Gifted and Talented Education

Parent and Educator Handbook

Julesburg School District RE-1

Introduction

Julesburg School District RE-1 recognizes that the student population includes students with exceptional academic abilities. These students have a need for educational services that are consistent with their ability levels and learning characteristics such as thinking abstractly, having the ability to study a topic in depth, and learning rapidly. These students shall be provided appropriately challenging curricula and instruction that are congruent with their learning abilities and styles through the shared responsibility of teachers, gifted and talented specialists, administrators, counselors, parents and learners themselves.

Julesburg School District RE-1 is committed to providing educational programming that recognizes the unique abilities and needs of all students, while promoting adequate yearly progress from their points of entry.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Julesburg Gifted Education
Mission, Principles, and Vision

Mission
Gifted students' learning and growth ensured by needed provisions and advocacy.

Principles

- Relevant, appropriate instruction and outcomes for gifted learners
- Shared responsibility and involvement of educators, parents, and community for the academic and affective outcomes and growth of gifted learners
- A climate of excellence and rigorous curricula for every child
- Differentiation in curricula, instruction, and assessment supporting tiered programming and a continuum of services for every gifted learner
- High quality standards for educators and counselors who work with gifted learners
- Identification and gifted programming in all populations of race, culture, gender, and income level

Vision (2008-2012)
Gifted student education is a shared responsibility among educators, parents and community members for the learning and growth of gifted students. Collaboration creates a partnership in which purposeful direction is set in the State Performance Plan and local Program Plans. Meaningful efforts are aligned and supported by all stakeholders. Regional networks expand a statewide support system, and, include representation from parents and each district. Aligned local and state policies ensure high expectations, personnel and accountability for gifted students. Jointly, stakeholders obtain additional resources for gifted student education.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Defining Giftedness

Common Characteristics

During preschool years, giftedness can be demonstrated by early physical development, early language development, and/or exceptional powers of observation and curiosity.

While it is rare for a gifted child to exhibit all characteristics listed below, it is common for a gifted child to manifest many of them:

Good problem-solving abilities

Longer attention span

Sees relationships/makes connections with ideas

Preference for older companions

Wide range of interests (or narrow ones)

Interest in experimenting and doing things differently

Early or avid reader with greater comprehension

Ability with puzzles, mazes or numbers

Insatiable curiosity and persistence

Perceives abstract ideas, understands complex concepts

May demonstrate intense emotional and/or physical sensitivity

Rapid learning

Compassion for others

High degree of energy

Unusual sense of humor

Intense concentration

May question authority

Exhibits creativity

May seem mature for age

Perseveres in areas of interest

Advanced sense of conscience

Extensive vocabulary

Good memory

Perfectionism

Bright Child or Gifted Learner?

- 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 feeling 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 a 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

Janice Szabos, Challenge, 1989, Good Apple, Inc., Issue 34

Possible Issues

- Strong-willed
- Worries about humanitarian concerns
- Sensitive to criticism or peer rejection, excessive self-criticism
- Boredom, frustrated with inactivity; may be seen as hyperactive, disruptive and at risk
- Resistant to traditions and expectations
- Asynchronis development
- Intensity of thought, purpose, emotion, spirit, and soul

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

The Twice Exceptional Child

Twice Exceptional students have both the characteristics of students with disabilities and of students with outstanding potential. The discrepancy between the superior abilities and the learning difficulties results in feelings of frustration and heightened sense of inefficacy. Their strengths are often evident in the arts and in their ability to think and speak creatively.

Twice-exceptional children may demonstrate one or more of these learning challenges:

➢ On tests of ability, their scores may show significant discrepancies of 12 points or more between verbal and nonverbal subtests.
➢ They have large vocabularies which may be deficient in word meanings and the subtleties of language.
➢ They may be reading significantly below grade level but have a large storehouse of information on some topics.
➢ They have the ability to express themselves verbally but an apparent inability to write down any of their ideas.
➢ They may excel at abstract reasoning but seem unable to remember small details.
➢ They may seem bright and motivated outside of school but have difficulty with traditional school tasks.
➢ Their slow reaction speed may result in incomplete work and low test scores on timed tests.
➢ Their general lack of self-confidence may manifest itself as inflexibility, inability to take risks, super-sensitivity to any type of criticism, helplessness, socially inadequate behaviors, stubbornness, and other behaviors designed to distract others from their learning inadequacies.
➢ They may lack effective organization and study skills.

Ways to Help Twice-Exceptional Students Succeed in School

Twice-exceptional children can not improve simply by "trying harder." They must be taught specific compensation strategies. They must know and appreciate the fact that they have normal and above-average intelligence. They, and the adults in their lives, need to understand that their brains are dealing with certain physiological factors that influence their ability to learn.

Underachieving Gifted

Students who demonstrate a discrepancy between ability and achievement are considered to be underachievers. If a child appears not to be engaged in the learning process, it is important to ascertain why. Various factors that attribute to underachievement include:

Family Considerations
- Level and value of education in the family
- Models for achievement within the family
- Overprotection
- Parental expectations
- Perfectionism of parents
- Making a child a "little adult"
- Emotional or physical turmoil

Personal Considerations
- Need for control or attention
- Response to competition
- Attitude for failure
- Level of creativity
- Learning style
- Deficit skills
- Coping strategies
- Self-esteem, self-concept

To reverse underachievement it is helpful to know the origin of the problem. A number of interventions have proven to be effective, depending on the circumstances.

Factors Attributed to Reversing Underachievement
- Out-of-school interests
- Consistent parenting that encourages a positive attitude, responsibility
- Goal-setting that attaches meaning to success in school
- Opportunities for advanced study, independent study
- Relevant assignments
- Evaluation of process as well as product
- Flexible teaching styles
- Competent, passionate teaching
- Realistically high expectations
- Student retaining internal locus of control
- Student reflection on patterns of underachievement
- Student acceptance of responsibility for actions and behaviors
- Student understanding of relationship between coursework and future careers
- Self-efficacy; student's belief in his or her ability to perform well

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

- Positive perception of school and teachers
- Student ability to manage time, stay on task, and set and achieve goals

In general, teachers can also help by providing opportunities for creativity, freedom of choice, academic challenges, and enjoyment for learning.

Indicators of Progress may Include:
- Attitude change (happier, enjoys learning, improved self-concept)
- Completed assignments
- Quality of work
- Increased concentration and productivity
- Improved ability to deal with emotional conflict

MYTHS & REALITIES ABOUT GIFTED LEARNERS

Myth: Everyone is gifted in some way.
Reality: All individuals have gifts that make them unique, but giftedness refers to extraordinary, exceptional, beyond-the-norm abilities and talents.

Myth: Gifted kids are smart enough to learn by themselves.
Reality: Gifted children require the same professional educational and emotional support as other children, but that support must be appropriate to their needs.

Myth: Special provisions for the gifted are undemocratic.
Reality: In a democratic and egalitarian society that places high value on the worth of every individual, the public schools have an obligation to provide educational opportunities that will enable each student to develop fully according to his or her potential.

Myth: Labeling a child as gifted leads to special treatment and special problems.
Reality: Gifted education identifies academic needs of students whose abilities and knowledge exceed what is being taught in the regular classroom and meets those needs. When that happens, problems often disappear.

Myth: Accelerating eager gifted learners sometimes causes them social or emotional harm.
Reality: Research shows no connection between acceleration of content/grade and social or emotional problems for correctly identified children.

Myth: Gifted learners with the same level of intelligence have the same abilities and interests.
Reality: Gifted children, like all children, are unique individuals and differ in their abilities, talents, and personalities.

Myth: Gifted learners are enthusiastic about school and academic work.
Reality: Gifted learners may actually struggle in a school environment because of lack of challenge, a learning difficulty, or a different learning style.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Myth: Gifted education and the "gifted" label are "elitist" because schools with gifted programs offer "special" treatment for smart kids that already have it all.
Reality: Gifted education is, in fact, about meeting the academic and affective needs of students whose abilities and knowledge exceed what is being taught in the regular classroom.

Myth: Gifted kids tend to be physically weak and unhealthy.
Reality: Gifted children actually tend to be stronger, have fewer illnesses, and many are outstanding athletes.

Myth: Gifted kids are emotionally unstable and social misfits.
Reality: The opposite is generally true. Many children fail to be identified by teachers because their outward behavior seems so normal. They are often very outgoing and can be outstanding leaders.

Julesburg School District RE-1 Definition of Gifted

"Gifted and talented children" means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:

- General or specific intellectual ability.
- Specific academic aptitude.
- Creative or productive thinking.
- Leadership abilities.
- Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Referral, Identification, and Programming

Efforts to refer and identify students for gifted programming will be made at each grade level. Multiple criteria shall be used for identification purposes. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups and across all economic strata. Students shall receive gifted programming congruent with their identified needs.

Students as young as preschool through the second grade are screened for exceptional abilities by the classroom teacher and the district's RtI Problem Solving Team. As with all students, programming at the primary level is differentiated to meet the learning needs of high ability students.

At the beginning of the third grade, formal screening begins with the school-wide administration of the Cognitive Abilitites Test (CogAT). A test of aptitude, the CogAT will often reveal abilities of students who are not achieving in the classroom or on standardized achievement tests.

Referral Process
A student may be referred by parent/guardian, staff member, counselor, school psychologist, or self-nomination.
A student may be referred for consideration based on any of the following:
1. Student products of high quality
2. Evidence of outstanding performance
3. Standardized group achievement test scores in the Advanced Range
4. Standardized aptitude test scores in the 95th percentile or above
5. Behavior/Characteristics

Data Gathering Team
Gifted student data is reviewed by the district RtI problem solving team that may consist of a building administrator, building facilitator, classroom teacher(s) and others.
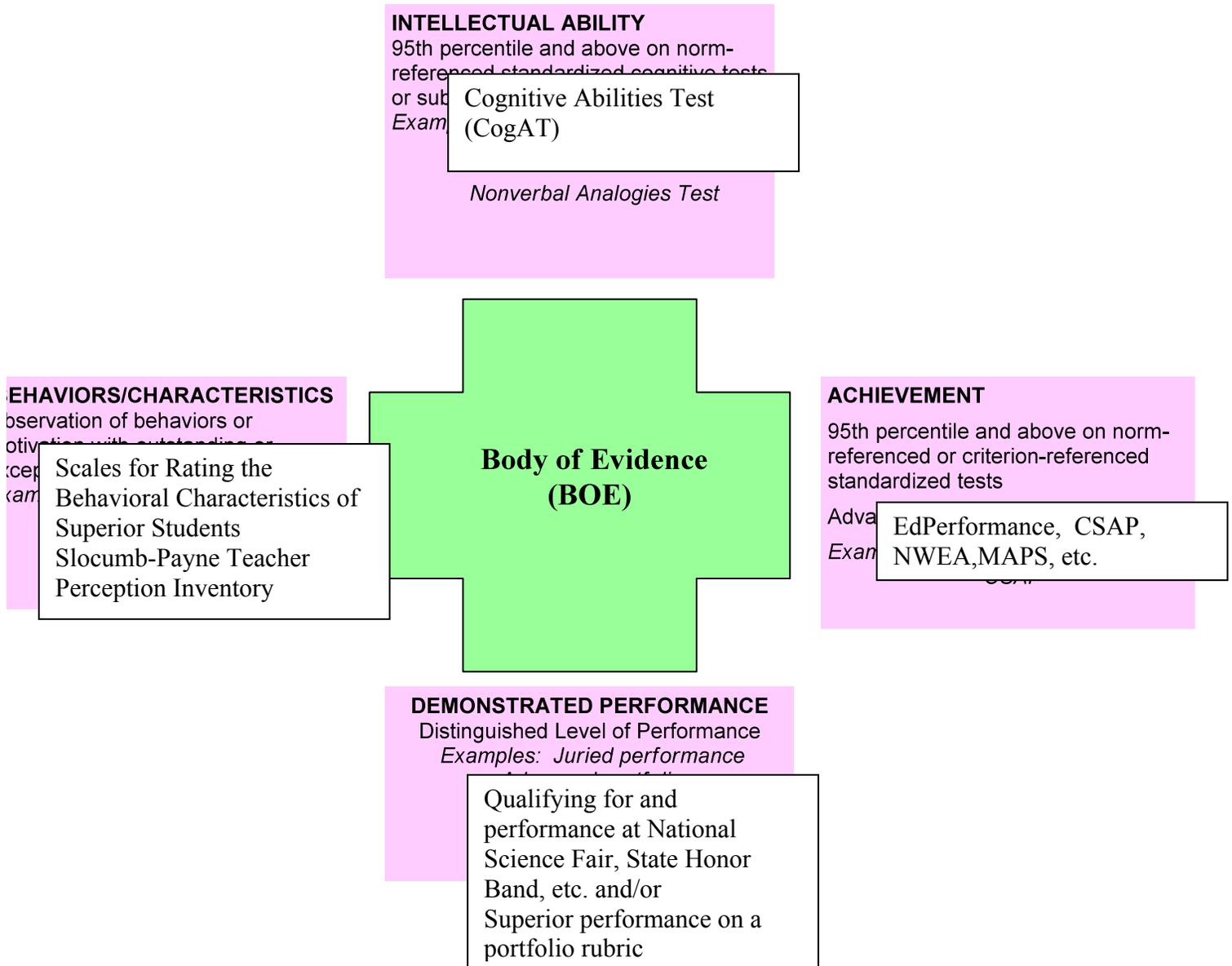The make-up of this group may change depending on the student(s) who are being considered.

Identification and Placement Criteria for Gifted Programming Services
The district's Data Gathering Team identifies gifted students based on a body of evidence that includes the four areas listed below. Those students who do not meet the criteria for identification but display some of the indicators will be put in a talent pool for possible programming and further monitoring and screening.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Body of Evidence

The Body of Evidence used to collect data by the school gathering team for identification and placement of students for gifted programming services and differentiated curriculum are:

INTELLECTUAL ABILITY
95th percentile and above on norm-referenced standardized cognitive tests or sub...
Exam...

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)

Nonverbal Analogies Test

Body of Evidence (BOE)

BEHAVIORS/CHARACTERISTICS
observation of behaviors or motivation with outstanding or ...cep...
...am...

Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students Slocumb-Payne Teacher Perception Inventory

ACHIEVEMENT
95th percentile and above on norm-referenced or criterion-referenced standardized tests

Adva...
Exam...

EdPerformance, CSAP, NWEA,MAPS, etc.

CSAP

DEMONSTRATED PERFORMANCE
Distinguished Level of Performance
Examples: Juried performance

Qualifying for and performance at National Science Fair, State Honor Band, etc. and/or Superior performance on a portfolio rubric

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Placement

When the school gathering team has completed collecting the information for the nominated student and that student has met the requirements for identification, the parents are informed and the student will then receive specific programming strategies for his/her area of strength that are based upon the area of identification.

Record Keeping through Advanced Learning Plan

A record of gifted and talented education programming services, options, and strategies used with individual students shall be made part of the student's record and shall be considered in educational planning and decision-making concerning programming for that student. This Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) will be developed based on the students identification needs. It will be used as a planning guide for making instructional decisions about materials, programming options, and assessments for gifted and talented students based upon strengths, interests, learning characteristics, and social-emotional needs.

The ALP will be used as a tool for monitoring students with outstanding potential in their area of strength.

Data for the ALP is collected from regular classroom, district, and state assessments, and/or identified gifted programming options.

The ALP will be reviewed with parents and the gifted student at least once a year.

The ALP is critical in the transition of gifted students from one level of schooling to the next, and from school to school.

Facilitating School Experiences for Students with High Ability and Low Achievement
Students who have abilities that would qualify them for gifted learning services and achieve at a low level will be referred to the RtI team who, working with the parents/guardians, will determine the school experiences that best meet the student's needs. This referral will result in identifying the student for gifted programming services unless parents/guardians and staff determine that such identification and/or placement will not meet student needs.

Student progress will be reviewed annually by the data-gathering team.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Right of Appeal

➢ Step 1
   o If a student does not meet the specified criteria for identification, and gifted programming services seem warranted, then staff members, the student and/or parents/guardian may submit data to the school data-gathering team to be reviewed. The gathering team will consider the following information on which to base decisions for provided gifted programming services:
      • Demonstrated accomplishments
      • Expert testimony or reports
      • Outstanding scores on objective tests
      • Other evidence
➢ Step 2
   • A meeting will be scheduled to share decision made.
   Attending: Data Gathering Team, parents/guardian, school administrator, building facilitator, classroom teacher(s) and others.
   The make-up of this group may change depending on the student(s) who are being considered.

Whole-grade Acceleration Process
Acceleration Grade Placement will be determined on a case by case basis. The following criteria will be considered for whole grade acceleration:
   •performing two years above academic grade level.

Each case will be presented to the Data Gathering Team:
Gifted student data is reviewed by the district RtI problem solving team that may consist of a building administrator, building facilitator, classroom teacher(s) and others.
The make-up of this group may change depending on the student(s) who are being considered.
Notification of outcome will be in written form and a formal conference will be scheduled to include Data Gathering Team, parents/guardians and/or student.

Communications about Referral, Identification, and Placement Criteria and Procedures
At the beginning of each school year the district will provide written information to parents/ guardians about gifted programming referrals, identification, and Procedures, including ways parents/guardians or students may facilitate the referral and identification process. Information describing the school's gifted programming, referral, identification, and procedures including ways parents/guardians or students may facilitate the referral and identification will be made available for all stakeholders.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Student Services

Individual student services are driven by student data. Programming and instruction for gifted students falls within the Colorado Multi-Tiered Model of Instruction and Intervention with services at the universal, targeted or intensive levels based on student needs. Curriculum and instruction options might include:

Elementary
- Differentiated instruction in the regular classroom
- Cluster grouping
- Acceleration
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions* when offered
- Special Classes or clubs, when offered**
- The Ultimate Celebration (Semester Regional Saturday program for gifted)

Middle School
- Differentiated instruction in the regular classroom
- Cluster grouping
- Acceleration
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions* when offered
- Special Classes or clubs, when offered**
- Gifted Kids Network online classes
- The Ultimate Scavenger Hunt (Annual Regional Weekend program for gifted)

High School

- Honors/AP Classes
- Dual enrollment college classes
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions* when offered
- Special Classes or Clubs, when offered**
- The Ultimate Scavenger Hunt (Annual Regional Weekend program for gifted)

*Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, Brain Bowl, and Destination Imagination

** Reading, Writing, and Music and Performing Arts Enrichment

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

In addition, the secondary schools offer a variety of activities in which highly able students also
participate, including Student Council, National Honor Society, Athletics, FBLA, Fine Arts Club, Science Fair, and Journalism

Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction for Gifted Learners

Programming services in curricula and instruction will be designed to accommodate the student's ability levels and learning characteristics, such as thinking abstractly, having the ability to study a topic in depth, and learning rapidly. The programming services may differ depending on the needs of the student and the gifted designation.

Programming services might include:
• Differentiated curricula and instruction
• Acceleration
• Flexible grouping, including some homogenous grouping
• Providing appropriate courses and activities

The elements of differentiation are: content, process, product, and environment.
Content Modification - The major focus is on the acquisition of complex, abstract ideas that are applicable to a wide variety of disciplines and situations.
Process Modification - As new materials are presented and as students engage in learning activities, the focus is on:
  • ***Higher Level of Thinking*** - emphasis on the use of knowledge rather than its mere acquisition.
  • ***Open-Endedness*** - questions and learning activities that have no predetermined right answers and which encourage further thinking and investigation.
  • ***Discovery*** - learning situations in which students use inductive reasoning to discover patterns, ideas and underlying principles.
  • ***Evidence of Reasoning*** - students are encouraged to not only express their conclusions but also to explain their reasoning. They are encouraged to learn different reasoning processes by observing, listening and interacting with other students.
Product Modification - Students will produce original products that go beyond paraphrasing or copying of existing materials. These products will address issues of real concern to the student, will meet criteria determined by the teacher and students and will, to as great an extent as possible, be shared with audiences other than the classroom teacher and students.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Learning Environment

- ***Student Centered vs. Teacher Centered -*** high emphasis on student discussion and interaction.
- ***Evaluative Environment -*** students are encouraged to express their ideas without fear of judgment – a definite distinction is made between judgment and evaluation – judgment implies rightness or wrongness – evaluation implies measuring a product against specific, stated criteria and identifying strengths and weaknesses in a helpful, non-threatening manner.

SUPPORTING YOUR GIFTED CHILD

AT HOME
Activities
• Read aloud routinely as a family, even when children can read themselves.
• Read the classics.
• Join an adult interest group (photography, birds, gems and minerals, chess, etc.) with your child.
• Encourage your children to enter contests: consider spelling bee, Destination Imagination, science fair,
etc.
• Help your child to develop presentation skills. Sign up for a storytelling class or encourage her to become
a magician, clown, or juggler.
• Encourage friendships.
• Discover the nonfiction section of your library.
• Select challenging games and play them with your children.
• Encourage your child to start a collection, going beyond just gathering objects. Think of ancillary
activities to enhance the project.
• Foster an appreciation in the arts. Visit museums and attend concerts. Participate in a play or be a
member of a stage crew.
• Check out special-interest classes and camps. Apply early.
• Choose a foreign language to learn as a family.
• Host an exchange student.
• Encourage your child to keep a journal or find a pen pal.
• Take advantage of the free offerings of nearby colleges.
• Have your child join a Junior Great Books group.
• Teach your child how to take advantage of new technologies (computer, recorders, etc.
• Develop your children's bodies as well as their minds. Include some family fitness activities.
• Arrange for an internship for your child at a local business.
• Encourage science projects and inventions.
• Become involved in a social cause as a family.
• Encourage your child to be an entrepreneur (dog-walking service, birdhouse business, etc.)
• Support your child's interest in construction (skateboard ramp, dollhouse, fort, dog pen, etc.)
• Study the stock market. Purchase some stock or mutual funds and track the investment.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

• Promote environmental awareness by adopting an endangered animal, planting trees, recycling, buying an
acre of rain forest, etc.
• Let your child plan his birthday party around a theme.
• Borrow recipe books from the library and have your child prepare a weekly meal. Try some ethnic
dishes.
• Dream, imagine, and have fun

Attitudes
• Model life-long learning.
• Encourage and model good communication with your children.
• Encourage your child to share his feelings in an accepting environment.
• Be a good listener.
• Be a facilitator and a guide. Share in the adventure of learning something new.
• Allow childhood to be a part of your gifted child's life.
• Don't compare your children with each other.
• Make free time a regular pastime. Don't over program your child.
• Set clear and consistent expectations and consequences. Follow through.
• Help your child believe in himself.
• Nurture the passion and interests within your child.
• Compliment your child with achievable descriptors only when deserved: bright, kind, good thinker,
rather than brilliant, genius, etc.
• Model general respect for educators. Avoid critical conversations of particular teachers in front of your
child.
• Be a role model who reflects the values you demand of others.
• Value hard work and the satisfaction of achievement.
• Emphasize the positive. Deal with the negative in non-judgmental ways.
• Discuss effective ways to solve problems and deal with failure.
• Encourage independence through responsible behavior.
• Remember who is the student, who owns the homework, and who needs to do the learning.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

SUPPORTING YOUR GIFTED CHILD

IN SCHOOL

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

Attitude
- See yourself as a contributor to enhanced learning.
- Be willing to give your time and talents (not just complaints!)
- Be assertive, not adversarial.
- Take time to say 'thank you' to your child's teachers and other school staff.
- Develop rapport with your child's teachers.
- Be respectful of the teaching profession … being a "know-it-all" will get you nowhere.

In the Classroom
- Share your child's "at home" work and creativity at appropriate times.
- Find a constructive reason to help in the classroom when appropriate. Volunteer as a "teacher's helper" in the classroom, or work with classroom teachers to help organize curriculum-related field trips, guest speakers, and/or displays.
- Volunteer or assist in other areas of the school such as media, computer, art or front office. Volunteer for "non-gifted" school activities to give balance to your purpose and credibility to your cause.

Committees
- Become knowledgeable in building- and district-level Gifted and Talented plans, priorities, goals, and objectives. Network with other interested parents, teachers, and community members as well as representatives from other schools and school districts.
- Represent the interests and needs of Gifted and Talented students on committees such as School Improvement Committee, District Accountability Committee, Honors Steering Committee (MCHS) and Special Task Force Committees.

Monitoring Your Child's Progress
- Document student academic needs through personal accounts, trends in standardized test scores, and other objective means.
- Check your child's "cumulative file" at the end of each school year; if you wish, make a copy of each of the documents for your records.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

- Schedule yearly meetings with your child's G/T coordinator to review his or her Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) and discuss your child's strengths and weaknesses, personal goals, indicators of academic growth, and means for parental support. These meetings provide you with the opportunity to discuss any possible revisions of your child's ALP.

Supporting the Gifted and Talented Program
- Create formal and informal opportunities for dialogue with key educators and policy makers.
- Roundtable discussions and "brownbag lunches" provide opportunities to raise awareness of, and discuss issues related to, Gifted and Talented programs and staff.

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.

Resources

District Resources

Delisle, James R., <u>Parenting Gifted Kids,</u> Waco, Texas, Prufrock Press Inc., 2006.

Henate, Diana, <u>Gifted Intervention Manual Second Edition</u>, U.S.A., Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc., 1990.

Kingore, Bertie, Ph.D., <u>Differentiation: Simplified, Realistic, and Effective</u>. U.S.A., Professional Associates Publishing, 2004.

Kingore, Bertie, <u>Teaching Without Nonsense: Translating Research into Effective</u>

Additional Resources
Additional information on gifted education, parenting the gifted and support groups and organizations for the gifted can be found on the BOCES website at:

www.neboces.com

www.cde.state.co.us/gt/index.htm

Subject to change, ongoing as needed.