

Gifted Task Force Report

April 15, 2008

Education Committee Meeting



Core Principle

Every child in the Pittsburgh Public Schools deserves consistently challenging, developmentally appropriate, and need-sensitive instruction that allows for the fullest development of that child's gifts and talents.



Background

**Council of Great City Schools
Audit of the District's Gifted
Program in 2006**

**Recommended a District Self-
Evaluation in six areas**



Those were...

- Identification process
- Achievement results
- Linkage of the District's pull out program to success in course work



And...

- Student perception of the pull out program in relation to classroom work missed at the home school
- Teacher certification to work with Gifted Students
- Parent perceptions of the Program



Charge to Task Force

- Evaluate current Gifted Program in light of State Chapter 16 requirements
- Examine the use of alternative testing instruments for identifying potentially gifted students
- Investigate successful Gifted and Talented programs in urban districts outside of Pittsburgh including those programs that serve minority and low SES students



Charge for Task Force

- Examine the components of other urban gifted programs outside the district with a focus on:
 - Program design
 - Delivery of services
 - Professional development
- Issue recommendations for an improved and/or new program design



Evaluation of the District's Existing Program

- **Seven Site Visits**
 - Atlanta, Columbus, Norfolk, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Fairfax, Montgomery County, Maryland and Orlando
- **Surveys**
 - parents, students currently enrolled at the Pittsburgh Gifted Center and students enrolled in the Centers for Advanced Study (CAS) in each of our district's high schools



Current K-8 Program

- Students attend a one day a week pullout at the Gifted Center located at Greenway School Facility
- Coordination with home school is limited



Task Force Findings - Current K-8 Program

- Enriching supplement
- Not time effective for students
- Cannot deliver the consistently challenging and developmentally appropriate instruction necessary for our gifted students



Task Force Findings

- **Gifted Children Benefit from Daily Interaction with Peers of Same Intellectual Ability** - Peer grouping allows gifted students to progress more rapidly
- **Cluster/Skills Grouping Produces Positive Academic Results for Students at All Instructional Levels**



Task Force Findings

Effective Gifted
Programming Delivers a
Continuum of Services.



That continuum includes:

- A five day per week delivery model
- Flexible grouping
- Cluster/skills grouping within a classroom, grade, and across grade levels



- **curriculum compacting**
- **acceleration and enrichment by subject and/or grade**



Task Force Findings

- Professional Development is Vital to Effective Program Design
- A Comprehensive Screening and Identification Process is Needed to Determine Program Eligibility



Task Force Recommendations

- Delivery Model
- Professional Development
- Screening
- Parent Engagement



Delivery Model

**Develop a Five Day a Week
Gifted Delivery Model at the
Home School**



Delivery Model

Expand the
Continuum of
Services



Program Design Recommendations

1. Common scheduling across the core curriculum classes
2. Articulation between Elementary, K-8, Middle and High School Programs
3. Evaluate program design



Screening and Identification

- **Develop a Comprehensive Screening and Identification Process**



Professional Development

1. Develop Partnerships with Universities and/or Experts in the Field of Gifted Education
2. Design a Professional Development Model
3. Recruit Highly Qualified Teachers



Parent Engagement

Clearly communicate the components of the District's Gifted Program including the identification process with all parents and community members utilizing multiple communication formats on an ongoing basis.



Conclusions

- District goals for gifted programming and services cannot be met within current model
- Replace the current gifted program with one that better challenges gifted children
- Suggested Program Design: **Five Day a Week Skills Level Grouping in the Home School**
- The present Gifted Program should remain in place until the District has replaced it with a better alternative



Task Force Members

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Ms. Ellen Estomin
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Mrs. Barbara Thrush
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Thank you to the Task Force Members

*For the research and the
report!*



District Response to Gifted Task Force Report

April 2008



District Goals

- Meet the learning needs of gifted students
- Address the under representation of African American students in gifted programs



Pilot Program 2008-09

- Three year duration
- Program evaluation in 2010-11
- Locate in both high incidence and low incidence schools
- Professional Development



Pilot Program Design

- Support from teacher with gifted education background
- Flexible groups for reading and math
- Acceleration and enrichment when appropriate



Pilot Program Design

- More global selection process
- Talent Pool
- District Support



Proposed Locations

- Three elementary schools and one K-8 school:
 - Colfax K-8 ALA
 - Dilworth K-5
 - Fort Pitt K-5 ALA
 - Northview Heights K-5 ALA



Recommendations for an Elementary Gifted Pilot Program

- Establishing a Talent Pool of students in all four schools
- Comprehensive needs assessment including achievement data and a non-verbal assessment (i.e. Naglieri) for all students



Recommendations for an Elementary “Home School” Gifted Pilot Program

- Implement skills grouping by grade level
- Provide enrichment by grade level and content
- Provide acceleration across grade levels and content areas



Recommendations for an Elementary “Home School” Gifted Pilot Program

- Develop a school-wide identification process
- Non-verbal screeners, such as the CogAT6, at the early primary grades



Underrepresentation of African American Students

- Selection of Pilot Schools
- Screening of all students
- Talent Pool Development



Resources Needed

- Project Coordinator to oversee the work of all four schools
- Four Gifted Resource Teachers across all four schools (from Gifted Center)



Underrepresentation of African American Students

- **Consultant Support**
- **Collaborate with Task Force**



Support from Gifted Resource Teachers

- Coaching
- Technical assistance
- Co-teaching opportunities
- Management of Chapter 16 compliance work, Gifted Individualized Education Plans (GIEP)



Professional Development

Partnership with a nationally recognized college/university in the areas of programming and instructional best practices for gifted students (e.g. William and Mary)



Proposed Timeline

- Hire Project Coordinator
June 2008
- Posting for four (4) Gifted
Resource Teachers (May
2008)
- Contract with
college/university partner
(June 2008)



Proposed Timeline

- Professional development and individual school planning activities (Summer 2008)



PILOT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Four school pilots beginning in September 2008
2. Continue with district and school-based professional development activities and planning with college/university partner in preparation for the implementation of the pilots in all four schools for the second semester of the 2008-09 school year

