



GIFTED AND TALENTED WHOLE SCHOOL ENRICHMENT

Weehawken Township School District
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INTRODUCTION

The Weehawken Township School District is dedicated to providing the best education for every student and enabling each to be a thoughtful, responsible contributor to a changing world. Our mission is to provide the best education for every student includes the goal to meet the unique educational needs of gifted and talented (GT) students. The Weehawken Township School District School accepts the complex challenge of meeting these needs by providing continuous and systematic educational and support services that motivate, challenge, and support our gifted and talented students.

The district strives to ensure challenging and appropriate opportunities for each of its students. The district uses the Response to Intervention (RTI) model to identify and serve the academic and affective needs of all its students, including the gifted.

Gifted and Talented Educational Services Vision:

“Students in the Weehawken Township School District who are gifted and talented in any of the five areas; intellectual, academic, artistic, creative, or leadership, will receive education and support commensurate with their abilities and needs, resulting in the realization of their full potential, and maximum contributions to self and society.”



“A rising tide lifts all ships.”

OVERVIEW OF GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

The Weehawken Township School District is committed to ensuring a quality education for all students. Outstanding talents are present in students from all socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural populations. Gifted learners are a special population of students who have unique academic, social, and emotional needs. When these needs are met, there can be a realization of potential by the individual who, in turn, can contribute to the school and to society.

The Weehawken Township School District believes that all children will achieve their full potential in instructional environments that respond to their unique needs. We are dedicated to providing a continuum of services that match identified gifted and talented students' individual needs, strengths, and interests

DEFINITION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED

On June 1, 2005 the State Board of Education readopted with amendments [N.J.A.C. 6A: 8, Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement](#), which includes more specific requirements for gifted and talented programs.

The regulations define gifted and talented students as:

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

KEY POINTS

- All public schools must have a board-approved gifted and talented program.
- Students are to be compared with their peers in the local school district.
- District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures, including but not limited to, achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, parent, student and/or teacher recommendation, and other appropriate measures.
- The regulations do not establish state-level criteria for giftedness (such as an IQ score or grade point average). Specific tests are not required to be used to identify gifted and talented students.
- Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology used is developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered.
- N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1(a)5 ii requires local district boards of education to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten.
- District boards of education shall take into consideration the *PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children* (NAGC) in developing programs for gifted and talented students.

BRIGHT-GIFTED-CREATIVE

Bright	Gifted	Creative
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning	Enjoys possibilities
Is never finished with possibilities	Is self-critical	Is pleased with own learning
Answers the questions	Questions the answers	Sees exceptions
Is interested	Is curious	Wonders: What if...
Is attentive	Is selectively mentally engaged	Daydreams; may seem off task
Generates advanced ideas	Generates complex, abstract ideas	Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed
Absorbs information	Manipulates information	Improvises
Memorizes well	Guesses and infers well	Creates and brainstorms well
Learns with ease	Already knows	Plays with ideas and concepts
Questions the need for mastery	Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master	Needs 5 or 6 repetitions to master
Completes assignments on time	Initiates projects and extensions of assignments	Initiates more projects that will ever be completed
Performs at the top of the group	Is beyond the group	Is in own group
Grasps the meaning	Infers and connects concepts	Makes mental leaps: Aha!
Gets As May not be motivated by grades	May not be motivated by grades	May not be motivated by grades
Enjoys the company of age peers	Prefers the company of intellectual peers	Prefers the company of creative peers, but often works alone
Understands complex abstract humor	Creates complex abstract humor	Relishes wild, off the wall humor
Adapted from (Szabos,1989) & (Kingore,2004)		

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WITH GIFTS AND TALENT

General Intelligence

- Recalls facts easily
- Is very well informed about one or more topics
- Shows keen insight into cause-effect relationships
- Has exceptional ability to solve problems
- Has phenomenal memory

Intelligence in a Specific Academic Area

- Exhibits extended attention span in a particular content area
- Displays a passion for a topic of interest
- Makes independent contact with or carries on correspondence with experts in the field
- Puts extensive efforts into a project - time is of no consequence
- Manages to change a topic under discussion to the discipline of his/her interest (e.g., a discussion on today's weather soon becomes focused on meteorology or global warming)

Creativity

- Possesses strong visual thinking or imaginative skills
- Transfers ideas and solutions to unique situations
- Prefers variety and novelty and an individual way of solving problems
- Asks many and unusual questions
- Often has several projects going at once
- Resists external controls, tests and challenges limits

Leadership

- Relates to and motivates other people
- Organizes others for activities
- Demonstrates high levels of self-assurance when making decisions or convincing peers
- Sees problems from many perspectives
- Listens to and respects the opinions of others (or listens to and debates the opinions of others)

Visual/Performing Arts

- Shows very high ability in the visual arts, i.e., painting, sculpting, and/or arranging media in a unique way
- Possesses unusual ability to create, perform, or describe music
- Possesses unusual talent in drama or dance
- Uses artistic ability to express or evoke feelings

IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The Weehawken Township School District has formed a Gifted and Talented Committee that is comprised of 1 reading specialist, 1 supervisor, 1 principal, 1 child study team member and 2 teachers. The school-based GT Committee's purpose is to identify and match students to the appropriate levels of service; to educate the staff, parents, and community on the characteristics of gifted learners; and to monitor the progress and services provided at the school level.

The purpose of identification is to locate those exceptional students who require special programming in order to reach their potential. The need for special programming depends on the discrepancy between a child's development and that of his or her classmates (Lohman, 2012).

I. Screening

Universal screening for gifted and talented services begins in grade 2. A matrix with multiple data sources is used to identify students showing the potential for performing at high levels of ability when compared with other students of a similar age.

Stage One

- DRA above grade level
- Majority of "exceeds standards" on standards-based report card for ELA and Math

Stage Two

- InView Assessment
- Student Portfolio

II. Evaluation

The evaluation stage is a process designed to analyze the data from the screening stage to determine which students require additional services in order to reach their potential. The school GT Committee reviews student data and makes a recommendation for services. The committee assigns identified gifted and talented students to the appropriate level of service that matches their specific needs. Parents will be notified in writing on or about the first week of August.

III. Transfer Students

There is no test to enter the GT Program in the Weehawken Township School District. The primary qualification for moving a student into the GT Program would be a student's independent DRA reading level. In order for a child to even be considered for GT placement, he or she must be reading at least one grade level above (NF or higher). If your child's DRA is above grade level, another assessment may be administered for Stage 2.

A student should also have very strong grades. Students who enroll and have been formally identified as gifted and talented from another district can also provide documentation of receiving those services along with their report card. All students will be administered a DRA assessment four times per year beginning in September. Data will be carefully reviewed by our GT Committee and parents will be notified in writing if their child qualifies.

IV. Reassessment

The Weehawken Township School District recognizes that children continue to grow and develop over the years. For this reason, all students in grades are monitored and reevaluated annually to identify if there is a need for GT services. Parents will be notified in writing on or about the first week of August if their child is eligible.

V. Parent Appeal Process

Parents/Guardians must submit a written request for reconsideration of the identification and placement along with an appeals portfolio to the building principal. In your appeals portfolio, please include work samples that demonstrate:

1. Above grade level aptitude
2. Why current placement does not meet student needs
3. Possible samples to include:
 - Creative writing
 - Academic writing
 - Mathematical thinking beyond problem sets
 - Problem-solving beyond classroom situations
4. A brief explanation for each piece included in your portfolio describing why you choose to include it.
5. A list of non-academic activities/interests (i.e., music, art, clubs, etc.) and what your child's role is in each activity.

Items that will not be considered if included in the portfolio:

Teacher recommendation letters

Certificates, awards, etc.

The principal shall acknowledge in writing the receipt of the request within five working days and shall forward copies of the request and acknowledgement to the Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services and Personalized Learning and the district Gifted and Talented Coordinator.

The Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services and Personalized Learning, Principal and other appropriate staff will review the student's file within ten working days of the original request. Additional data may be gathered to support or change the earlier decision.

Parents/Guardians may be provided an opportunity to present additional evidence.

A decision will be made within twenty working days after receipt of the written request for reconsideration. The parents shall be notified in writing and the decision shall be forwarded to the superintendent. *The Appeals Committee will review only one appeal per student per year.*
The decision may be appealed to the Board.

VI. Parent Nomination Process

Parents/Guardians must submit a written request if they believe their child is performing well above grade level or demonstrating exceptional strengths or talents and would like their child's performance and achievement to be reviewed to determine eligibility for GT education services.

If a parent/guardian decides to nominate his/her child, a letter of nomination must include the following:

- Student Name
- School and Grade
- Homeroom Teacher
- Parent/Guardian Name
- Address and Telephone Number

The content of the letter must include:

- Information about your child that you believe are associated with exceptionality and what has made you realize that your child is exceptionally able.
- Learning/behavioral characteristics of your child associated with general intellectual ability.

If a student is struggling and not demonstrating progress, the following process will be initiated by the teacher, principal, counselor or parent:

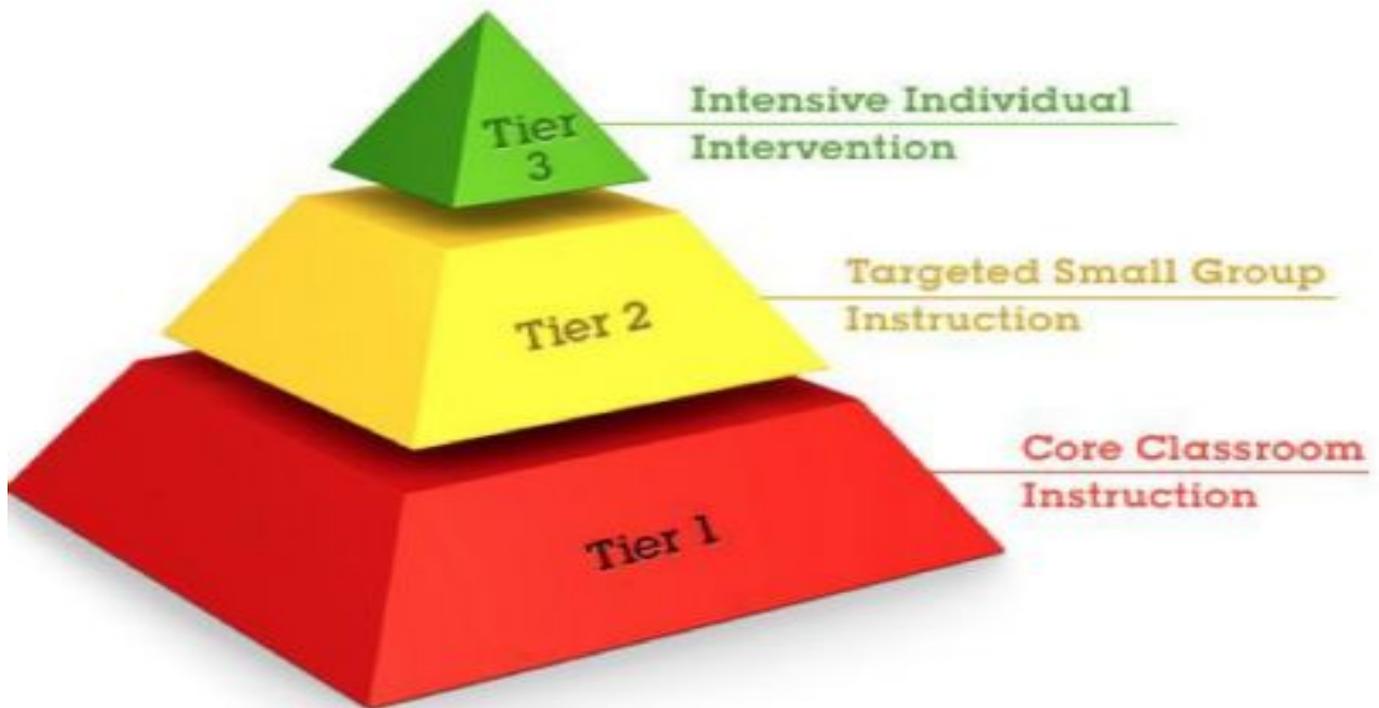
1. Conference with parent to address concerns and develop an action plan with RTI interventions
2. Subsequent meetings with parent to review student and make adjustments to the plan as needed.

If a student is struggling and not demonstrating progress, it is assumed that regular communication has occurred between teacher and parent before the initial conference takes place. A low performing student should not be removed because of compliance problems (i.e. poor homework completion/assignments, behavior in class, etc.)

RTI and the Gifted

Originally introduced as a way to help struggling students before they were referred for special education services, RTI is increasingly being recognized as an effective way to respond to the learning needs of all students. RTI is the practice of providing high quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to adjust instruction or goals and applying student data to important educational decisions.

The Weehawken Township School District has explicitly defined RTI as a process for ALL students, including those with gifts and talents. Because of its initial and widespread use with the struggling student, however, fewer resources are available regarding RTI and the gifted. While the general framework for RTI is the same for students with advanced learning needs as it is for students in need of additional help, there are some differences. To ensure that the needs of the gifted are not lost in our efforts to help students in need of remediation, there are some things that must be kept in mind throughout the RTI process.



RTI (Response To Intervention)
3 Tiers of Support

Tier I—Classroom Differentiation

The majority of students have their needs met by the classroom teacher at this level. Students receive high quality, research-based core instruction aligned with State Standards and differentiated to match their advanced learning needs. Level I includes strategies that an educator uses to meet all student learning needs. Differentiation is NOT additional work; it is different work. Strategies include, but are not limited to:

- flexible grouping
- tiered assignments
- modified assignments
- independent projects
- learning centers
- leveled texts
- enrichment activities

Tier 2—Targeted Instruction

A smaller number of students will require targeted instruction to meet their learning needs. In addition to classroom differentiation, grade level teachers plan learning activities to meet students' demonstrated needs. Strategies include, but are not limited to:

- grouping strategies which allow for advanced work with others of similar ability
- academic competitions
- reading specialist
- academic support team
- assignments requiring higher level thinking
- subject level acceleration
- enrichment activities
- other appropriate programming

Tier 3 – Individualized Services

A small percentage of students will require academic and intellectual challenge that are unlikely to be met by differentiation of grade level curriculum. For these students, services include those listed in Tiers 1 and 2 plus the possibility of:

- advanced grade level instruction
- curriculum compacting
- independent projects
- subject and grade level acceleration
- distance or advanced online learning opportunities
- enrichment activities

THE ARTS

Students who are identified as gifted/talented in the the arts will be provided with opportunities to develop those talents, as well. Special area teachers will work with teachers/counselors to identify students gifted in the arts and provide the students with opportunities to further develop their gifts whenever possible during classroom and school activities. Students will be notified of extracurricular and community opportunities that fall within their area of giftedness.

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

These students are gifted children of above average abilities who also have special educational needs—ADHD, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, etc. Because their giftedness can mask their special needs and their special needs can hide their giftedness, WTSD recognizes the importance of identifying and servicing this often under-represented group.

The following list should be viewed as characteristics which are typical of many children who are gifted and who also have a disability, rather than characteristics which all such children possess. These twice exceptional learners do not form a simple, homogeneous group; they are a highly diverse group of learners.

STRENGTHS

Superior vocabulary
Highly creative
Resourceful
Curious
Imaginative
Questioning
Problem-solving ability
Sophisticated sense of humor
Wide range of interests
Advanced ideas and opinions

CHALLENGES

Easily frustrated
Stubborn
Manipulative
Opinionated
Argumentative
Lack of interest in or quality of written expression
Highly sensitive to criticism
Inconsistent academic performance
Lack of organization and study skills
Difficulty with social interactions

School personnel need to be sensitive to clues that seem to reveal contradictions in abilities. Possible examples are:

- above grade extensive vocabulary/struggle with spelling basic words
- strong verbal expression/poor illegible handwriting
- good listening comprehension skills/low self-concept
- sophisticated sense of humor/difficulty engaging in social aspects of the classroom
- difficulty sitting still/can become deeply immersed in special interests or creative activities

These types of contradictions may be indicators of possible twice exceptionality worth further investigation. Educators who suspect a student may be twice exceptional should contact a school psychologist to conduct a comprehensive evaluation in order to make an accurate diagnosis.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Recognizing and understanding the needs of gifted learners and then providing challenging and enriching opportunities to meet those needs requires specialized knowledge and skills. Research shows that over 60% of teachers have received little or no training in gifted and talented educational strategies. To address this contradiction, the Weehawken Township School District will provide professional development in the area of gifted and talented education to ensure that staff understands the learning needs of gifted students and are equipped with the necessary strategies to successfully meet those needs. Furthermore, training opportunities, collaboration time, and student interventions provided for RTI implementation will include options for gifted education.

ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the delivery of Gifted and Talented Educational Services include, but are not limited to, those listed below:

Teachers (all content areas)

- Screen/pre-assess and review data to identify students in need of challenge/enrichment, including those who may be underachievers or twice exceptional
- Ensure differentiated lessons include options for advanced students
- Collaborate with the GT Coordinator
- Guide and support students in learning how to self-advocate
- Engage in professional development activities related to gifted education

School Counselors

- Assist in the identification of students in need of advanced learning opportunities
- Provide students with individual and group counseling
- Collaborate with parents and other school personnel to maximize opportunities
- Engage in professional development activities related to gifted education

Interventionists

- Assist in the review of data and identification of students with advanced learning needs
- Provide additional diagnostic testing as needed

GT Coordinator

- Review data to help identify students with advanced learning needs
- Collaborate with teachers and other school personnel
- Collaborate with counselors for students in need of support/guidance
- Conduct classroom searches for students with talents in the areas of leadership, creativity, and the arts
- Maintain records on students with gifts and talents
- Communicate and collaborate with parents and other school personnel

Administration

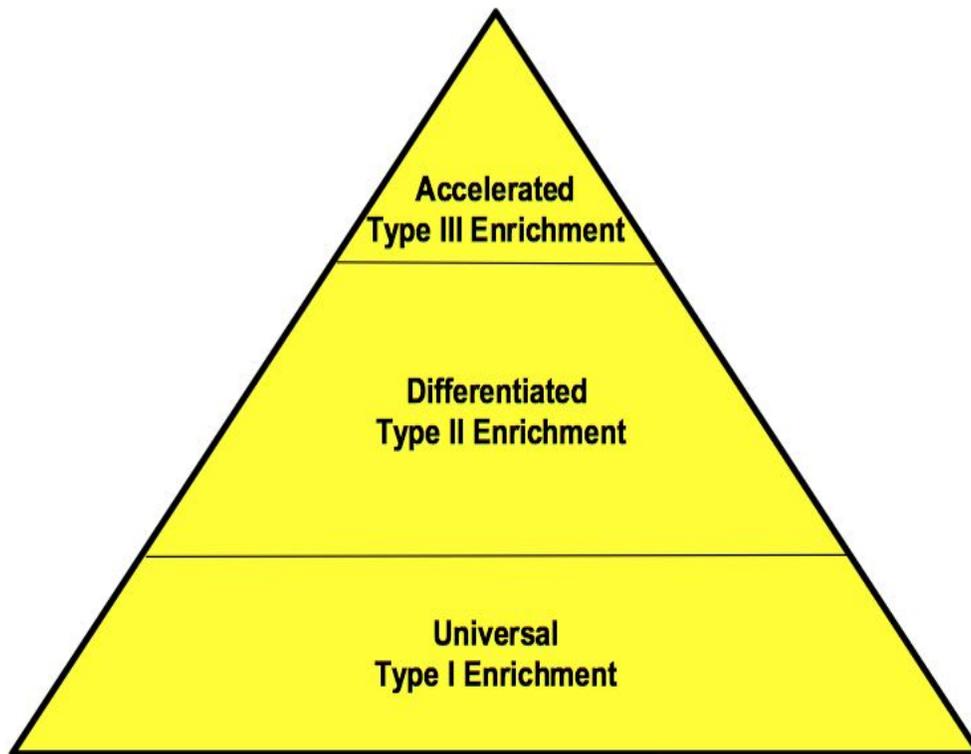
- Provide Professional Development opportunities in the area of gifted education
- Allow for flexible/creative scheduling
- Ensure adequate resources are available for meeting gifted education needs
- Work with GT Coordinator and other school personnel to ensure implementation

Parents

- Provide opportunities and encouragement for your child to explore a wide variety of activities
- Communicate and collaborate with school personnel
- Guide and support your child in learning how to cope with both failure and success
- Guide and support your child in learning how to advocate for himself/herself

SCHOOLWIDE ENRICHMENT

Our Schoolwide Enrichment Model engages all students in memorable activities to enhance the existing curriculum. SEM is based on a model for gifted education developed by Dr. Joseph Renzulli at the University of Connecticut. The Schoolwide Enrichment Model provides enriched learning experiences and higher learning standards for all children through three goals; developing talents in all children, providing a broad range of advanced-level enrichment experiences for all students, and providing advanced follow-up opportunities for young people based on their strengths and interests. SEM focuses on enrichment for all students through high levels of engagement and the use of enjoyable and challenging learning experiences that are constructed around students' interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression.



Types of Enrichment:

- Type I Universal General Exploratory Activities
- Type II Differentiated Group Activities
- Type III Individual and Small Group

DWS Schoolwide Enrichment

Type I Enrichment	Type II Enrichment	Type III Enrichment
Whole-class and whole grade programs	Differentiated clusters with classroom teacher and/or media specialist	Small group instruction with media specialist
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trout in the Classroom ● Chorus ● Hour of Code ● Grade Level Field Trips ● Assemblies ● Art ● Makerspace 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dinosaur PBL ● Writing Portfolios ● Digital Literacy ● PebbleGo ● Middlebury Language ● ST MATH 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kid Witness News ● PBL based-upon students

TRS Schoolwide Enrichment

Type I Enrichment	Type II Enrichment	Type III Enrichment
Whole-class and whole grade programs	Differentiated clusters with classroom teacher and/or media specialist	Advanced Grade-level Sections of ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oearch Shark Tracker ● Instrumental Music ● Bell Choir ● Choir ● Media Center ● Makerspace ● Hour of Code ● Grade Level Field Trips ● Assemblies ● Art 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minecraft Lab ● National History Day ● Pre-band ● Kid Witness News ● Summer Enrichment ● Science Fair ● Middlebury Language ● ST Math ● NewsELA 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accelerated instruction and assessment ● Advanced Strings ● 21st Century Literacy: Intervention and Enrichment

WHS Whole School Enrichment

Type I Enrichment	Type II Enrichment	Type III Enrichment
Whole-class and whole grade programs	Differentiated clusters with classroom teacher and/or media specialist	Advanced Grade-level Sections of ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Subject Area Electives ● PBL Experiences in all classes ● Online classes 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Career Academies 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Honors Academy ● AP Courses ● AP Capstone Academy

Honors Academy - Grades 7-9

Grade 7:
 Honors English 7
 Honors Math 7
 Honors Science 7
 Honors Global Exploration 7
 Technology 7
 PE/Health
 World Language Exploration

Grade 8:
 Honors English 8
 Honors Algebra I
 Honors Science 8
 Honors Civics & Geography 8
 Technology 8
 PE/Health
 French I or Spanish II

Grade 9:
 Honors English I
 Honors Geometry
 Honors Biology
 AP World History
 Financial Lit & Career Exploration
 PE/Health
 Spanish II or French II

Honors program flows directly into our Career Academies and AP Capstone

Academies - Grades 10-12

AP Capstone Diploma

- *At least four (4)
AP courses
- *AP Seminar
- *AP Research

AP Capstone Research Project

Biomedical Academy

- *Physics
- *Biology
- *Chemistry
- *Geoscience or
an AP Science

Internship at Palisades Hospital

Engineering Academy

- *Physics
- *Intro to
Engineering
- *AP Principles of
Computer Science
- *Robotics

Culminating Engineering Project

Business & Finance Academy

- *Algebra II
- *Accounting
- *AP Economics
or an AP Math
- *Three years of
world language

Internship via SuitUp

Law & Public Service Academy

- *AP World
Language
- *AP Human
Geography
- *AP Economics
or AP Government
- *Civics or Politics

Internship community organization and/or government office

Arts Academy

- At least four (4)
electives in one of
the Arts
- *Fine Arts
- *Performing Arts
- *Visual Arts

Culminating Art Portfolio and Showcase

Liberal Arts Academy

- *AP English
and/or three
English electives
- *One to two Social
Studies electives

Culminating Research Project

Personalized Academy

- Select any four
electives that suit
your selected
interdisciplinary
needs and
concentration.

Personalized Project

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acceleration: Interventions that move a student through an educational program at a faster than normal rate.

Achievement test: A test that measures what students have learned in a specific content area relative to the expected achievement of average students.

Aptitude test: A standardized test designed to predict an individual's ability to learn certain skills.

Cluster Grouping: A grouping method that places the top five to eight high ability students in the same grade level in one classroom.

Compacted Curriculum/Compacting: Streamlining the regular curriculum to “buy time” for enrichment, accelerated content, and independent study. Usually involves “testing out” of classroom content and using that time for challenge or enrichment activities.

Differentiated Instruction: A matching of instruction to meet the different needs of learners in a given classroom by modifying delivery, time, content, process, product, and the learning environment. One or more of these elements can be modified to provide differentiation.

Evidence-Based Instruction: Refers to empirical research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge. This includes research that: employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review; involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and can be generalized.

Flexible grouping: Grouping students based on readiness, interests, and abilities on an assignment-by-assignment basis.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Questioning in discussions or providing activities based on processing that require analysis, synthesis, valuation, or other critical thinking skills.

Independent Study Projects: Structured projects agreed upon by student and supervising teacher that allows a student to individually investigate areas of high interest or to advance knowledge.

Intelligence Quotient (IQ): A measure of cognitive ability as determined by a standardized test.

Differentiated Educational Plan (DEP): A formal written plan for managing and delivering instruction for a child with extraordinary differences in ability or educational needs.

Intervention: Provided by school staff, these are learning activities designed to help a student improve performance relative to a specific, realistic, and measurable goal. Interventions are based upon valid information about present levels of performance relative to grade-level expectations, realistic implementation with fidelity, and may include modifications and accommodations.

Mentoring: Establishment of a one-to-one relationship between a student and an outside-of-school expert in a specific topic area or career.

Problem-Based Learning: Providing students with unstructured problems or situations for which they must discover the answers, solutions, concepts, or draw conclusions and generalizations.

Progress Monitoring: The ongoing process of collecting and analyzing assessment data to determine student progress toward specific skill goals or general outcomes. At Tier 2 and Tier 3, progress monitoring data is used to make instructional decisions about the effectiveness of intervention to accelerate student learning that increases the learning rate and enables the student to meet a specific goal designed to meet at least minimum proficiency levels.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A process for achieving higher levels of academic and behavioral success for all students through high quality research-based instruction and interventions, regular monitoring of student progress using multiple measures, and collaborative, data-based educational decision making.

Systematic Instruction: A carefully planned sequence for targeted instruction.

Talent/Ability Grouping: Grouping students of like ability or like interest on a regular basis during the school day for pursuit of advanced knowledge in a specific content area.

Targeted Intervention: Focused instruction on an identified skill.

Tier 1 Intervention: Evidence-based core curriculum and differentiated instructional practices provided to all students in a classroom.

Tier 2 Intervention: Tier 2 intervention is strategic and targeted intervention that is implemented as a result of assessment that indicates a student is not making adequate gains from Tier 1 instruction/programs. Tier 2 intervention is typically delivered in small groups of students with similar skill concerns.

Tier 3 Intervention: Tier 3 interventions are for students who require highly individualized, systematic, and explicit instruction to accelerate learning rate and/or to support learning. Intervention is considered to be intensive and is typically delivered one-on-one or in very small groups of students (2-3) with similar skill needs.

Within-Class Ability/Performance Grouping: Grouping of students, so that those of similar ability work together on a short- or long-term basis.

