# **Gifted and Talented Program**

# **Handbook**

**Lonoke School District**

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Gifted and Talented Program

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The programs in public schools are built on a fundamental belief in serving the needs of all our students as unique individuals. We believe that gifted and talented individuals have special characteristics and learning styles and that their potential for accomplishment is such that they require special provisions, experiences, and services not provided for in the regular instructional program.

We are committed to provide a program for identifying and meeting the needs and interests of our gifted and talented students. The identification and placement of these gifted and talented students will be based on documented objective and subjective evidence of above average intellectual ability, creative ability, skills, products, and tasks commitment / motivation.

Gifted and talented students are outstanding consumers and producers of knowledge and ideas in any worthwhile endeavor. They may have potential abilities in general intelligence, creative, or productive thinking, exceptional leadership, and specific aptitudes. These abilities must be cultivated, nurtured, and developed.

Gifted and talented students must be provided opportunities to interact with their peers and to work with materials which challenge their abilities and encourage them to expand their abstract thinking and reasoning abilities.

Maximizing the potential of gifted and talented students requires a commitment of school, community, and home; commitment is essential for progress to be effected. The gifted and talented program is designed to cultivate within the student a desire for excellence and a sense of productive responsibility to self, family, school, community, and to our changing society.

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### **IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

The student identification / placement process is a multi-dimensional procedure. A special effort will be made to include students who may be difficult to identify such as underachievers, members of minority groups, the culturally different, the handicapped, deprived, the highly creative, and the highly intellectual.

The process includes the creation of a candidate pool through referral and data accumulation. A student may be referred by himself / herself, parents, teachers, counselors, administration, or any other person in the community. Identification procedures will be clearly stated to school staff through professional development and email.

Data accumulated and analyzed includes standardized achievement test scores, teacher rating scales, creativity test scores, parent questionnaires, and student questionnaires. No one item is a decisive factor in the placement of a student in the gifted and talented program. The student need not score high on every criterion for inclusion into the program. For example, teacher ratings may override low test scores, and good normative data may outweigh negative teacher ratings. The final evaluation decision considers the best interest of the student as an individual and the degree to which it is felt the student would benefit from participation in the gifted program. Written parental consent is required prior to data gathering as well as prior to student placement in the gifted program.

Identification is on going and takes place at any time.

Student placement decisions and data on all nominated students are kept for a minimum of five years or for as long as needed for educational decisions at the district GT office. After this time, records are disposed of in an appropriate and confidential way.

Participation in the GT Program shall be noted on student transcripts and permanent records.

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### **CURRICULUM**

The Lonoke School District’s program for the identified gifted and talented students features the utilization of gifted strategies within the existing K-12 curriculum, i.e., homogeneous grouping of students in certain required subject areas. Students do not have more work; the emphasis is on different work based on modifying the content and pace for part of the time in three ways: (1) enrichment; (2) acceleration; (3) individual or group interest-based learning.

The existing curriculum is further modified by emphasizing the acquisition and use of higher level thinking skills, divergent thinking and production skills, and opportunities for independent study, creative thinking, and skill development in coping with exceptionality. Basic skills are not de-emphasized; they are integrated through the above-mentioned strategies within the content area.

Curriculum units are designed in the following format for differentiated learning:

*Grouping* *Content Modification*

Individual Interest – based

Small Group Acceleration (Compacting)

Full Group Enrichment

Affective objectives of the curriculum are:

*Higher Levels Various Levels Emphasis on*

*Of Critical of Creative Affective*

*Thinking Thinking Objectives*

\* Evaluation \* Fluency \* Self-Concept

\* Synthesis \* Flexibility \* Critical Acceptance

(Self Evaluation)

\* Analysis \* Originality \* Coping with Failure

\* Application \* Elaboration \* Coping with Exceptionality

\* Risk Taking in Creative Activities

At least part of the time, the gifted program curriculum must include the above objectives, but not exclude the opportunity to be evaluated on process and process toward obtaining these objectives. Students are allowed to present products in a variety of ways, not just be tested. Also, the curriculum will develop decision-making skills as part of the content of the curriculum.

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## **PROGRAM DESIGN**

The program design for our gifted and talented students for grades kindergarten through twelfth grade is intended to provide a curriculum that is both differentiated and appropriated for the specialized needs of students who are advanced in their thinking and learning processes. Gifted and talented students are provided opportunities to interact with their peers and to work with materials which challenge their abilities and encourage them to expand their abstract thinking and reasoning. This is accomplished through using various approaches appropriate to the designated grade level. All instructors involved have received training through the Arkansas Department of Education and/or advanced degree training.

A certified teacher trained in “Talent’s Unlimited” meets with the kindergarten – second grade students for whole-class enrichment weekly. A pull-out program consisting of smaller groups for grades three, four and five meet for a minimum of one-hundred fifty minutes a week with a certified Gifted and Talented Instructor. Activities are geared to meet the identified gifted and talented student needs.

Grades six through eight grade gifted and talented student needs are met in core content areas by classroom teachers differentiating for each student’s need. There is also opportunity for enrichment chosen by the student, advanced math opportunities for 7th graders, school clubs and 8th graders have the choice to take Algebra 1.

Grade nine through twelve gifted and talented students’ needs are met through designated classes in the academic areas of English, math, science, and social science. Academic advancement, Pre-Advanced Placement, and Advanced Placement are among the program options available.

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**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Goal A. Every attempt will be made to train certified personnel in a sequential and

continuous program development to enable them to assist in the identification,

selection, and programming of gifted and talented students.

Objective A. 1. Provide pre-service and in-service staff development for

teachers and administrators.

Objective A. 2. Provide an opportunity for participation in conference

specifically related to gifted education at the state, regional,

national, and international levels.

Objective A. 3. Provide current reference materials related to gifted education

to students, teachers, administrators, school patrons, and

community members.

2. PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Goal A. Parents and resource persons of the community will participate through

active involvement in expanding opportunities of gifted and talented students.

Objective A. 1. Involve the community in programs for the gifted and

talented through the formation of an advisory council,

volunteer/mentor program, community in-service, media

releases, and/or surveys.

3. IDENTIFICATION

Goal A. A systematic process will be planned and implemented for identifying those

gifted and talented students who have the greatest need for qualitatively

differentiated educational experiences and/or services.

Objective A. 1. Develop procedures and criteria for identification of the

gifted and talented using appropriate instruments and

establishing specific methods for identification.

4. PROGRAMMING

Goal A. The district will develop and implement a program in which administrators,

classroom teachers and other staff members will jointly plan and provide

enriched experiences and/or services.

Objective A. 1. Recognize the need to provide differentiated educational

experiences for the gifted and talented of all backgrounds.

Objective A. 2. Establish a program with a long-range goal of providing

services for all areas of giftedness for students kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Objective A. 3. Provide gifted and talented students with multiple

differentiated materials which will allow them to purposefully

expand ideas and engage in the exploration of issues and

interests at each child’s individual level.

Objective A. 4. Provide a wide variety of generalized strategies designed to

develop thinking/feeling processes and operations based on

student strengths, learning styles, and interests in order to

enhance:

1. Critical and reflective thinking
2. Divergent and creative/productive thinking
3. Problem solving and self-directed expanded inquiry
4. Positive self-concept, sense of individual commitment to self in a changing society, with the teacher as a guide.

Objective A. 5. Establish opportunities for the gifted and talented student to

become a “young professional” engaged as an investigator of

real problems utilizing appropriate community resource

persons serving as volunteers/mentors.

Objective A. 6. Provide a format for gifted and talented students to come

together to challenge and interact with each other.

Objective A. 7. Provide enrichment exploration for all gifted and talented

students through the use of community resource persons to

expand student interest areas.

Objective A. 8. Articulate and coordinate the differentiated gifted program

with the regular classroom program and classroom teacher.

5. EVALUATION

Goal A. Evaluation procedures will be developed and implemented to determine and

document the degree of success of the program for gifted and talented

students.

Objective A. 1. Develop and utilize written instruments, both subjective and

objective, for periodic evaluation of the program.

Objective A. 2. Use all evaluation data to review and modify the gifted and

talented program as needed.

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#### **STUDENT EVALUATION POLICY**

Teachers constantly evaluate and re-evaluate each student’s progress. Included in the evaluation are mastery of basic skills as well as high level thinking skills, creativity, and affective growth. Continuous evaluation is done through teacher observation, teacher-made test, and standardized tests. Students are involved to some extent in the evaluation of their work.

Student progress in the GT program is shown via progress reports at the end of the first and third grading period. At the end of the first and third 9 weeks, a day is set aside school-wide for parent/teacher conferences. In addition, a parent may request a conference any time throughout the school year.

Also, students’ progress in grades sixth through twelfth is reflected via regular report cards. A state-wide uniform grading scale is used by all teachers:

A 90 – 100

B 80 – 89

C 70 – 79

D 60 – 69

F 59 and below

Evaluation of the students in the gifted program are ongoing to determine whether their needs are being met by the gifted class.

When a student is enrolled in more challenging and demanding courses such as gifted, accelerated, or honors, Pre-Advanced Placement, or Advanced Placement classes in grades ninth through twelfth, this is noted on the student’s transcript.

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## **EXIT PROCEDURE**

If data indicates that the student’s needs are not being met by the program, the placement will be reviewed by the placement committee. The committee will review data including at least two objective and two subjective measures. This may consist of standardized tests, anecdotal records, student’s work, copies of notes or letters to parents, etc.

Based on the available data, the committee will determine what placement would best meet the needs of the student. The committee’s decision will be communicated to the parent. If the parent disagrees with the decision, district GT appeals procedures will be followed.

If a parent no longer wishes for their child to participate in the gifted program, then they submit a written statement to the GT coordinator. At this time a meeting will be held with the parent, child, and GT coordinator. If the decision remains that the program is not meeting the child’s needs, then the child will discontinue participation in the GT program. If the child wants to re-enter the program, then he/she will have to go through the referral process again.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

(Produced for the Office of Gifted and Talented, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Heath, Education, and Welfare by the Council for Exceptional Children)

There are numerous lists of characteristics or distinguishing features and attributes of gifted and talented children. Teachers and parents should interpret any single list, including this one, as exemplary rather than exclusive. Few gifted children will display all of the characteristics. Understanding the characteristics of gifted and talented children will help parents and teachers sharpen their observations of these children in two distinct ways: (1) While characteristics do not necessarily define who is a gifted child, they do constitute observable behaviors, and (2) these characteristics are signals to indicated that a particular child might warrant closer observation and could require specialized educational attention, pending a more comprehensive assessment.

##### General Characteristics of Gifted / Talented Children

* They typically learn to read earlier with a better comprehension of the nuances of the language. As many as half of the gifted and talented population have learned to read before entering school. They often read widely, quickly, and intensely and have large vocabularies.
* They commonly learn basic skill better, more quickly, and with less practice.
* They are better able to construct and handle abstractions than their age mates.
* They are frequently able to pick up and interpret nonverbal cues and can draw inferences which other children have to have spelled out for them.
* They take less for granted, seeking the “hows” and “whys”.
* They display a better ability to work independently at an earlier age and for longer periods of time than other children.
* They can sustain longer periods of concentration and attention.
* Their interests are often both wildly eclectic and intensely focused.
* They frequently have seeming boundless energy, which sometimes leads to a misdiagnosis of “hyperactive”.
* They are usually able to respond and related well to parents, teachers, and other adults. They may prefer the company of older children and adults to that of their peers.

Creative Characteristics

* They are fluent thinkers, able to produce a large quantity of possibilities, consequences, or related ideas.
* They are flexible thinkers, able to use many different alternatives and approaches to problem solving.
* They are original thinkers, seeking new, unusual, or unconventional associations and combinations among items of information. They also have an ability to see relationships among seemingly unrelated objects, ideas, or facts.
* They are elaborative thinkers, producing new steps, ideas, responses, or other embellishments to a basic idea, situation, or problem.
* They show a willingness to entertain complexity and seem to thrive in problem situations.
* They are good guessers and can construct hypotheses or “what if” questions readily.
* They often are aware of their own impulsiveness and the irrationality within themselves and show emotional sensitivity.
* They have a high level of curiosity about objects, ideas, situations, or events.
* They often display intellectual playfulness, fantasize, and imagine readily.
* They can be less intellectually inhibited than their peers in expressing opinions and ideas and often exhibit spirited disagreement.
* They have sensitivity to beauty and are attracted to aesthetic dimensions.

Learning Characteristics

* Gifted and talented children often show keen powers of observation, exhibit a sense of the significant, and have an eye for important details
* They often read a great deal on their own, preferring books and magazines written for youngsters older than themselves.
* They take great pleasure in intellectual activity.
* They have well developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesizing abilities.
* They have rapid insight into cause-effect relationships.
* They tend to like structure, organization, and consistency in their environments. They may resent the violation of structure and rules.
* They display a questioning attitude and seek information for the sake of having it as much for its instrumental value.
* They are often skeptical, critical, and evaluative. They are quick to spot inconsistencies.
* They often have a large storehouse of information regarding a variety of topics which they can recall quickly.
* They show a ready grasp of underlying principles and can often make valid generalizations about events, people, or objects.
* They readily perceive similarities, differences, and anomalies.
* They often attack complicated material by separating it into its components and analyzing it systematically.
* They have a well-developed common sense.

Behavioral Characteristics

* They are willing to examine the unusual and are highly inquisitive.
* Their behavior is often well organized, goal directed, and efficient with respect to tasks and problems.
* They exhibit an intrinsic motivation to learn, find out, or explore and are often very persistent. “I’d rather do it myself” is a common attitude.
* They enjoy learning new things and new ways of doing things.
* They have a longer attention and concentration span than their peers.
* They are more independent and less subject to peer pressure than their age mates. They are able to be conforming or nonconforming as the situation demands.
* They have a highly developed moral and ethical sense.
* They are able to integrate opposing impulses, such as constructive and destructive behavior.
* They often exhibit daydreaming behavior.
* They may seek to conceal their abilities so as not to “stick out.”
* They often have a well-developed sense of self and a realistic idea about their capabilities and potential.

(Prepared by Bruce Boston, Fairfax, Virginia)