved.
Has good ideas.	Has wild, silly ideas.
Works hard.	Plays around, yet tests well.
Answers the questions.	Discusses in detail, elaborates.
Top group.	Beyond the group.
Listens with interest.	Shows strong feelings and opinions.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.
6-8 repetitions for mastery.	1-2 repetitions for mastery.
Understands ideas.	Constructs abstractions.
Enjoys peers.	Prefers adults.
Grasps the meaning.	Draws inferences.
Completes assignments.	Initiates projects.
Is receptive.	Is intense.
Copies accurately.	Creates new design.
Enjoys school.	Enjoys learning.
Absorbs information.	Manipulates information.
Technician.	Inventor.
Good memorizer.	Good guesser.
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation.	Thrives on complexity.
Is alert.	Is keenly observant.
Is pleased with own learning.	Is highly self-critical.

Bright Learners

Bright learners are students that have a strong motivation to perform well and succeed in school. These types of students usually enjoy school, get A's, memorize information easily, give complete and accurate answers, have advanced knowledge and are at the top of their class. They tend to be satisfied with their knowledge and skills, but they will receive new information with willingness and interest when required. High achievers are usually emotionally and socially on track, and they relate well to peers of their own age.

Gifted Learners

Gifted learners are students that have a strong motivation to learn and expand their intellectual capacity. They prefer self-directed learning, may or may not be motivated by grades, are excellent at making inferences and connections, pose complex questions, generate abstract concepts and are beyond their class. They are not satisfied with a straightforward answer, preferring to examine a problem's intricacies and underlying implications. They tend to be self-critical and are constantly seeking to expand their knowledge. Gifted learners may be emotionally and socially behind, on track or advanced. Most tend to connect with peers on the basis of shared intellectual interest rather than similarity in age.

Traits, Aptitudes and Behaviors of a Gifted Child

It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time.

Motivation: Intrinsic desire to learn.

- Demonstrates persistence in pursuing and completing self-selected tasks.
- Expresses enthusiasm about learning.
- Aspires to be somebody or something.

Interest: Intentness, passion, concern, or curiosity about something.

- Demonstrates unusual or advanced interest in a topic or activity.
- Self-starts.
- Pursues an activity unceasingly.

Communication: Highly expressive and effective in use of words, numbers and/or symbols.

- Demonstrates unusual ability to communicate in one or more ways (verbally, physically, artistically, and symbolically).
- Uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations.

Problem Solving: Effective, inventive strategies used to recognize and solve problems.

- Demonstrates unusual ability to devise or adapt a systematic strategy for solving problems.
- Changes strategies when the employed strategy is ineffective.
- Creates new designs or inventions.

Memory: Retains and retrieves information.

- Already knows something that is assumed to be new knowledge.
- Needs few repetitions for mastery.
- Has a wealth of information about school and/or non-school topics.
- Pays attention to details.
- Manipulates information.

Inquiry: Questions, experiments, explores.

- Asks unusual questions for age.
- Plays around with ideas.
- Demonstrates extensive exploratory behaviors directed at eliciting information.

Insight: Grasps new concepts, makes connections, and senses deeper meanings.

- Demonstrates exceptional ability to draw inferences.
- Appears to be a good guesser.
- Is keenly observant.
- Sees unusual and diverse relationships.
- Integrates ideas and disciplines.

Reasoning: Uses controlled, active, intentional, goal-oriented thought.

- Makes generalizations.
- Uses metaphors and analogies.
- Thinks things through.

Creativity: Produces many and/or highly original ideas.

- Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials.
- Has wild, perhaps silly ideas.
- Produces ideas fluently or flexibly.
- Is highly curious.

Humor: Brings heretofore unrelated ideas together in a recognizable relationship.

- Uses a keen sense of humor.
- Has a large accumulation of information about emotions.
- Sees unusual relationships.
- Demonstrates unusual emotional depth.
- Demonstrates sensory awareness.

Intensity: Extreme responses to stimuli; emotional, intellectual, sensory, psychomotor, and/or imagination.

- Intense passionate feelings.
- Identification with others' feelings.
- Heightened awareness of injustice and hypocrisy.
- High level of emotional energy.
- Heightened sensitivity to the environment. (e.g. light, noise, movement)
- High levels of empathy.
- Keen self-awareness.

The Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Children

To a large degree, the needs of gifted children are the same as those of other children. The same developmental stages occur, though often at a younger age. Some needs and problems, however, appear more often among gifted children. It is helpful to conceptualize needs of gifted children in terms of those that arise because of the interaction with the environmental setting (e.g., family, school, or cultural milieu) and those that arise internally because of the very characteristics of the gifted child. Several intellectual and personality attributes characterize gifted children and should be noted at the outset. These characteristics may be strengths, but potential problems also may be associated with them.

Possible Problems that may be Associated with the Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children

Strengths	Possible Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquires/retains information quickly• Inquisitive; searches for significance• Intrinsic motivation• Enjoys problem solving; able to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize• Seeks cause-effect relations• Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play• Seeks to organize things and people• Large facile vocabulary; advanced broad information• High expectations of self and others• Creative/inventive; likes new way of doing things• Intense concentration; long attention span and persistence in areas of interest• Sensitivity, empathy; desire to be accepted by others• High energy, alertness, eagerness• Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self• Diverse interests and abilities; versatility• Strong sense of humor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impatient with others; dislikes basic routine• Asks embarrassing questions; excessive interests• Strong-willed; resists direction• Resists routine practice; questions teaching procedures• Dislikes unclear/illogical areas (e.g. traditions of feelings)• Worries about humanitarian concerns• Constructs complicated rules; often seen as bossy• May use words to manipulate; bored with school and age-peers• Intolerant perfectionist; may become depressed• May be seen as disruptive and out of step• Neglects duties or people during periods of focus; resists interruption; stubbornness• Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection• Frustration with inactivity; may be seen as hyperactive• May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity• May appear disorganized or scattered; frustrated over lack of time• Peers may misunderstand humor; may become "class clown" for attention

– Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seagoe (1974)

These characteristics are seldom inherently problematic by themselves. More often, combinations of these characteristics lead to behavior patterns such as:

- **Uneven Development:** Motor skills, especially fine-motor; often lag behind cognitive conceptual abilities, particularly in preschool gifted children (Webb & Kleine, 1993). These children may see in their "mind's eye" what they want to do, construct, or draw; however, motor skills do not allow them to achieve the goal. Intense frustration and emotional outbursts may result.
- **Peer Relations:** As preschoolers and in primary grades, gifted children (particularly highly gifted) attempt to organize people and things. Their search for consistency emphasizes "rules," which they attempt to apply to others. They invent complex games and try to organize their playmates, often prompting resentment in their peers.
- **Excessive Self-Criticism:** The ability to see possibilities and alternatives may imply that youngsters see idealistic images of what they might be, and simultaneously berate themselves because they see how they are falling short of an ideal (Adderholt-Elliott, 1989; Powell & Haden, 1984; Whitmore, 1980).
- **Perfectionism:** The ability to see how one might ideally perform, combined with emotional intensity, leads many gifted children to unrealistically high expectations of themselves. In high ability children, perhaps 15-20% may be hindered significantly by perfectionism at some point in their academic careers, and even later in life.
- **Avoidance of Risk-Taking:** In the same way the gifted youngsters see the possibilities; they also see potential problems in undertaking those activities. Avoidance of potential problems can mean avoidance of risk-taking, and may result in underachievement (Whitmore, 1980).
- **Multi Potentiality:** Gifted children often have several advanced capabilities and may be involved in diverse activities to an almost frantic degree. Though seldom a problem for the child, this may create problems for the family, as well as quandaries when decisions must be made about career selection (Kerr, 1985; 1991).
- **Gifted Children with Disabilities:** Physical disabilities can prompt social and emotional difficulties. Intellect may be high, but motor difficulties such as cerebral palsy may prevent expression of potential. Visual or hearing impairment or a learning disability may cause frustration. Gifted children with disabilities tend to evaluate themselves more on what they are unable to do than on their substantial abilities (Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Problems from Outside Sources

Lack of understanding or support for gifted children, and sometimes actual ambivalence or hostility, creates significant problems (Webb & Kleine, 1993). Some common problem patterns are:

- **School Culture and Norms:** Gifted children, by definition, are "unusual" when compared with same-age children--at least in cognitive abilities--and require different educational experiences (Kleine & Webb, 1992). Schools, however, generally group children by age. The child often has a dilemma--conform to the expectations for the average child or be seen as nonconformist.
- **Expectations by Others:** Gifted children--particularly the more creative--do not conform. Nonconformists violate or challenge traditions, rituals, roles, or expectations. Such behaviors often prompt discomfort in others. The gifted child, sensitive to others' discomfort, may then try to hide abilities.
- **Peer Relations:** Who is a peer for a gifted child? Gifted children need several peer groups because their interests are so varied. Their advanced levels of ability may steer them toward older children. They may choose peers by reading books (Halsted, 1994). Such children are often thought of as "loners." The conflict between fitting in and being an individual may be quite stressful.
- **Depression:** Depression is usually being angry at oneself or at a situation over which one has little or no control. In some families, continual evaluation and criticism of performance--one's own and others--is a tradition. Any natural tendency to self-evaluate likely will be inflated. Depression and academic underachievement may be increased.

"Parenting a gifted child is like living in a theme park full of thrill rides. Sometimes you smile. Sometimes you gasp. Sometimes you scream. Sometimes you laugh. Sometimes you gaze in wonder and astonishment. Sometimes you're frozen in your seat. Sometimes you're proud. And sometimes, the ride is so nerve-wracking; you can't do anything but cry."

-Carol Strip & Gretchen Hirsh, in Webb, Gore, Amend, & DeVries, A
Parent's Guide to Gifted Children

Misconceptions and Realities of Gifted Children

Misconception: All children are gifted. Many principals and teachers assert that all children are gifted, meaning that all children have some areas in which they have strengths or that all children have equal potential for learning.

Reality: While all children have relative strengths and weaknesses, some children have extreme strengths in one or more areas. Students who are gifted may require special education, just as students who have cognitive disabilities do. The belief that all children are gifted leads to a lack of identification and service to students who are gifted.

Misconception: Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They can make it on their own because they're smart. They don't need any special help in school or anywhere else.

Reality: Gifted students may drop out of school because they don't find it challenging, interesting or relevant. They often feel "different" because of their unique thinking processes and thus become alienated from other students. Too many of them try to fit in and do not reach their potential.

Misconception: Gifted kids love school, get high grades, and greet each new school day with enthusiasm. The gifted student is the one who is most enthusiastic about school and schoolwork.

Reality: Most schools and classroom teaching methods are geared for average students which make it hard for gifted students to get excited about going to school. Some of the most capable students end up not using their academic potential unless they are appropriately challenged and their social and emotional needs are understood and addressed.

Misconception: Teachers love to have gifted students in their classes.

Reality: Some do, but some don't. Some teachers feel uncomfortable with the unique learning needs of gifted students and are unsure of how to meet the students' needs. They may also have the responsibility of meeting the needs of a very wide variety of student abilities.

Misconception: Gifted children have intellectual capabilities that allow them to be outstanding in all subjects and areas.

Reality: Academic giftedness is often concentrated in a particular area, including the "hands-on" or manipulative strengths that are not common practice in most classrooms. Most gifted children have a combination of academic strengths and weaknesses. Children can even be gifted in one academic area and learning-disabled in another.

Misconception: High-IQ children are popular, well-adjusted, exceptionally moral, and glowing with psychological health.

Reality: This perception was based on results by Terman's study in 1922 which defined gifted children not only as academically superior, but also as superior in physique, health and social adjustment, marked by superior moral attitudes. Gifted children are often socially isolated and unhappy unless they are fortunate enough to find others like themselves. Gifted children may face ridicule and taunts about being nerds or geeks. Most children easily pick out the awkward, un-athletic loners, or the "show-offs" who have strange interests and vocabularies that are out of touch with those of their peers. (13-14 Gifted Services Programming Overview Page 23)

Misconception: Gifted kids are equally mature in all areas - academic, physical, social and emotional.

Reality: Gifted children tend to have "asynchronous" development. That is, their intellectual, social and emotional abilities often develop at different rates. An 8-year-old gifted child may sound like a teenager but act like a 6-year-old. These differences in development can be frustrating for the children and adults around them.

Misconception: Nearly all gifted students come from upper-, middle-class, professional families. Teachers won't find them coming from the lower economic and social levels.

Reality: There are just as many gifted children from families with a low socio-economic status as there are in the suburbs. Intelligence knows no income, race or socio-economic levels. One of the challenges of school systems is to implement identification methods that are appropriate for all children, including those who do not have strong English-language skills or have not had experiences that more affluent families can afford.

Misconception: Gifted children are destined to become eminent adults.

Reality: Many gifted children are more susceptible to emotional and physical problems from being "stressed out" and thus burn out early or choose to hide or deny their abilities. Some, while extremely successful as adults, never do anything

genuinely creative. Besides a high level of ability, personality, motivation, family and school environments, opportunity, and chance play important roles. The Terman studies and the Stanford studies showed, however, that an unusual proportion of gifted individuals became lawyers, doctors, engineers, college professors, and leaders in government, business, and industry.

Misconception: Some people assert that gifted children are "made" by overzealous parents' intent on their children's stardom. Parents are cautioned not to push or label their children, to let them have a "normal" childhood. Otherwise, they are told, their children will resent them and lose interest in achieving.

Reality: Parents of gifted children are often highly involved in the nurturance of their children's gifts. A high degree of investment and involvement is not a destructive force. It is necessary for a child's gift to be fully developed. Emotional support and understanding from the family are also important for gifted children. Nature and nurture both play a role in determining whether there is the ability for high levels of intelligence to develop.

Identification Process

"District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process of gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures, including but not limited to, achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, parent/student/peer recommendations, and other appropriate measures."

N.J.A.C., 6A; 8 - New Jersey Department of Education

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to identify gifted and talented pupils within the school district and to provide these pupils appropriate instructional adaptations and services. To that end, the Board directs each such pupil in the school district be identified and offered an appropriate educational program and services. For purposes of this policy, gifted and talented pupils will be defined as those "exceptionally able pupils who possess or demonstrate high levels of abilities, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities."

The District follows the NAGC and USDOE recommendations as well as the NJDOE definition to identify our students within a range of the top 5-10%. All students undergo the identification process. The following is a summary of the identification process which differs slightly at each grade level and in each building.

- All students are evaluated for G.A.T.E.
- All students are compared with their chronological peers in the District.
- The District identification process is developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered. (e.g. use of math achievement to identify students for a math program)
- Student identification for inclusion in the gifted and talented education program is **data driven** and **evidence based** utilizing **multiple measures**.
- OCSD does not settle for the norm of triangulation of data to identify students. Instead we utilize a minimum of 5 criteria to determine placement. Measures may include but are not limited to:
 - Criterion-referenced Assessment Scores also known as Standardized test scores (NJASK, HSPA, PARCC, etc.)
 - Norm-referenced Assessment Scores (e.g. Map percentile)
 - Curriculum Based Assessment Scores/Performance Samples
 - Common Core Writing Sample
 - Open ended response problems for Math
 - DRA, Gray Oral Reading, Brigance, TOMAGS, New Orleans
 - Marking Period/Trimester Grades
 - Teacher Recommendations
 - Any other developmentally appropriate benchmark or assessment

Appeal Process

Parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal a placement decision regarding admission or dismissal from the GATE program. Appeals shall be made in writing and received within fifteen (15) days of the date the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance. Written appeals shall be sent to the building principal in accordance with Board of Education Policy 5710 and must include the nature of the concern and contain supporting documentation attached. If the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) do not receive the relief requested at the building principal level, the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may request (in writing) a conference with the Director of Curriculum to appeal the decision. If the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) do not receive the relief requested at the Director level, the student or parent(s)/guardian(s) may request (in writing) a conference with the Superintendent or designee to appeal the decision. At no time will any requests be accepted that circumvent the procedures above. Please note that the identification process is confidential and individual results will not be released. Therefore appeals will not be granted if they are asking to appeal results of any part of the identification process.

Please note that placement decisions are reversed only in instances where extensive documentation is presented providing significant evidence that the child's knowledge, skills and abilities are superior to those measured by school personnel.

While we will consider any external documentation that you may present, please remember that the ultimate decision regarding placement and services lies with the school district.

Testing from an outside source will only be considered with the support of NJDOE. While the department does not endorse a particular program or practitioner, the Gifted Child Clinic at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School serves as a referral agency for children who are thought to be gifted or talented. Children between three and twelve years of age are referred by parents and/or pediatricians. A battery of tests is used to evaluate the children for signs of giftedness. Among these are standardized measures of cognitive ability, informal assessments of special skills and behavioral observations. Testing from independent practitioners will not be accepted. At no time shall the Ocean City School District be responsible or liable for any costs incurred if a parent chooses to obtain information this way. Please note that due to the number and vast differences of the available IQ tests, as well as the high cost associated with such testing, OCSD does not utilize IQ tests for placement purposes in the G.A.T.E. program.

Exit Policy and Procedures

Furlough

At times a student may seek a furlough or have such a "leave of absence" recommended for many reasons: emotional trauma, family considerations, health issues or any other circumstance which would inhibit or curtail the student's performance in the program. Furloughs are intended to help students who need a temporary break from the program, not to remove non-performing students.

The building principal, parent/guardian and student may agree to grant the student a furlough, with a written request from the parent/guardian. The furlough shall not exceed one semester. At the end of the furlough, the student, parent/guardian and building principal shall meet and decide whether the student shall re-enter the GATE program, be removed from the program or be placed on probation.

A furlough may also be used in conjunction with probation prior to a formal exit from the program for those students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the learning opportunities of the GATE program. If a student and parent/guardian do not return for their meeting at the end of the furlough period, the student will be exited from the program.

Probation

Probation is for any GATE student failing to meet the identification process or to meet the expectations of the program and where a furlough was not or would not be successful. Students will maintain their status in the GATE program during probation for a period up to one (1) year. If their performance improves **and** they meet the qualifications for identification for the next academic term then they will be fully reinstated. If they fail to meet the qualifications then they will be exited from the program.

Exit

The GATE program exists to provide services to identified students that will develop their unique talents and abilities. Participation in an educational program that goes beyond the services provided by the regular classroom/school program should allow these students to achieve their potential. Identified students have demonstrated high performance ability or potential and therefore have the right to these additional services. The services provided for identified students match their area(s) of strength(s) through the way a student was identified. Therefore, the District takes very seriously the denial of services to a student who has qualified and will only make such determinations after careful attention and serious consideration.

Removal is defined as discontinuing the participation of a student in the program. Prior to removal, a student must be placed on probation. Probation is defined as critically

examining and evaluating the performance of a student with prescribed interventions for a period of time not to exceed one (1) year while the student remains in the program.

Students participating in the *GATE* program are expected to continue to meet the criteria set for identification and maintain high academic standards. Occasionally there may be a student or students who are identified for the *GATE* program who do not perform at expected standards in the program. Students shall be removed from the program at any time the building principal determines it is in the student's best interest and a furlough and/or probation have been ineffective. If a parent requests their child be removed, the building principal shall grant the request. Once a student is exited from the program, he/she must adhere to the identification procedures and timelines and exhibit an educational need to be readmitted.

The following guidelines are examples as to why a student may be exited:

- Refusal of services after being notified of identification.
- Repeated failure to complete assigned work.
- Substantial difficulty in understanding work that other students do independently (without parental or tutorial assistance).
- Inadequate performance in an academic subject area/s considered to be two consecutive six weeks grade averages in at least on subject fall below an 80 or failing at least one subject in a six week period.
- Indications of extreme stress or pressure (nervousness, anxiety, depression).
- Behavioral concerns, distractions, etc.
- Parent request in writing.

Please note that a student identified for *GATE* in both ELA and math may be exited from either one or both programs based on individual circumstances.

Miscellaneous

Notification

Parents shall be notified in writing upon selection for the *GATE* program. Participation in any program or services provided for gifted students is voluntary. The District will automatically place any qualified student into the *GATE* program. In your written notification you will also receive an "opt out" letter that must be returned to the school if you wish to refuse services. All students undergo the same testing for placement. In some instances, additional testing for placement may be required. In such an instance, the parent/guardian of record will be contacted before a subsequent round of testing.

Reassessment

All students will be reassessed annually for continuation or furlough decisions. Assessments outside of the normal window for all students will not be accommodated and requests for further assessments or re-assessments will not be accommodated for any reason including for the appeals process.

Transfer Students

When a student identified as gifted by a previous public school district transfers into the District, the student's records shall be reviewed by the building principal. Students entering with a gifted/talented identification from another public school district shall receive services if appropriate documentation is provided. Upon receipt of documentation they will be placed in the *GATE* program and will follow the normal course and timelines for the annual re-evaluation.

Continuance Procedures

Placement into the *GATE* program during any academic year does not mean that the student will automatically qualify for services in subsequent years. Time in the school system is the only method for evaluating appropriateness of the placement into the *GATE* program. All students will be reassessed annually.

Probation

Students that fail to maintain the academic expectations of the program will be placed on probation. In addition, any student that is currently in the *GATE* program but fails to qualify for the *GATE* program for the following year will maintain their status in the program for a probationary period of one (1) year. At the end of the probationary year the student will either qualify and be fully re-instated or will not qualify and will be exited from the program.

Furlough

A furlough is a temporary leave of absence from the *GATE* program designed to meet the individual needs of an identified student. A leave of absence from the program of services for a maximum of one semester can be initiated by the student and parent/guardian for

academic or social/emotional reasons. All requests for a furlough shall be sent directly to the building principal.

Exit Provisions

Student performance in the program shall be closely monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time that the District determines it is in the student's best interest **and** a furlough and/or probationary period has been ineffective. The teacher shall make a recommendation to the Principal for exiting the student.

Appeals

Parents/guardians have the right to appeal. All appeals will be sent to the building principal and must follow the appeals procedures outlines in this handbook. (Please see page 31)

Program Evaluation

Evaluation and assessment of the GATE program is important to the success and development of the program. OCSD will annually evaluate the GATE program by surveying students, staff and parents/guardians. The evaluation data will be presented to the Directors of Curriculum and used as a needs assessment to be addressed in the District annual instructional program.

Community Awareness

The District shall ensure that information about the GATE program is available to parents and community members and that they have an opportunity to develop an understanding of and support for the program.

Professional Learning

The New Jersey Department of Education requires professional learning for all teachers and the District further requires additional training for teachers who are assigned to teach students who have been identified as Gifted and Talented. To date, staff assigned to the GATE program have undergone extensive training and complete monthly reports.

Parent Resources

What Should I do if I Believe My Child is Gifted?

Family members play an important role in providing learning experiences for children. There are many ways in which you can recognize and build on the strengths and talents you see in your child(ren). For example:

- Encourage your child(ren)'s curiosity and creativity
- Help your child(ren) find activities they love
- Give you child(ren) opportunities to take healthy risks as they explore the wonder around them

What Gifted Students Want from Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do to support your child who has gifts or talents. Galbraith and Delisle's research informs us what students themselves requested.

- Be supportive and encouraging; be there for us; be on our side
- Don't expect too much of us; don't expect perfection
- Don't pressure us, be too demanding, or push too hard
- Help us with our schoolwork and homework
- Help us develop our talents
- Be understanding
- Don't expect straight As
- Allow us some independence; give us space
- Trust us, because chances are we know what we are doing
- Talk to us; more importantly listen to us
- Let us try alternative education and special programs

How Can I Be an Effective Advocate for My Child?

- Know the facts and be informed. If you're not sure, ask questions to learn what you need to know.
- Educate yourself on educational terminology, especially the vocabulary related to gifted education.
- Become familiar with the state guidelines and national guidelines to deepen your own knowledge base about giftedness.
- Be willing to give your child's school or classroom your time and talents - not just your critiques and suggestions.
- If you wish to talk with your child's teacher, make an appointment and tell the teacher in advance what you wish to discuss, being as specific as possible. Remember, in the

hallway right after school is never the best time and place for a serious conversation. Help ensure that your advocacy will make the most difference by allowing your teacher to give you his/her full attention.

- Network with other interested parent(s)/guardian(s), teachers and community members to discover what has worked for them, what has not worked, and who in the community has been most helpful.
- Be willing to listen to other perspectives.
- Bring your sense of humor - everyone, including your child, will appreciate it.
- Be respectful of the professionals who are doing their best to educate every child, just as you are doing your best as a parent.
- Avoid becoming a hovering or "helicopter" parent - even gifted children need to develop their own sense of independence and the ability to speak for themselves in a tactful manner.
- Focus on your main issue and be willing to collaborate and compromise in order to move the conversation and next steps forward.
- Focus on your student's needs, not the "gifted" label. Teachers teach youngsters, and each student has a unique array of gifts and challenges.
- Be assertive, not adversarial - remember that you are modeling how to interact with the world for your child.
- Join gifted organizations, attend gifted education conferences, and subscribe to gifted education resources - all of these will help reassure and challenge you as well as move you in a constructive direction.

Supporting Your Gifted Child

There are many things that parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians can do to encourage children with gifts and talents to grow more able, more curious, more compassionate and well-adjusted. You will see from these examples that these are things we want for all our children!

At Home

- Set an example; model life-long learning.
- Collect examples of your child's work and creativity in a portfolio.
- Encourage and model good communication.
- Create an accepting environment and encourage your child to share his/her feelings, questions, comments.
- Be a good listener.
- Be a facilitator and a guide - share in the adventure of learning new things.
- Allow childhood to be a part of your gifted one's life; do not expect him/her to feel and act like a miniature adult.
- Avoid comparing your child with others - don't lose sight of his/her individuality.

- Make free time a regular pastime – don't over-schedule your child.
- Set clear and consistent expectations and consequences; involve your child in the process.
- Help your child believe in him or herself.
- Emphasize your child's strengths; be positive.
- Supplement your child's learning at home; nurture your child's passions, interests, and creativity.
- Model respect for others.
- Value risk-taking, hard work and the satisfaction of achievement.
- Discuss effective problem-solving techniques and strategies to cope with failure.
- Encourage independence by giving your child responsibility.
- Provide opportunities for your child to interact with other gifted children, older children and stimulating adults.
- Check out special-interest classes and camps -- apply early.
- Encourage self-awareness.
- Remember the value of humor.

In School

Successful partnerships between home and school largely depend upon common knowledge, direct and honest communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

- Develop rapport with your child's teacher.
- Share your child's "at home" work and creativity with the teacher at appropriate times.
- Ask your child's teacher for suggestions to encourage and nurture a particular talent, interest, or ability.
- Be a volunteer in your child's classroom or school.
- Keep written documentation of meetings with school staff so you can be more helpful if there is a question in the future.
- Offer to assist school staff in designing a Differentiated Educational Plan (a document that identifies the student's strengths and weaknesses, personal goals, indicators of academic growth, and avenues of parental support).
- Take time to thank your child's teacher and other school staff.

Organizations/References

The **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)** is an organization of parents, educators, professionals, and community leaders to address the unique needs of gifted children and youth. www.nagc.org

The mission of **National Society for the Gifted and Talented** is to advance the development of gifted, talented, and high potential youth, in the United States and abroad, through opportunities, advocacy, and exemplary programs and practices. www.nsgt.org

The **Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students (AEGUS)** provides a forum for ideas and interventions aimed at helping twice-exceptional students reach their full potential. www.aegus1.org

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page is a resource guide for the education of gifted children with links to many gifted education resources available on the Internet. www.hoagiesgifted.org

Montclair State University Academically Gifted and Talented Youth Program provides engaging courses designed to meet the unique intellectual and social needs of high-ability students. Gifted students in grades K-11 have an opportunity to enroll in courses delivered over nine weekends in the fall and spring, as well as a six-week summer camp. www.montclair.edu/GiftTalent/

John Hopkins Center for Talented Youth identifies and develops the talents of the most advanced K-12 learners worldwide. As part of Johns Hopkins University, CTY helps fulfill the university's mission of preparing students to make significant future contributions to our world. <http://cty.jhu.edu/>

The **Gifted Child Society** is a non-profit organization in northern New Jersey. Its mission is to provide educational enrichment and support services specifically designed for gifted children and to provide assistance to parents in raising gifted children. <http://giftedchildsociety.com/index.php>

The **New Jersey Association for Gifted Children** is the state affiliate to the National Association for Gifted Children. Its mission is to promote excellence and leadership in gifted education through appropriate programs, resource networks and community advocacy. www.njagc.org

The **American Association for Gifted Children** is affiliated with Duke University and has resources related to gifted education and students. www.aagc.org

The **Association for the Gifted (TAG)** is a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. They promote scholarly research, advocacy and professional development. www.cectag.org

The **Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development** is sponsored by the University of Iowa and conducts talent searches and educational programs for gifted students. www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/

College Admissions Services - Resources and information about college admissions including financial aid, scholarships, studying for the SAT, writing application essays, and the college admissions process. <http://www.go4ivy.com/resource.asp>

Davidson Institute for Talent Development - Supports profoundly gifted young people and opportunities for development of talents. <http://www.ditd.org/public/>

Kids Links - Gifted and Talented Education Program - Resources for students to use. Web resources, games and activities for students in elementary and middle school are posted on this site. There are links for parent resources as well.
www.stockton.k12.ca.us/gate/kids-links.htm

Stanford University Education Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY) - Computer-based distance-learning courses for high-ability students of all ages in an individualized educational experience in a variety of subjects from kindergarten through advanced-undergraduate.
<http://epgy.stanford.edu/>

Jacob K. Javits Fellowships Program - U.S. Department of Education sponsored programs for gifted and talented education funding for elementary, high school, and college students; local educational agency grant programs, and university research.
www.ed.gov/programs/jacobjavits/index.html

National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRCGT) - The NRCGT promotes and publishes research on gifted education related to current and emerging issues in education of gifted and talented students, including GATE students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups. <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt.html>

Odyssey of the Mind - An international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college; involving regional, state, and international competitions. <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) - Fosters education and research to support the unique social and emotional needs of gifted individuals.
<http://www.sengifted.org/>

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children - A worldwide network of educators, scholars, researchers, parents, educational institutions, and others interested in research and information on the gifted. <http://www.worldgifted.org/>

Websites

Ocean City School District: <http://www.oceancityschools.org>

Academy of Achievement: <http://www.achievement.org/>

Belin and Blank Center: www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank

Blue Ribbon Learning Sites: <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn/index.cfm>

Chem4kids.com: <http://www.chem4kids.com/index.html>

Creative Learning Press: <http://www.creativelearningpress.com/>

EduHound: Everything for Education K12: <http://www.eduhound.com/>

Filamentality "Learning Web": <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/index.html>

Future Problem Solving Program <http://www.fpspi.org/>

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page: www.hoagiesgifted.org

International Baccalaureate Organization <http://www.ibo.org/>

Johns Hopkins University (including center for talented youth (CTY):
<http://cty.jhu.edu/>

Mensa for Kids, <http://www.mensaforkids.org/>

Odyssey of the Mind, <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>

Prufrock Press (publisher of *Gifted Child Today*): <http://www.prufrock.com/>

Science News for Kids: <http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org/>

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted), <http://www.sengifted.org/>

Underachievement www.sylviarimm.com

Young Writers Workshop: <http://www.meddybemps.com/9.700.html>

Periodicals

Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children, published by Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091. For information, call 703-620-3660.

Gifted Child Today, published every two months. For information, call 1-800-998-2208.

Gifted Child Quarterly, published by National Association for Gifted Children, 1707 L Street, NW Suite 550, Washington DC 20036.

Journal for the Education of the Gifted, a publication of the association for the Gifted, a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. For information, contact: JEG, University of North Carolina Press, PO Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288

Parenting for High Potential, and Gifted Child Quarterly, a quarterly magazine from NAGC. For information, call 202-785-4268.

Suggested Reading for Parents

Adderholdt, Miriam Ph.D., and Jan Goldberg *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good?*

Alvino, James. *Parents' Guide to Raising a Gifted Child*.

Delisle, James and Judy Galbraith, *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*.

Delisle, James R. Ph.D., and Judy Galbraith, M.A. *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs*.

Dweck, Carol. *Mindset*

Franklin-Smutney, Joan. *Stand Up for Your Gifted Child-How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home*

Franklin-Smutney, Joan. *Your Gifted Child: How to Recognize and Develop the Special Talents in Your Child*

Galbraith, Judy. *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide For Ages 10 & Under*

Gosfield, Wayne; Gosfield, Margaret. *Expert Approaches to Support Gifted Learners Professional Perspectives, Best Practices, and Positive Solutions*

Rimm, Sylvia. *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades: And What You Do About It*

Rimm, Sylvia. *Keys to Parenting the Gifted Child*

Robinson, Ann; Shore, Bruce M.; Enersen, Donna L. *Best Practices in Gifted Education: An Evidence-Based Approach*.

Walker, Sally. *The Survival Guide for Parent(s)/guardian(s) of Gifted Kids: How to Understand, Live With, and Stick Up for Your Gifted Child (*

Webb, James T.; Gore, Janet L; Amend, Edward R. *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*.

Yahnke, Sally. *The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids*

Suggested Reading for Students

Non-fiction Titles

- *101 Questions Your Brain Has Asked About Itself But Couldn't Answer Until Now* by Faith Hickman Brynie
- *Alphabet Workbook for gifted preschoolers* by Martha Cheney and Karol Kaminsky.
- *Bringing up Parents: The Teenager's Handbook* by Alex J. Packer
- *Dibs in Search of Self* by Virginia Axline
- *Extraordinary Young People* by Marlene Targ Brill
- *The Gifted Kid's Survival Guide: For Ages 10 and under*
- *Gifted Kids Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*
- *More Questions & Answers: For Ages 6 to 8* by Bailey Kennedy and Larry Nolte
- *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good* by Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott
- *Smart Girls: A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness* by Barbara Kerr
- *Story Starters: Stories About Animals* by Julie Koerner and Leo Abbett

Fiction

- *Born of the Sun* by Gillian Cross
- *The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear* by Kim Platt
- *The Drowning Boy* by Susan Terris
- *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* by Hanna Greene

Titles for Younger Middle School Gifted Students

- *Aria of the Sea* by Dia Calhoun
- *Buried Onion* by Gary Soto
- *Cheating Lessons* by Nan Willard Capps
- *Go and Come Back* by Joan Abelove
- *The Great Whale* by Richard W. Jennings
- *Kids on Strike* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- *Moves Make the Man* by Bruce Brooks
- *The Music of Dolphins* by Karen Hesse
- *The Outcast of 19 Schuyler Place* by E. L. Konigsburg
- *Red Scarf Girl* by Ji-li Jiang
- *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if my child is gifted?

Compared to their age peers, gifted children usually learn at a faster pace, use a large vocabulary, ask many questions, and need activities that are complex and challenging. They may also be highly sensitive, creative, and intense. These are only some of the characteristics of a gifted child.

What is a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program?

In NJ, public schools must provide appropriate learning opportunities for those students identified as gifted and talented. A basic gifted program will include: testing to identify gifted students; grouping students within a class or for all or part of the school day by ability; providing curriculum that is challenging and allows continuous progress; developing social and emotional skills; training for teachers and administrators in the education of gifted learners; providing counseling and support for gifted students who are at risk; and involving parents in the planning and evaluation of GATE programs. A written plan defining how the district will meet the needs of gifted students as articulated in the state GATE standards must be submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education (CDE) for approval

How can I make sure that my child receives an appropriate education?

It is important that parents/guardians act as their child's advocates. Learn as much as you can about gifted education and the needs of gifted children. Familiarize yourself with the terms and definitions used in the various educational programs offered at your school or in your district. Inform the school about your child's special needs and then volunteer to help make sure those needs are met. In addition, look for opportunities for your child to pursue special interests through community programs, summer classes or enrollment at the local community colleges of learning.

Can a gifted child have learning disabilities too? Where can I get information?

Some gifted children have learning disabilities such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, and visual or auditory processing difficulties. It is sometimes difficult to identify the special needs of these children because they often use their high abilities to mask or adapt to their learning disabilities. For more information, go to the CAG web site (www.CAGifted.org).

Why is raising a gifted child so challenging?

Gifted children often exhibit unique social and emotional needs that may include a strong sense of justice, extreme idealism, moral intensity, perfectionism, hypersensitivity, and unreasonably high expectations for themselves and others. They can be emotionally hypersensitive, such as to criticism, and/or physically hypersensitive, such as to touch and smell. Some may appear to be perpetual motion machines, or show wide swings in mood and maturity. Their vast emotional range can make them appear contradictory: aggressive and

timid, mature and immature, arrogant and compassionate, depending on the situation. They may push the limits of rules at home and school, challenge their parents and teachers with constant questioning, and engage in risky behavior. The discrepancies between their physical, emotional, and intellectual development make parenting and teaching gifted children especially challenging. You may benefit from joining a support group for parents of gifted children as a way to meet others who share your concerns; if there are no groups in your area, consider starting one of your own.

How and when do we start planning for our child's future?

Begin now by developing an atmosphere of positive expectations and help your child identify interests, talents, strengths and weaknesses. Together with your child, investigate possible careers that could provide personal growth and satisfaction and explore options for the future. Look into mentoring or job shadowing opportunities. Request literature and visit college campuses when on vacation. Participate in summer programs and other activities sponsored by universities. If possible, begin a savings or investment plan to finance higher education or other experiences to support your child's goals.

How does New Jersey Administrative Code define a gifted and talented student?

The regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1) define gifted and talented students as: *Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.*

How should students be identified?

The regulations require that students be compared to their chronological peers in the local school district. New Jersey does not have state-level criteria such as mandated tests or assessments, grade point averages, or IQ scores. Local school districts must use **multiple measures** to identify students.

What does the state mean by "multiple measures?"

District boards of education must make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes **multiple measures**, including but not limited to: achievement test scores; grades; student performance or products; intelligence testing; parent, student, and/or teacher recommendation; and other appropriate measures. Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology is developmentally appropriate, nondiscriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered (e.g., using math achievement to identify students for a math program).

What services are required?

All public school districts must have a board-approved gifted and talented identification process and provide services for identified students enrolled in the grades of that school district. The regulations require that identification and services be made available to students in grades K-12.

When should districts identify students for giftedness?

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1(a)5 ii requires district boards of education to **provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students**. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten or upon entrance to the school or district. There is a misconception that schools are not required to identify students prior to grade three or that students who are new to a district must complete a state-mandated waiting period before they can be evaluated. That information is inaccurate. Additionally, local school districts are not obligated to identify students prior to their enrollment in the public school (e.g., three-year olds, students enrolled in community early childhood programs or private kindergartens). Local school districts are not obligated to identify students attending nonpublic schools.

Can a student be gifted in more than one content area?

Yes. If a district uses appropriate and multiple measures to identify students, it is likely that students will be identified as having multiple strengths and services should be provided to address the identified strengths.

We don't administer standardized tests until grade three. How can we identify students in grades K-2?

District boards of education are required to identify students in grades K-12. The state does not require the use of standardized tests, including the NJASK-3, as part of the identification process. Local districts can identify students using other assessments, including student products, screening checklists, and other identification methods.

Must Pre-K students be identified? Must a district identify students who are not age-eligible for school entrance?

No, the regulations are applicable to K-12 students who are enrolled in a public school.

What types of instructional accommodations must be made for students identified as gifted and talented?

The regulations require that district boards of education provide appropriate K-12 services for gifted and talented students. This includes appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment. District boards of education must also take into consideration the *Pre-K through Grade 12 National Gifted Program Standards* of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students. A copy of those

standards was sent to every chief school administrator and is available at www.nagc.org. In addition, each curriculum framework developed by the NJDOE provides general, as well as content-specific information on gifted education (e.g., terminology, examples of appropriate practices). The frameworks can be accessed at: <http://www.nj.gov/njded/frameworks/> or at www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs.

Does the state require a specific program or model for elementary or middle-level students?

No, the state does not endorse a particular program or model. Program models might include, but are not limited to, pull-out programs, classroom-based differentiated instruction, acceleration, flexible pacing, compacted curricula, distance learning, advanced classes, or individualized programs.

Can honors or Advanced Placement (AP) courses be used to satisfy the requirements at the high school level?

While that is a local decision, it is important to note that these courses may not address all areas of giftedness identified prior to high school. High schools must have an identification process and, as such, may establish certain prerequisites for entrance into honors or AP courses. The state does not define what constitutes an "honors" course.

Must gifted services be offered during the school day?

Appropriate adaptations are required in order to assist all students to achieve the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. *N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1* states that district boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the Core Curriculum Content Standards and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for students with limited English proficiency, and for students who are gifted and talented. Meeting the needs of gifted students is not an extra-curricular activity or club but a requirement for all New Jersey public schools.

Does the state or federal government provide funding for gifted programs?

The state does not provide specific, dedicated funds for gifted programs; however, district boards of education are required to provide identification and services using state aid and local revenues.

What is "twice exceptional?"

Students who are identified as twice-exceptional may have learning disabilities that mask their giftedness. These students may require different identification methods and program modifications to reach their full potential. It should not be assumed that students with disabilities cannot participate in gifted and talented programs.

Are local school districts obligated to accept the evaluation of a student's giftedness from another state, school district, or independent service?

No. The district board of education establishes the identification criteria, and students are compared to their chronological peers within the district. Therefore, the district is not obligated to accept an out-of-district evaluation. However, new students, particularly those that have been identified as gifted in another setting, should be evaluated by the district in a timely manner.

How should districts identify limited English proficient students?

Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) may be at a significant disadvantage when using more traditional identification methods. Students from disadvantaged households, ethnic minority students and LEP students are clearly underrepresented in gifted programs. For more information on addressing the needs of diverse student populations, please see <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/newsletter/winter05/winter053.html>.

Does the state provide financial aid to K-12 gifted students to attend private schools?

No, New Jersey does not provide financial assistance to attend private schools or specialized programs for K-12 students. However, there are private entities, such as the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, that provide assistance and services for profoundly gifted students. For more information, please go to <http://www.ditd.org/>. In addition, the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University is another source of specialized programs and assistance. For more information on CTY, please go to <http://cty.jhu.edu/about/index.html>.

Does the state support gifted magnet schools?

New Jersey does not have statewide specialized magnet schools in the arts, science, or technology. Some district boards of education have created specialized schools and programs for gifted and talented students within the boundaries of the local district or within a specified region of the state.

How should gifted services be documented on a student's transcript or report card?

Student performance should be documented as in any other course using grades, narratives, or other means. Unlike some states, New Jersey does not require the use of an individualized education plan (IEP) for gifted students.

If I am unhappy with the services currently available to my child, what should I do?

It is important to have a clear understanding of district procedures and policies before expressing your concerns. Look at the student handbook or on your district's Web site for information on the gifted program. Next, you should talk with your child's teachers, the building principal, and the district's gifted coordinator before discussing your concerns with the district administration. If your concerns are still not resolved, you should put your concerns in writing to the district administration with a copy to the county superintendent.

Does the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) address the gifted child?

The federal government does not prescribe programs and services for gifted students (unlike special education). NCLB focuses on improving student achievement with particular emphasis on students in high-need schools. Gifted students are not a subgroup population examined under NCLB testing parameters.

Is federal funding available to support gifted education?

The only federal funds specifically earmarked for gifted education are the Javits Grants which support research centers. New Jersey is not a recipient of these funds.

What state or national organizations support the needs of gifted students? How can I contact them?

The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC) assists schools, teachers, parents and students. For more information on New Jersey programs, consult the NJAGC Website at www.njagc.org. Additionally, the Gifted Child Society is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1957 by parents of New Jersey to further the cause of gifted children. More information is available on its Website at www.gifted.org.

At the national level, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences. For further information on national efforts on behalf of gifted children, go to <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=585&a1>.

I am looking for summer programs for my child. What's available?

District boards of education may provide summer enrichment programs for all students. One of the best-known national programs, the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG), began in 1984 with a single session in New Jersey, and has expanded over the past twenty-one summers to include eleven residential sessions in seven states and four-day programs. In 2008, SIG served close to two thousand academically gifted students in kindergarten through 11th grade. The mission of the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG) is to provide the highest quality educational and social opportunities for academically gifted and talented students through programs designed to meet their abilities and needs. For more information go to: <http://www.giftedstudy.com/>

I would like to have my child tested for giftedness. Are there independent resources for assessing giftedness for students? Will health insurance cover testing?

While the department does not endorse a particular program or practitioner, the Gifted Child Clinic at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School serves as a referral agency for children who are thought to be gifted or talented. Children between three and twelve years of age are referred by parents, pediatricians and educators. A battery of tests is used to evaluate

the children for signs of giftedness. Among these are standardized measures of cognitive ability, informal assessments of special skills and behavioral observations. For more information please go to: [Gifted Child Clinic](#). There are also a number of independent practitioners, such as child psychologists or learning consultants, who provide such services. You should discuss your concerns with your child's healthcare provider and confer with your insurance provider about the applicability of these services for reimbursement.

Will there be scheduled time within the school day for students to complete work?

All gifted students will still have a study center to complete homework and classwork. Students will not see additional work due to changes in gifted programming, but instead students will see materials and activities that will meet their academic needs. This is a matter of quality of work and not quantity of work.

How do you maintain quality differentiation throughout the school year?

More purposeful clustering of gifted students will allow teachers to better deliver suitable instruction to meet their academic needs throughout the school year. OCS D has made a commitment to provide ongoing professional development that will occur throughout the year. In addition, job embedded professional development will be delivered directly to all teachers during planning times, team meetings, and in-service days.

Will changes in gifted programming result in more work for my child?

The goal of gifted programming is to provide gifted learners with more challenging work, not an increased workload. While the work may at times take longer to complete due to increased challenge, the amount of work will not increase.

If my child feels overwhelmed, what should I do?

Like all students, school personnel including teachers, counselors, gifted specialists, and principals are always available to help students deal with emotional and social needs. The classroom teacher is always a good starting point when beginning to address any concerns.

What are the success metrics of the gifted programming? How do you validate what you are doing?

The changes in our gifted programming are supported by research and stem from the district's gifted audit conducted by district administration. To measure our students' growth and the impact of our gifted service model, we will use state testing results which specifically focus on our highest achieving learners. In addition, we will collect student survey data and solicit feedback and input from staff, students and parents to assist in continuing to develop our gifted service model.

How will students/parents know which classes to schedule?

Administration and guidance will schedule students based on their gifted identification and course selections.

Why doesn't testing occur in all grades after 7th?

Research shows that whole grade testing and evaluation is not helpful after 7th grade.

How do parents know what students are doing in gifted class?

The school website, teacher website, Guardian Home Access, teacher conferences, and your daily discussions with your child are all valuable tools to keep parents informed.

What percentage of students are identified as gifted?

Nationally, 3-5% of the population is identified as gifted. Ocean City School District is a Choice School District which attracts families to our district. Currently around 10% of our student population is identified as gifted in one or more areas of gifted identifications.