



Parent Handbook for Gifted Education Services

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For more information:
Office of Instruction
23296 Courthouse Avenue
Accomac, VA 23301
Phone: (757) 787-5754
maribeth.haines@accomack.k12.va.us

Introduction

This guide is designed to provide information to parents of identified students receiving Gifted Education Services for Accomack County Public Schools (ACPS). The guide complements the division's Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted and addresses:

- the ACPS service model,
- differentiation strategies for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and
- resources for parents as partners in Gifted Education

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the Talented and Gifted (TAG) Programs are:

- To screen and identify all eligible students in grades K-12 for TAG Program services in the areas of General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) and Visual Arts Aptitude
 - Uniform procedures established
 - Universal screening of first grade students for GIA
 - Identification based on multiple criteria
 - Visual Arts referrals based on portfolios
 - Collect annual demographic data
- To provide comprehensive, differentiated educational services for each eligible student in grades K-12
 - Balance of classroom differentiation
 - Independent and small group activities
 - Push-in and pull-out services
- To provide appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction that includes both enrichment and acceleration for TAG students
 - Curriculum aligned with VA SOL and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) standards
 - Higher level thinking, problem solving, research
 - Participation in Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Testing
 - Support for social, emotional, and career interests
- To provide appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers of TAG students
 - Gifted competencies lessons for all teachers
 - Review current research and conduct workshops on best practices
 - Participation in VA state-sponsored Art Conference for Visual Arts teachers
 - Participation in VA state-sponsored Gifted conferences
 - Development of professional learning community of Art teachers
- To increase and/or maintain the representation of students from diverse backgrounds in the TAG programs

- Continue to review and evaluate the process
- Analyze annual data
- Review of current research on best practices
- To increase parent and community awareness of and participation in TAG programs
 - Keep Gifted Education link on the division web page up to date
 - Sponsor authentic learning opportunities: Visual Arts student visits to local art galleries and business displays of student work
 - Ensure student participation in Summer Residential Governor's School and Eastern Shore Regional Governor's School programs, as appropriate
 - Use multiple means of publicity for Advisory Committee meetings
 - Provide parents with easy access to information that is current and applicable to having an identified gifted child.

Gifted Education Services Model

A. Service Options are Continuous and Sequential

This section provides evidence that the division's program of curricula and instruction for gifted learners is continuous and sequential. GIA programs need to provide evidence from kindergarten through twelfth grade. SAA programs need to provide evidence that service options are continuous and sequential from identification until twelfth grade.

General Intellectual Aptitude

All elementary students receive differentiated instruction in the general education classroom. Identified students in grades K through 2 receive a dedicated hour of pull-out instructional time with intellectual peers each week with a gifted resource teacher. Students in grades 3 through 5 receive at least ninety minutes of pull-out time with the gifted resource teacher each week. If a cluster model is implemented in Grades 3-5, then identified students receive an additional 60 minutes of language arts instruction per week delivered by both the classroom teacher and the Gifted Education teacher in a collaborative teaching model. The classroom teachers collaborate with the gifted resource teachers to provide additional challenge as needed. The theme-based curriculum at elementary and middle school enriches and extends the Virginia Standards of Learning in each of the four core subject areas at each grade level, incorporates the NAGC Standards, and develops problem solving, higher order, creative, and critical thinking abilities. Independent research projects are an integral part of the learning experience. The CLEAR curriculum delivered in cluster classrooms is a language arts curriculum developed at the University of Virginia, is aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Objectives for Language Arts, and is based upon performance of students in rural communities across Virginia. The purpose is to expand

instruction and to provide advanced learning opportunities for students in specific Language Arts content outlined in the Virginia SOL.

At the middle school level grade 6 through 8 students are enrolled in daily classes as an elective (Gr. 6 for 45 minutes daily for 90 days and Gr. 7 & 8 for 90 minutes daily for 45 days). Middle school students also are eligible to enroll in advanced level Mathematics courses based on additional criteria and the proper prerequisite requirements. The gifted resource teacher at this level also collaborates with the classroom teachers to challenge the gifted students and to meet their academic and social needs.

High school students are able to enroll in Honors, Advanced Placement, and/or dual-enrollment classes on each high school campus based on the necessary prerequisites. A gifted resource teacher is scheduled in each high school regularly as a resource for both students and teachers.

VPA - Visual Arts

Beginning in the third grade, each student identified as eligible to participate in the Visual Arts program receives additional differentiated instruction in Art from the school's Art teacher at the elementary and middle school levels. This service may occur during the regularly scheduled classroom Art period and/or an additionally scheduled pull-out time depending on individual school.

B. Service Options Provide Instructional Time with Age-level Peers

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model that allows gifted students to interact with their age-level peers during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude

Due to the fact that elementary services are pull-out on a weekly basis and/or in a cluster classroom, these students are with their age-level peers the majority of their school time. At the middle school, where services are only one period a day for one quarter or one semester, students also spend most of their time with age-level peers. High school students are scheduled with age-level peers until they begin to select and differentiate their individual courses of study over the four years.

VPA - Visual Arts

Most elementary visual arts students are instructed with their age-level peers. Depending upon the number of students served, third through fifth grade identified students may be instructed as a group. Middle school students have the option to stay after school hours, be scheduled for an additional Art elective, or receive differentiated services during their regular Art elective class. High school students enroll in higher-level Art

classes or Advanced Placement courses. At all grade spans, students are encouraged to participate in local, regional, and state contests for recognition.

C. Service Options Provide Instructional Time with Intellectual and Academic Peers

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to accelerate and enrich the content for gifted learners beyond the grade-level or course expectations for all learners. The description should include how these academic needs are met during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude

Part-time services with the gifted resource teachers provide acceleration and enrichment opportunities for students who are identified as gifted. Specific instructional strategies may include mathematics acceleration, scientific inquiry and investigation, historical research across content areas using primary sources, writing for various purposes, and oral presentations of topics based upon individual interest and ability. Emphasis is placed on higher order thinking and problem solving. At the high school level Honors, Advanced Placement, and dual-enrollment courses are taken by gifted as well as high-achieving students.

D. Service Options Provide Instructional Time to Work Independently

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model used in the division to allow gifted learners to work independently during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude

Both classroom and gifted resource teachers provide advanced learners with instructional time to pursue topics of individual interest and ability. Projects and reports are assigned that require independent research and work both in and out of school. This instructional time and the student expectations are monitored by classroom and gifted resource teachers. On-line courses are taken in the school media center and monitored by the media specialist at the high schools.

E. Service Options Foster Intellectual and Academic Growth

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to foster intellectual and academic growth during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude

A goal for Accomack County Public Schools is to ensure that graduates are college and career-ready. In order to achieve this goal, the plan for Gifted Education services incorporates those instructional strategies that will emphasize higher level thinking, engage all students in the learning process, and provide authentic learning opportunities for students. These strategies will foster creativity and productivity in the classroom and throughout the school that are innovative and that encompass “twenty-first century skills.” All students will be included in the learning process. Critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration are some of the necessary skills required of our workforce. The gifted program will build on this foundation, enriching and extending the general education focus in these areas to include technology, opportunities for reflection, working with others to solve problems, and continuous personalized intellectual growth.

Appropriate instructional models for gifted students include shared inquiry, problem and project-based learning, critical thinking (Bloom and Paul), creative thinking, concept development, problem-solving (CPS and SCAMPER), and research.

F. Procedures for Assessing Academic Growth in Gifted Students

This section includes a description of the procedures used by the division to assess the academic growth for gifted learners.

General Intellectual Aptitude

As the division completes its plans for assessing student growth for all students, various instruments will be researched for their applicability in measuring student growth, such as Paul’s Reasoning Model, the critical thinking test available through the Gifted Center at William and Mary, and/or the use of concept maps over time.

Authentic assessment strategies are flexible and varied, encouraging alternative, innovative solutions to real-world problems, multiple responses, and emphasize higher-level outcomes according to the needs and abilities of the students. Evaluation is on-going and diagnostic, and is conducted in accordance with principles of excellence in performance and products. To assess the academic growth of gifted learners, we will administer pre- and post-tests in each curriculum unit. These tests will measure the broad concepts of the topics so that student-generated concept maps may be used to show growth in understanding. Students will create portfolios, both paper and pencil and on-line, using various options such as wikis and blogs. Where applicable, student growth percentiles (SGP) will be used as measures of growth. Rubrics are developed locally to use with performance-based assessments. All documentation of student growth will be a “living document” that follows students through the grades and each teacher will be able to use and to contribute information.

At the high school level for students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, released tests are available for use as pre-tests for those courses and to serve as a guide for the differentiation of instruction for students. At this time division-wide plans have not been made to use a particular quantitative or qualitative measure for assessing student growth, although research is being done into a variety of options.

Students will begin to develop learning goals for themselves each year that will serve to focus their instruction on outcomes. These goals will be assessed at the midpoint and at the end of the school year in conference with the gifted resource teachers.

Differentiation Strategies for Gifted Education

General Intellectual Aptitude

Each year, our elementary and middle school gifted students study content-based units, at least one of which is an independent study and research unit based on the specific needs, strengths, and interests of the individual student. The units are designed to meet both the cognitive and affective needs of the students, and provide open-ended learning activities. Each unit is multi-disciplinary, and may involve both accelerated and enriched content. Students use critical, analytical, and evaluative thinking skills to develop their expertise in problem solving, communicating, collaborating, and creative expression. Emphasis is placed on the processes of creative problem solving, developing original work, as well as on the process of scientific inquiry.

Theoretical foundations for the program include consideration of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains, Webb's Depth of Knowledge, Gardner's theories on multiple intelligences, Renzulli's content- and project-based outcomes, and Paul's Critical Thinking Model. The NAGC Standards serve as the framework for the processes, products, and content of the differentiated curriculum and instruction for the students identified as gifted in Accomack County Public Schools. On the secondary level, participation in the gifted program includes dual enrollment classes, advanced placement and honors classes, with consideration given to the specific interests of the individual student. One TAG teacher is scheduled at each high school on a weekly basis and monitors secondary level students' progress.

Strategies for instruction are based on the best practices specified by the Department of Education in "Teaching the Gifted Learner," as well as "Basic educational options for gifted students in schools" (VanTassel-Baska) and include flexibly-paced instruction, acceleration and enrichment of tasks, activities and processes beyond that which are required by the minimum standards of the SOLs. There is an emphasis on academic rigor, creativity, and complexity through

integrated, multi-disciplinary academic experiences. Self-directed learning, critical inquiry and a diversity of responses, projects and products encourage development of original thought and leadership skills. Broad-based themes or concepts are used to facilitate interdisciplinary connections to increase student understandings and knowledge.

In grades K-8, the gifted resource teachers enrich the general education curriculum in all four core subject areas using an integrated multidisciplinary approach. Selected materials include:

Language Arts:

- ☐ William & Mary (W&M) Literature units, Jacob's Ladder and Navigator series
- ☐ Shakespeare
- ☐ novel studies
- ☐ Junior Great Books
- ☐ Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), WHRO, NASA, and other local and regional essay contests
- ☐ University of Virginia (UVA) CLEAR curriculum Language Arts lesson plans

Mathematics:

- ☐ Project M2 and M3 units developed by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT)
- ☐ W&M Math units
- ☐ Lego Mindstorms
- ☐ National contests and challenges

Science:

- ☐ W&M Project Clarion units
- ☐ Other W&M problem-based Science units
- ☐ GEMS (Great Explorations in Math and Science) units from the Lawrence Hall of Science
- ☐ The scientific investigation process
- ☐ Local Science Fairs
- ☐ Environmental education

History and Social Science:

- ☐ W&M units developed by the Center for (CFGE)
- ☐ Primary Sources websites including the Library of Congress
- ☐ Analysis and interpretation of national and local issues
- ☐ Law and civics

At the high school level Honors, Virtual Virginia, Advanced Placement, and dual-enrollment courses are available to students with the appropriate pre-requisites to provide additional academic rigor for students. Internships may also be available. A gifted resource teacher is scheduled weekly in each high school to collaborate with teachers and counselors to assist students as needed. The role of the gifted resource teacher is to inform and consult with eligible gifted students regarding high school course selection, available opportunities such as

application to Governor's School, and to assist with the college and career placement process.

VPA - Visual Arts

The Visual Arts curriculum includes instruction, research, and exploration in the areas of Art History, Art appreciation and Art making. Students participate in and experience projects in painting, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture. Students not only produce art, but cohesively connect the art they make to the world around them. Art history and appreciation drive the lessons used by the instructors to ensure that the students are being exposed to a broader sense of what art can be.

Resources for Parents as Partners in Gifted Education

Student Performance Reporting to Parents

At the end of each grading period, the academically gifted students receive a progress report from their Gifted Education teacher. This report gives a general idea of how the child is performing in the Gifted Education program. The Visual Arts students do not receive a written progress report at this time. Periodically, TAG students and parents receive program evaluation forms to complete. These evaluation forms help the staff to continually improve the programs.

Gifted Advisory Committee

The purpose of the local Gifted Advisory Committee is to coordinate school and community support in developing and promoting gifted education. This involves the annual review of the local plan for the education of gifted students and the determination of the extent to which the plan for the previous year was implemented. These findings and recommendations are submitted annually to the superintendent and the school board.

The Gifted Advisory Committee is composed of teachers, parents, administrators, school board member, community members, and students. The committee meets two to three times a year. The local Gifted Advisory Committee membership list is reviewed annually for deletions and/or additions. Parents of gifted students are given an opportunity to volunteer to serve on the committee and other members may be selected as needed. To ensure that the committee is representative of the ethnic and geographic composition of the locality, effort is taken to include members from each school in the county. All gifted students and their parents are invited to attend Gifted Advisory meetings, where parents may offer input and glean new information pertinent to their gifted child(ren).

Understanding a Gifted Child

Parents of children who are academically gifted need to understand the ways in which this giftedness may affect both the academic and the social progress of their children. Although the special abilities of a child may be in specific academic areas, these abilities may color the ways in which that child reacts to other academic and non-academic situations.

A child's self-understanding may be enhanced by discussing with the child the implications of being in a special program and of being identified as academically gifted. A child needs to understand why he/she learns at a different pace and may appear different from many of his/her peers. Perhaps the most important gift a child can be given is unqualified acceptance, not dependent upon the child's accomplishments or performance. Balance this acceptance with the idea that a child should live up to standards compatible with his/her potential. A parent may help the child set these standards until the child can internalize them and make the standards his/her own.

Helping a child know him/herself, and accepting who he/she is along with his/her own limitations and assets may help avoid needless frustration. It is always important for parents to take the time to listen, discuss, and interact with their children.

It is also important for other adults who deal with gifted children to know their characteristics and abilities. Parents can help by serving as advocates for the particular educational needs of their children. This may require active parental involvement in the educational plans made for their children.

Sometimes the gifted child has difficulty winning acceptance from others without sacrificing individuality. The middle school child, especially, may try to hide his/her assets in an effort to conform and fit in. If a parent continues to provide acceptance during this period, the child may come to understand that he/she can find a place in the world without having to sacrifice his/her own unique characteristics.

Examining some of the characteristics of gifted children and the occasional problems associated with these characteristics may increase the understanding of what it means to be gifted, and offer insights into the daily interactions of these children. The following chart may help to clarify some of the conflicting behaviors seen in gifted children.

Characteristics of the Gifted Child

The Gifted Student	But...
Asks many questions and is very curious	Easily gets "off task" and "off topic"
Possesses a large amount of information	Is impatient when not called on in class
Has a good memory	
Learns new information quickly	Is easily bored

Retains information easily	Can become disruptive in class
Masters reading skills earlier	Shows strong resistance to repetitive activities and memorization
Demonstrates strong abilities in math	Completes work quickly but sloppily
Displays unusual academic achievement	
Finishes class work quickly	
In interested in many things	May resist working on activities apart from areas of interest
Becomes involved in a variety of activities	Leaves projects unfinished
Is motivated to try new things	Takes on too much and becomes overwhelmed
Enjoys a challenge	
Thinks independently	Challenges authority
Expresses unique and original opinions	Does not handle criticism well
Is self-motivated	Does not work well in groups
Uses higher level thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)	Tends to be absent-minded regarding practical details
Makes connections other students don't see	Forgets homework assignments
Considers unusual approaches to problem-solving	Can be very critical of self and others
Has a strong sense of justice	Likes to argue a point
Likes to debate current issues and real life problems	Is a perfectionist and expects others to be perfect as well
Has a sophisticated sense of humor	Easily gets carried away with a joke
Understands subtle humor	Has a tendency to become the "class clown"
Enjoys plays on words and satire	
Demonstrates strong expressive skills	Sometimes perceived as a "know-it-all" by peers
Is sensitive to feelings of others	Is sometimes "bossy" to peers in group situations
Elaborates on ideas	
Shows skill in drama/art/music/language	

-adapted from <http://www.teachersandfamilies.com>

Parent Resources

Books on gifted issues are available at the school libraries, Eastern Shore Public Library, and at the Eastern Shore Community College. Resources on gifted education are also available through the Gifted Education teachers. Some professional journals include: *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *Parenting for High Potential*, *Roeper Review*, *Gifted Child Today*, *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, and *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*.

In addition, the Gifted Education Coordinator and teachers may provide help in locating information and resources at a parent's request.

There are many resources available on the Internet, including both booklists for students and resources for parents. Some useful sites include:

- The Virginia Department of Education
 - www.doe.virginia.gov
- The Virginia Association for the Gifted
 - www.vagifted.org
- The National Association for Gifted Children
 - www.nagc.org
- The Roeper Institute
 - www.roeper.org
- Institute for the Development of Gifted Education
 - www.du.edu/ricks/idge
- The Center for Gifted Education at The College of William and Mary
 - www.cfge.wm.edu
- Hoagies Gifted Education Page
 - www.hoagiesgifted.org
- Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University
 - www.cty.jhu.edu
- Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development
 - www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank
- Talent Identification Program at Duke University
 - www.tip.duke.edu
- Jack Kent Cooke Foundation
 - www.jackkentcookefoundation.org
- Royal Fireworks Press
 - www.rfwp.com

The Gifted Education Staff

The following persons involved in the Gifted Education Program in Accomack County are available to answer questions:

Gifted Coordinator: Dr. Maribeth Haines
P.O. Box 330 Accomack, Virginia 23301
Phone: 757-787-5754
Fax: 757-787-2951
Email: maribeth.haines@accomack.k12.va.us

Teachers of Gifted: Suzy Corson
Arcadia and Nandua- Middle and High Schools
suzy.corson@accomack.k12.va.us

Rebecca Johnson
All elementary schools
rebecca.johnson@accomack.k12.va.us

Sherri Spangler-Herman
Chincoteague High School & all elementary schools
sherri.spangler-herman@accomack.k12.va.us

Sharon Haynie
Tangier Combined School
sharon.haynie@accomack.k12.va.us

School Psychologists: (Contact the Special Education Office, 757-824-3360)

Guidance Counselors: (Contact individual school offices)

School Principals: (Contact individual school offices)



As required by Federal laws and regulations, Accomack County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, handicapping conditions, or national origin in its educational programs and activities.