

Indian Springs School District #109

Talent Development Program



Developed August 2004
Revised August 2008

Definition

(IL Code 227.10)

The term "gifted and talented students" means children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities that are not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to fully develop such capabilities.

Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988: PL100-297, Sec. 4103

Philosophy

In order to maximize learning and to ensure that no child is left behind, District #109 believes that commitment to providing equitable and appropriate instruction is an essential factor in the education process. Furthermore, it is believed that by identifying those students in need of advanced enrichment and developing personalized programs of *instruction*, we can more effectively serve their individual, as well as collective needs.

Goals

District #109 will provide educational services that meet the needs of secure learners in a way that:

1. Develops a child-centered program steeped in culture and insightfulness, one that has the flexibility to shift with the ever-changing trends in education, while maintaining a firm foundation in principles and ethics
2. Develops a clear rationale and definition of concepts and terminology as well as program design and expected outcomes
3. Communicates all components of the program to the school community
4. Identifies the talent through a consistent, comprehensive process
5. Addresses the social, emotional, and academic needs of secure learners
6. Creates personalized programming for each identified student
7. Optimizes available human and fiscal resources

so that our potential leaders will be prepared to meet the challenges of their own and the world's future.

FOREWARD

Historically, schools have viewed students who perform well on standardized tests as the “select,” those with talents to be nurtured. This idea comes from the definition of giftedness entitled “Schoolhouse Gifted,” where being a good learner is valued. Recent trends in international thinking tell us that there are other areas of giftedness besides the academic. Based on these trends and the review of research, School District #109 uses the multidimensional U.S. Department of Education definition of gifted that leaves the door open to many children whose gifts and talents simply are not measured by tests nor easily recognized by teachers. The district adheres to a philosophy that society’s most creative contributors are not only found in the upper 5% population.

The Talent Development Program (TDP), therefore, is based upon a vision that schools are places for talent development (Renzulli, 1994). The TDP program “blueprint” for total school improvement serves as a practical plan for K-8 teachers and administrators to make this vision a reality. It is a program that emphasizes the multidimensionality of gifts and talents and is based on a pyramid of services designed to enhance *Learning For All*. The intent of the program is to be inclusive, casting a wider net to catch many kinds of gifts and talents.

Three principal bodies of research have influenced the development of the TDP. First, the program is designed around the body of research evidence indicating that instruction must take into account the varying abilities, interests, experiences, and learning styles of each student. Secondly, because giftedness has many dimensions (abilities, personality factors, and environment), identification measures that go beyond academic achievement must be used to find students whose abilities are not indicated by tests and school performance. Both formal and informal data must be used validly. Finally, the program builds on research suggesting that all students need to be provided with challenging and accelerated learning content. Therefore, learning experiences are designed to reach the goal of engaging and offering stimulation and enjoyment to all students.

District #109 currently employs three facilitators who make up the Learning Support Services Team (LSST). Facilitators work to support the teachers of identified students by providing extended resources and learning opportunities. Through data analysis, modeling, student interaction/observation and best practices, the team collaborates with staff to differentiate instruction in order to meet the needs of the identified students.

IDENTIFICATION

(IL Code 227.40)

The need to identify and serve populations of gifted and talented students requires the development of a specific plan. The following system for identifying gifted and talented students was formulated with three developmental goals in mind:

- to develop a system that is flexible enough to meet the State of Illinois regulations which requires the identification of a district's upper 5% population
- to develop a system that addresses the under-representation of racial/ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged populations
- to develop a system that takes into account the broad range of research that has accumulated over the years about the expanded definition of giftedness. This research recognizes that many highly creative and productive young people may not meet state mandated test criteria. These are the students who are often excluded from traditional programs in which only rigid test cut-off scores are used for identification and service.

It must be recognized that identification of gifted and talented students is not, and cannot be, perfect. There will always be students for whom the identification processes are insufficient. Given this, it is critical that the search for information is as rigorous and comprehensive as possible.

Who is identified?

- District upper 5% population
- Talent Pool students – approximately upper 6% to 15%
- Students with subject specific gifts and talents
- Underrepresented populations
- LD gifted
- Gifted underachievers
- Culturally diverse gifted students
- Low socioeconomic gifted students

Upper 5% Population

Illinois Code requires districts to identify students in the upper five percent of its population. Service will focus on students in the upper 5% of the district's population. This will be accomplished through a matrix system that is multi-faceted, using formal and informal data (e.g. achievement tests, aptitude tests, observation inventories and student work samples).

Talent Pool Population

District #109 recognizes that a broader definition of giftedness exists. As a result, a talent pool of students (upper 6-15%) receive differentiated learning experiences through the district's differentiated instructional program and local assessment system. By identifying that layer of students below the top percentile points and by leaving room in the program for students to gain services on the basis of non-test criteria, we have eliminated the justifiable criticisms of those who know that other students are also in need of special opportunities, resources, and enrichment.

The ability to enhance *Learning for All* lies in the collaborative efforts of all school personnel working together toward a common goal. Without collaboration, servicing the broad range of the school population by the LSST facilitators alone is not possible.

Primary K - 2

The practice of identifying primary students as gifted or nongifted is burdened with controversy due to the lack of validity, reliability, and predictability in standardized measurements. The district is clearly aware that if we are to achieve our goal of talent development as well as talent identification, we must continually remind ourselves that not all primary students with the potential for gifted and talented behaviors will enter the school system as star pupils. They may, in fact, enter school not yet demonstrating their potential. In addition, some students may enter the system with advanced skills as a result of rich and varied pre-school experiences. Statistics have shown that some of these students reach intellectual plateaus at third grade and begin to struggle as the curriculum becomes more complex. As a result, District 109 uses a balanced, multi-faceted identification system that attends to these various points of entry, one that will allow gifted behaviors to emerge. Rather than rush to identify, we rush to provide service.

The screening process includes several measures which are based upon multiple criteria that includes, but may not be limited to, the **Diagnostic Inventory of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)**, Basic Reading Inventory, Parent Inventory, teacher recommendation, and portfolios of student work. Data provided by the screening criteria helps to identify those students in need of significant differentiation.

For those children who show evidence of exceptional cognitive potential, the classroom teacher, in collaboration with the LSST facilitator, will collect and analyze data to determine if further diagnostics (SAGES-P) should be administered.

Identification K-2	Formal (IL Code 227.40a)	Informal (IL Code 227.40b)
	DIBELS	Progress Monitoring Data: collection of classroom work
	Basic Reading Inventory	On-going, structured observation
	Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES-P)	

Grades 3-6

A yearly analysis of student data is conducted each spring. The screening process includes several measures which are based on multiple factors that includes, but may not be limited to, achievement and cognitive test data, teacher recommendation, inventories, classroom observations, and portfolios of student work. The selection process includes the analysis of the **Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT), specifically the SAT portion and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGat)**. These scores are weighted in a matrix which is used to identify the upper 5% of the district's population. Additional tools may include the **Naglieri Test of Abilities and the Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES)**. Once these students are identified, differentiation of the standard curriculum is developed by the classroom teacher. Monthly Student Achievement Collaborative Consult (SACC) meetings provide the forum for teachers to collaborate with other staff in developing appropriate learning experiences.

Identification 3-6	Formal (IL Code 227.40a)	Informal (IL Code 227.40b)
	Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)	Progress Monitoring Data: collection of classroom work
	SAT 10	On-going, structured observation
	Reading Inventories	
	Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)	Teacher Recommendation

Middle School (Grades 7-8)

Gifted and Talented Programming at the Middle School level promotes differentiation in content, process and product. It requires time, sustained effort, support and flexible use of resources. It is predicated upon best practice instruction for all learners. This type of instruction is congruent with Middle School reform in support of the areas of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness and social equity. It is our goal to support the principles of a differentiated curriculum, in a way that:

- learning experiences are based on diagnosis of student readiness, interest, and /or learning profile
- content, activities, and products are developed in response to varying needs of varied learners
- dynamic and flexible grouping ensures consistently fluid working arrangements, including whole class learning, pairs, triads and quads, student-selected groups, teacher-selected groups, and random groups
- students are assessed in a variety of ways appropriate to demonstrate their own thought and growth

The middle level student portrays diversity at its peak. There are sharp differences in the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development among 10 to 15 year olds. These students display a wide range of skills and abilities unique to themselves. Consistent with current brain development research, there is a widening range of diversity of cognitive ability at this particular age range. By thoughtfully utilizing assessment data including choice and personal learning profiles, the curricular elements of content, process and product can be modified throughout aspects of the curriculum. A student's profile is continually addressed within specific classroom structures.

Able learners who exhibit academic talent are those who have the ability to master content in the context of broad-based issues. They understand interdisciplinary relationships, ask significant questions, think abstractly, and possess a desire to learn. Honors classes strive to develop these abilities through the content, learning process and student products. Criteria used to identify candidates include, but may not be limited to the following information:

Formal <i>(IL Code 227.40a)</i>	Informal <i>(IL Code 227.40b)</i>
Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)	Performance data – collection of classroom work
SAT 10	On-going, structured observation through local benchmark assessments
Reading Inventories	Teacher Recommendation
Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)	

PROGRAMMING

(IL Code 227.30)

Clustering

The Inclusion model, in which special and regular education teachers work as a team, is compatible with the model of clustering gifted and talented students. Both are aimed at providing appropriate learning opportunities in regular classrooms for students with exceptional learning needs. If a particular class has a cluster of gifted and talented students, the teamwork of all involved teachers is essential to assure positive learning outcomes for all students. Students in the upper 5% population are clustered in the classroom of one teacher per grade level. If there are more than six students, two or more clusters may be formed.

Research indicates that gifted and talented students can better understand and accept their learning differences if there are others like them in the class, and they remain more humble when they have consistent academic competition. Rather than lacking positive role models for academic and social leadership, both teachers and extensive research report that new leadership “rises to the top” in the non-cluster classes (Rogers, 1991).

The heterogeneity of the gifted population requires a multiple programming approach (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985; Parke, 1989) ; one in which a variety of programs is available in which students participate based on their abilities, needs, and interests. The intent is to label services rather than children. District #109 uses a contemporary approach to talent development that has a dual purpose (Treffinger & Feldhusen, 1996):

- ◆ to respond appropriately and flexibly to the needs of students who already demonstrate very high levels of accomplishments in specific talent areas
- ◆ to initiate **deliberate** educational activities to seek and nurture the talents of students

The TDP is based on a pyramid of services designed to enhance *Learning For All*. It provides a comprehensively planned and differentiated curriculum in the fundamental learning areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts) that allows for both vertical (acceleration) and horizontal (breadth and depth in a topic) movement that is educationally relevant. The program stresses higher-level thinking skills such as inquiring skills, problem solving, and creative thinking. In addition, development of self-direction, risk-taking, curiosity, imagination, and interpersonal relations are emphasized.

The TDP program in District #109 continues to strive to provide comprehensive, effective programming for students with significant identified needs. All identified K-8 students must have the standard curriculum modified to provide learning experiences matched to their readiness, interests, and learning styles. Services are designed to supplement and build on the basic academic skills and knowledge learned in the regular classrooms at all grade levels to ensure continuity as students progress through the program. Responsibility for the education of gifted learners is a shared one, requiring strong relationships between the gifted education program and general education school wide.

Possible extensions for identified students may include, but are not limited to:

◆ Enrichment

Enrichment broadens the range of experience for all gifted and talented students. It encourages expansion of knowledge and skills within the regular curriculum. Additionally, enrichment assists students in improving skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, questioning, and independent research.

Enrichment may take the form of:

- Independent literacy centers
- independent or small group investigations
- differentiated content, process and product
- differentiation for varying student learning styles

◆ Acceleration

The decision to **permanently** accelerate any student needs to be made with considerable care in consultation with the student, parents, teachers, LSST facilitators, and administrators. Decisions regarding permanent, full-time acceleration should proceed only after thorough and careful consideration of the implication for the entire, long-term schooling experience of the student.

Acceleration may take the form of:

- compacting the standard curriculum to allow exemption from knowledge and skills already demonstrated
- cross-grade grouping
- off level content
- grade skipping

STAFF

(IL Code 227.50)

Responsibilities of the LSST Facilitator

- Collect, administer, and analyze formal and informal student evaluative data for screening and identification
- Review district quantitative data on all students and alert staff to students whose patterns of achievement suggest the need for differentiation
- Observe and conference with identified students, where appropriate
- Participate in collaborative planning sessions with teachers of the identified students to develop goals and plan of action for these students
- Advocate and provide a network of support for identified students' academic and social and emotional development
- Communicate with and disseminate information to parents of identified students
- Assist in investigating, developing, and building the resources needed to support curricular enhancements for non-identified students

Responsibilities of the Talent Development Teacher

- Participate in staff development activities concerning gifted education
- Engage in curriculum differentiation and compacting
- Provide enrichment opportunities on an ongoing basis
- Plan with the LSST facilitator to create challenging differentiation for the identified students in forums such as SACC

The classroom teacher is the primary educator of all students and is responsible for delivery of service and for seeking secondary service as needed. Teachers with the cluster of gifted and talented students make a commitment to partner with resource staff and differentiate the standard curriculum.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

(IL Code 227.50)

District #109 believes that the most effective strategy for ensuring learning for all students is to set high expectations for student performance in basic skills, complex thinking, and character development. Toward this end, the purpose of the professional development plan is twofold:

- (1) to establish parameters for both professional development and staff collaboration which promote a more personalized approach to learning
- (2) to identify a common understanding of how students learn and what significant features have the greatest impact on their learning

Staff is provided with ongoing, multi-level professional development opportunities in the nature and needs of gifted and talented learners, as well as, differentiated instructional strategies necessary to meet the needs of all students. The significant features of such a learning environment include a firm knowledge of the research on and practice in the use of:

Ω Learning Environments

Teachers design learning environments so that students master the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve curriculum standards. Grounded in a rich research and theoretical basis, these learning activities draw on the constructivist research, the Dimensions of Learning model, current brain research, and various theories of intelligences and learning styles.

Ω Flexible Grouping

Teachers group students for learning according to the nature of the task as well as students' developmental levels, interests, experiential background, cognitive ability, and learning styles/modalities. Sometimes teachers form groups based on identified needs that students share in common and that impact the completion of their work. Other groups may be initiated by the students based on their interests or perceived needs.

Ω Multiple Forms of Instructional Methods

At times teachers deliver information in large groups, helping students to construct knowledge and develop new skills. At other times, teachers work individually or with small groups of students on specific knowledge or skills, assisting students as they access or organize information, helping them make connections between prior and new knowledge, developing deeper understandings of new knowledge through processes of analysis, or selecting the best medium for sharing their work.

Ω Problem Based Learning

Teachers use Problem Based Learning to engage students in relevant, real world tasks that require application of facts, concepts, and skills in new situations. The learning is integrated and interdisciplinary in nature and is based on frameworks for organizing curriculum and instruction that encourages the development of students' complex thinking and reasoning skills.

Ω Assessment

Teachers assess students daily, both formally and informally. Types of assessments include performance-based assessments, curriculum-based measures, criterion-referenced tests, reading/writing assessments, and all other assessments which teachers use to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Ω **Teaming**

Teaming among adults and students is crucial in talent development. Teams of teachers and students working together can share ideas, responsibilities, resources, and expertise to add depth to the teaching and learning process. At its best, teaming promotes a learning environment in which teachers and students rely on each other in the development and management of learning.

Ω **Technology**

Technology is an essential tool to facilitate learning. It expands the learning environment for students, providing them with access to expertise and text on all topics. Students and teachers use technology to manage, organize, and present information to many audiences within the school and the community. Technology further provides the capability to document and organize students' work in relation to the curriculum outcomes, to communicate to students about their progress, and to provide feedback.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

Parents of K-8 students who have been identified as being in the upper 5% district wide will receive ongoing communication from the LSST facilitator throughout the course of the school year. This communication may occur in a variety of formats that include but are not limited to:

- Ω letters introducing extensions in which students will participate
- Ω bi-annual newsletters
- Ω notification of community-based opportunities for students

Communication is a focus for the LSST team. The LSS Coordinator consults with parents as warranted to discuss ideas for interacting with gifted and talented children as well as specifics about the TDP program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

(IL Code 227.60)

The TDP program is not a static program; rather, it is in a continual state of evolution. Evaluation of the program drives this evolution as we seek to review what has been done, determine its effectiveness, generate options for making improvements, and decide on the most appropriate course of action.

The evaluation we seek is ongoing, as is our response to it. Evaluation strategies are conducted throughout each year to continually make the TDP and its services for gifted and talented students responsive to their needs and to the district's mission and philosophy (Section 227.30b). The evaluation strategies in District #109 are an integral part of program planning and implementation. Formative* and summative** evaluations are conducted to determine if program goals are met and if revision is warranted (Section 227.50b-11).

Data collection strategies will maximize the opportunity to secure program information that will provide guidance for program changes as warranted (Section 227.60c). Data collection strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- logs, journals, anecdotal records
- program records, documents
- formal observation data
- students' products
- student interviews
- student evaluations of projects
- satisfaction/reaction data
- individual student reports
- test scores
- portfolios
- surveys

CURRICULUM DIFFERENTIATION

"In an instructional program designed for the gifted and talented student, the core curriculum in the fundamental learning areas must be differentiated. The theories that guide curriculum development for these students suggest that differentiation occurs through modifications of content, process, product, and the learning environment. Each of these can be used separately or in combination with others" (Illinois State Board of Education Gifted Education Rules Section 227.10).

Overview of the Research into the Curriculum Differentiation Educational Strategy

Curriculum differentiation is a broad term referring to the need to tailor learning environments and practices to create appropriately different learning experiences for different students. Typical procedures in the case of gifted and talented students include:

- deleting already mastered material from existing curriculum
- adding new content, process, or product expectations to existing curriculum
- extending existing curriculum to provide enrichment activities
- providing coursework for able students at an earlier age than usual
- differentiating curricula to meet the needs of gifted students

Curriculum needs to be differentiated in terms of:

1. **Learning Environment:** The aim is to create a learning environment which encourages students to extend their abilities to the greatest level possible, including taking risks and building knowledge and skills within a safe, flexible environment which is:
 - student-centered, by focusing on students' interests, input, and ideas rather than those only of the teacher
 - highly independent, by encouraging students at all levels to work independently on appropriately challenging projects
 - highly complex, by including a rich variety of resources, media, ideas, methods and tasks that present progressively more difficult challenges
 - highly mobile, by encouraging movement in and out of groups, desk settings, classrooms, and schools
2. **Content Modification:** The aim is to remove the ceiling on what can be learned and use students' abilities to build a richer, more diverse and efficiently organized knowledge base. This can be facilitated by encouraging:
 - **content abstractness**, by ensuring that gifted and talented students are not only secure in content knowledge but are able to move beyond the facts to principles, concepts, and generalizations
 - **content complexity**, by posing more challenging questions or situations that force learners to deal with the intricacies of the content
 - **content variety**, by expanding material presented in the standard curriculum
 - **content focus**, by including the study of individuals or peoples and how they have reacted to various opportunities and problems
 - **content inquiry**, by including procedures used by experts working in their fields

3. **Process Modification:** The aim is to promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills and to encourage productive use and management of the knowledge the students have mastered. This can be facilitated by encouraging:
- **higher levels of thinking** by involving cognitive challenge using Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes, logical problems, critical thinking and problem solving
 - **creative thinking**, by involving imagination, intuitive approaches, and brainstorming techniques
 - **open-endedness**, by encouraging risk-taking stressing there is not always one right answer
 - **group interaction**, by affording highly able and motivated students the opportunity to inspire each other in the task such as structured simulations or group problem solving
 - **variable pacing**, by allowing students to move through content more rapidly and allowing more time for students to respond fully on higher order thinking tasks
 - **variety of learning processes** by accommodating different students' learning styles
 - **debriefing**, by encouraging students to be aware of and able to articulate their reasoning or conclusions to a problem or question
 - **freedom of choice**, by involving students in evaluation of choices of topics, methods, products, and environments
4. **Product Modification:** The aim is to facilitate opportunities for gifted and talented students to produce a product that reflects their potential. This can be encouraged through the incorporation of:
- **authentic problems**, by investigating real and relevant questions or problems addressed by professionals appropriate to the discipline
 - **authentic audiences**, by utilizing an "audience" that is appropriate for the product, which could include another student or group of students, a teacher (not necessarily the class teacher), an assembly, a mentor, a community or specific interest group
 - **transformations**, by involving original manipulation of information rather than just regurgitation of facts
 - **appropriate evaluation**, by utilizing a variety of tools and methods including on-going embedded assessment , authentic and alternative assessment, products, presentations, performances
 - **multiple assessors**, by including the teacher(s), the student(s), and external experts, collaboratively or individually

ASSESSMENT MEASURES*

(IL Code 227.10)

Ω **Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES)**

The SAGES is a measure that assists in the identification of gifted students. It is comprised of three subtests: aptitude, achievement, and creativity. Aptitude is measured by the Reasoning Subtest, in which the child solves new problems by identifying relationships among pictures and figures. Achievement is measured by the School-Acquired Information Subtest, which assesses science, social studies, reading, and math concepts. Creativity is measured by the Divergent Production Subtest in which the child uses pictures and figures to generate a potentially large number of different ideas.

Ω **Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students – Primary (SAGES-P)**

The SAGES-P is given to K-2 students. It is comprised of two subtests, aptitude and achievement. Aptitude is measured by the Reasoning Subtest, in which the child solves new problems by identifying relationships among pictures and figures. Achievement is measured by the School Acquired Information Subtest, which assesses science, social studies, reading, and math concepts in a multiple-choice format.

Ω **Stanford 10 (SAT 10)**

The Stanford 10 scores are taken from the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT) administered in the spring each year as part of No Child Left Behind. The SAT 10 is a multiple choice assessment that measures achievement in both math and reading.

Ω **Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)**

The CogAT is a series of tests that provide information about the level of development of general and specific cognitive skills of students from kindergarten through grade 12. The primary purpose of CogAT is to provide a description of the student's cognitive potential for learners that teachers can use to help the student achieve instructional objectives. Three subtests are constructed to measure general cognitive skills using verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal types of test tasks.

* Additional resources to measure aptitude and potential in math and language arts are also available and utilized as needed.

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