

## Gifted and Talented Whole School Policy.

### Rationale: Introducing Gifted and Talented.

At ESH Secondary, a central tenet of our pedagogical approach is rooted in student-centred learning. We strive to support the holistic growth of our pupils and enable their development at a pace that is consistent with their abilities. Central to this approach is the need to facilitate a culture of curiosity and independence where individual passions and interests help to guide our learners on their way to successful Baccalaureate results, whilst also embedding the value of lifelong learning. To help facilitate this, while high expectations are set for all our students, including those deemed gifted and talented, we also aim to encourage our gifted learners to set their own targets and aspirations as it is an essential part of taking ownership of their educational journeys. This more autonomous approach to learning seeks to instill the creative and critical thinking skills needed to become productive citizens of our European society.

Within a learning environment that promotes a growth mindset where failure helps us succeed, the ESH Gifted and Talented program adopts a highly inclusive approach, seeking to extend enriching opportunities to all and establish a learning dialogue between staff, pupils and parents alike. We aim, therefore, to facilitate an environment where being identified as gifted and talented is not the final destination or the benchmark of success, but rather the starting point for nurturing and realising *potential*.

It is important to note that while ESH Secondary works in close partnership with ESH Primary to facilitate a smooth transition from P5 to S1, operationally, we are two separate entities, and while we share a common educational vision, policies implemented in Primary are not automatically identical in Secondary.

### Who is responsible? Gifted and Talented Coordinators, Specialist Coaches and Support Team:

#### **Gifted and Talented Coordinators: Kirsti Lansley and Nicole Meiners**

The coordinators are responsible for creating, implementing and reviewing the Gifted and Talented program. Liaising with subject colleagues to raise the awareness of the needs of gifted students is a key facet of this role, as is offering training on didactical strategies to enable differentiation in the classroom. Working alongside the Support team, they ensure the smooth running of the program and operate as the bridge connecting all stakeholders: the gifted and talented coaches, colleagues, students, parents and external specialists. The coordinators also network with other Dutch/European schools to share best practice and ensure a rigorous and research-based policy is implemented and reviewed.

#### **Gifted and Talented Coaches: Sciences, Languages, Arts specialists.**

Our Talent Coaches provide and manage support to students, and those engaged with them, by removing barriers to learning. They work closely with our gifted learners to develop a greater sense of student agency in order to promote effective participation, enhance individual learning, raise aspirations and enable students to achieve their full potential. Coaches are allotted 40 task hours to support their role and enable structured, regular support on a one-to-one basis; like the coordinators, they are central in connecting the links between the learner, the wider world and their potential, the learner and their subject teachers and, importantly, involving the parents to ensure a cohesive framework is established. Our Talent Coaches not only focus on academic capabilities, but also support the social and emotional development of our gifted learners. To further support this holistic approach, two additional members of staff have been appointed as Content Coaches to provide specialist knowledge on didactical skills in their specific field of expertise.

### **School Counsellor: Lizeth Kessels**

Research indicates that exceptionally able students are not a homogeneous, easily classifiable group; just as their giftedness may develop and present itself in different ways, so too might their social and emotional developments differ. This is *one* of the reasons that the support team is a vital branch of this program and while not exclusively working with gifted students, the support network is key to our holistic approach. Working alongside the talent coaches, the school counsellor helps to reinforce the important message that while gifted children often excel in areas of academic achievement and are developmentally advanced beyond their years, their social and emotional development may not operate at the same level; gifted students, like all students, often require support and guidance when navigating the social and emotional streams of school life, something that may be exasperated due to their giftedness. The school counsellor is currently following a training for social emotional coaching of talented students.

### **Support Leader: Nicoline Mostert**

The Support leader sits in the steering committee of the external support network, oversees the policy implementation and is responsible for the budget. Together with the Gifted and Talented coordinators, she is responsible for creating, implementing and reviewing the Gifted and Talented program at ESH Secondary.

### **The aims of this Gifted and Talented policy: Frameworks and structures.**

The aims of this policy are to promote good practice in identification, teaching, learning and management of students who are deemed gifted and talented. In order to achieve this, ESH will facilitate the following frameworks and structures:

- A consistent approach to identifying, supporting and monitoring gifted and talented students.
- Promote a clear whole school approach to gifted and talented provision, starting in the classroom with high quality teaching.
- Enable all staff to take responsibility for identifying and supporting gifted and talented pupils, by providing them with relevant training.
- Network with our partnering schools in the Netherlands and other European schools in order to share best practice.
- As this Gifted and Talented program is subsidised by the external support network SWVZHW , it is important to note that ESH will work in close association with and within the frameworks of this network.
- Build strong partnerships and a clear line of communication with our parents to support a joint learning approach at home and at school.

### **The objectives of this Gifted and Talented policy: Student-centered.**

- Highlight and embrace the multidimensionality of aspects of ability, including academic giftedness, creative talent and behavioural traits identified as exceptional.
- Develop a holistic and fully inclusive approach to learning that embodies the key values of ESH, focusing on the development of social, emotional and physical qualities, as well as academic abilities.
- Ensure our students have access to a wide, balanced and relevant curriculum that supports their success in the Baccalaureates, but also gives them the platform to enjoy other enriching experiences in multiple areas of interest outside of their usual timetable.
- Engender an atmosphere wherein students can develop in confidence, self-respect and cultivate a love of learning.
- Offer learning challenges that build on students' existing giftedness and encourage a level of curiosity that stimulates their love of learning even further.

### **Definition of key terms: All on the same page.**

We recognise that the term Gifted and Talented can be interpreted, and therefore defined, in different ways by different schools of thought. While it is possible to separate gifted and talented into two separate measurements of higher-level ability (untrained, extraordinary natural ability and an ability to transform superior skill into exceptional performance), at ESH we make no such distinction.

Being identified as Gifted and Talented means the student has academic abilities, talents, and/or the *potential* for exceptional abilities that is so developmentally advanced that they require enhanced provisions to meet their educational needs. These students have high achievement capabilities in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields.

### **Identification process: The who, the what and the how of identifying.**

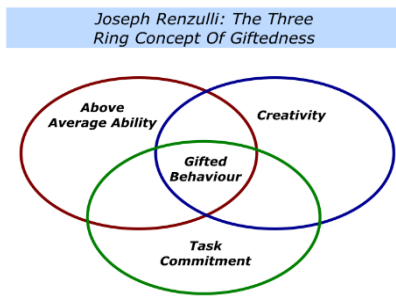
At ESH, we understand that giftedness is not an absolute concept, but something that exists in varying degrees and can manifest at different developmental stages, depending on context and situation as well as access to different opportunities. This makes a multi-focused definition critical, as well as highlighting the need for continual assessment and evaluation within the identification process; giftedness does not, necessarily, arrive fully bloomed, nor is it always easy to immediately detect.

It is important, therefore, that our identification systems look further than simply the obvious candidates – the 'achievers' - and actively seeks out those who are underachieving, concealing their talents due to socioemotional needs, our 'doubly gifted'. It is our aim to go beyond the traditional IQ based assessments of giftedness to explore the students' educational, social, emotional and psychological needs.

Furthermore, within the identification process, it is also essential to consider the cultural and linguistic diversity of our student population at ESH. This will undoubtedly impact our screening process when, for instance, assessing giftedness using more objective methods, such as cognitive ability tests in English or Dutch. To ensure we are not limiting any student potential, a culturally sensitive, multifaceted approach will be adopted to support the fair measurement of potential and performance.

In an effort to create a systematic and rigorous identification process, and to acknowledge the multidimensionality of aspects of ability, it is important to note that ESH draws upon the teachings of J.Renzulli's 'Three Ring Concept of Giftedness'. This model allows us to look beyond the traditional notions of IQ based testing to determine giftedness and look deeper into the potential for creative productive giftedness (see figure 1). This conceptual framework allows us to engage with a much wider pool of potentially gifted students as it prioritises not only the intellectual abilities of our learners, but also the exceptional behavioural traits that they might possess.

**Figure 1**



As a consequence of this multifaceted conception of giftedness, the identification of students deemed gifted and talented is a critical part of the program; it underpins all other considerations for provision, monitoring and evaluation. ESH maintains a continuous, whole school approach that uses a range of both quantitative and qualitative information, therefore allowing us to deliver a fully systemised and highly inclusive program.

**The key components of the identification of gifted and talented include:**

Method	Rationale	Advantages?	Disadvantages?	Who is responsible?
<b>CBO screening</b>	Offering qualitative and quantitative data on our S1-2 students' hidden talents and providing an insight into their potential and performance.	- Standardised screening allows for comparison to other peers. - Easily administered in an 'informal' manner to ensure no 'test anxiety' - Multidimensional: looks at intellectual abilities, motivation and the personality of students.	- In English and Dutch only, so translation must be available to ensure validity. - Testing, in any form, does not measure creativity or productivity. - In isolation, this kind of screening will not help to identify gifted underachievers.	External company - CBO Coordinators – organisation and logistics Mentors – practical application
<b>Whole school checklist</b>	Checklist that considers qualitative data and provides insight into the student's behavioural traits as well as academic capabilities.	- Holistic in nature as it considers a range of potentially gifted areas – academic ability, metacognition, motivation, behaviour, leadership etc. - A standardised platform to ensure consistency across the board.	- Can be generic and therefore not specific enough for an individual subject's needs; it would need following up for greater depth.	G&T Coordinators Individual teachers Mentors Coaches
<b>Subjects Specific checklist</b>	A refined set of criteria that is created by the subjects specialists to further support the identification of giftedness or talent in a specific context.	- Subject specific, therefore refined. - With training, supports teachers' understanding of what giftedness might look like in their specific subjects.	- Whole school training required to ensure staff are confident in identifying giftedness, even when it is not presented in the most obvious way, e.g. identifying underachievers. Time during INSETs might be a challenge.	Departments Coaches Content Coach specialists
<b>Special circumstances checklist</b>	A wider set of criterion that looks at identifying the underachieving gifted student.	- There is a particular focus on the behavioural and motivational considerations that might hamper a student's identification as gifted – it allows us to cast a wider-net.	- Again, time for whole staff training is necessary as this type of giftedness is easily missed.	G&T Coordinators Individual teachers Mentors Coaches

<p><b>Teacher Nomination</b></p>	<p>Being the first-wave of provision, teacher nomination offers a valuable insight into the student as a whole – this can be observed within the classroom or outside in other activities, such as after school provision, trips etc. Teachers will be able to comment on/measure potential and performance in academic tests as well as provide an insight into learning behaviour over time.</p>	<p>- Teachers see students in a range of academic situations. - Teachers can compare potential, performance and behavioural aspects of giftedness with other students of the same age group.</p>	<p>- Teachers must use the whole-school identification process to nominate students to ensure consistency. - Teachers require training to be able to see beyond some negative behavioural traits sometimes associated with giftedness. This will be covered in INSET training days, but there needs to be continual training on this.</p>	<p>G&amp;T Coordinators Individual teachers Mentors Coaches</p>
<p><b>Peer Nomination</b></p>	<p>Using the ‘Nebraska-Star’ approach to identification, students can nominate their peers.</p>	<p>- Looks at a range of academic and behavioural, personal, motivational criterion in a student friendly manner. - It will be a very useful tool to educate students themselves on what it means to be G&amp;T, as well as dispelling any common myths, e.g. all gifted students are shy ‘book-worms’ or ‘teacher’s pets’; it will support the fully inclusive, integrated approach of the program.</p>		<p>Students Mentors G&amp;T Coordinators Coaches</p>

**Provision: How do we support Gifted and Talented students?**

As this is an organic program that is continually evolving and focuses on the passions/interests of our students, it would be impossible to outline all levels of provision in this policy; provision for giftedness exists in practice, not only on paper. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the main focus of our

approach is to create a range of opportunities that, with support and encouragement from staff, parents and external agencies, helps our students to grow (in all senses of the word) and provide them with the tools to sustain the personal drive needed to fulfil their potential. This will be achieved by challenging, stimulating and motivating students on a daily basis in an environment that celebrates excellence.

It is important to highlight that here at ESH, we champion a fully inclusive, in-class approach to providing educational enrichment and challenge to our gifted students. With specific regard to Gifted and Talented Support, we do not, as a consequence, encourage acceleration programs where students are frequently withdrawn from their usual lessons and work in parallel 'Gifted Classes'; it is our belief that this strategy, while having some benefits, does not support the child as a whole, something that drives our student-centred vision of learning. Having said that, we at ESH understand that learning thrives in flexible conditions and can be stifled by unnecessary rigidity; as the gifted program continues to evolve, it is to be expected that individual students would benefit from being withdrawn from some classes in order to work with talent coaches, external experts etc. on enrichment activities in order to challenge and stimulate their learning even further. Within a flexible approach, this is possible and allows us to offer an additional level of individualized provision that benefits the specific needs of the learner, whilst still prioritising the holistic approach to learning.

It is further important to note that following identification as gifted, each student, in partnership with their appointed Talent Coach, will complete an Individual Education Plan as the starting point of their provision. This entails a discussion between the student and coach that addresses three main areas of learning: **curriculum** (discussing barriers to learning), **enrichment activities** (project-based learning and other opportunities, for example) and **social/emotional development** (considering behavioural growth). Collaboration and dialogue are key in this process as the student helps to create the plan (along with input from teachers) and is encouraged to take ownership of the expectations agreed upon. To emphasise the student's ownership over this process and his/her own targets, the document will be signed as a way of formalizing *their* individual plans. Furthermore, as this is intended to be an organic document, it will be regularly reviewed and monitored by both the student and the coach over the academic year, adjusting where necessary in line with the student's needs/passions. To ensure transparency and a cohesive approach between all stakeholders, this document is shared with the student's parents, mentor and classroom teachers.

### **In class provision: effective teaching = excellent provision for all.**

The principles of good teaching for *all* students provides the foundation for effective provision for those deemed gifted and talented. As part of the professionalisation of staff members, training will be given to ensure the continuation of high-quality lessons. At ESH, good teaching that supports the challenge of giftedness can be characterised by:

- Long and short-term planning that accommodates the special needs of gifted students, taking into consideration what they already know (through baseline testing at the start of new units, for example), building on that knowledge base and energizing students to investigate for themselves the next stages of their learning.
- Creating a safe and nurturing classroom environment that sets high expectations and a sense of self-accountability – in these spaces, it is 'cool to learn' and curiosity is encouraged.
- While fully acknowledging that the curriculum/syllabus is essential in ultimately achieving the Bacc certificate, teachers may choose to present the curriculum as a series of problems to solve, rather than a body of information to memorise. This can also take the form of competition, such as the Kangaroo Math Competition for gifted mathematicians.

- Supporting student metacognition and study skills – without these tools, all students (not just gifted ones) find it difficult to translate their knowledge and potential into performance.
- Encourage critical thinking skills and creativity – excellent teachers promote independent thinking and open inquiry, challenge students with higher order thinking skills and concepts as well as supporting their understanding of how the given topic can be applied outside of the classroom.
- Continually encourage self-assessment and reflection as a critical component of the learning process as well as being able to learn from/with peers.

### **Outside of the classroom: Enrichment beyond the curriculum.**

In addition to having their own Gifted and Talented working environment where students can choose to study independently, collaborate with peers (not just those deemed gifted to ensure inclusivity) and engage in stimulating learning activities, the Gifted and Talented program at ESH also provides many out-of-lesson opportunities for our learners to thrive. These include:

- A range of extra-curricular clubs for all year groups, which although not exclusive to gifted students, provides them with a platform to develop and pursue their passions further, ranging from Lego League STEM clubs, to new creative writing groups (TBC) and a debate society (TBC).
- Independent Project days (off timetable) where our S1-5 students are given the choice to follow their interests in the Sciences, Languages and Creative fields of learning in order to discover their hidden talents outside the regular timetable provision.
- S5-7 gifted students can participate in University projects for Applied Sciences at the University of Leiden and Delft This not only provides students with the opportunity to engage with advanced learning challenges, but also serves to nurture their aspirations for higher education whilst also giving them a greater insight into possible future career opportunities.
- External Specialists being invited to ESH in order to work with targeted groups of students, based on passions and interests. The unique situation of ESH is that we are fortunate enough to have many of our parents in European Agencies, such as the Space Agency, EMA, European Courts etc., something we would like to take full advantage of.
- Facilitated by the G&T team, external Talent Contracts are also a form of enrichment and fall under the consideration of the program as it may require time where the student misses their usual lessons. This could, for instance, take the form of a Talent Contact with the Dutch Conservatory for musical talent.
- Trips and Excursions are encouraged in all subject areas as here at ESH, we believe that learning happens outside of the classroom as well as inside it.

### **Resources: What do we need?**

As this program develops and grows, so too will the resources required to truly impact the learning journeys of our students; within reason and pragmatism, this program aims to be adaptive to our students' needs. Having said that, below is a sample of the emerging resources needed:

- CBO screening tests – offering quantifiable data as one of the tools used within the identification process. This objective approach enables the coordinators to standardise results and compare potentially gifted learners' data to their peers.
- Whole-school Gifted and Talented Checklist – offering qualitative data to ensure a holistic understanding of the child's giftedness, therefore strengthening the reliability and validity of information collected. This data is captured over time and in a range of situations.



- Specialised Department checklists for gifted and talented identification – in addition to whole school standardised checklists, departments may inevitably wish to refine their own criteria into specific areas of giftedness and talent in their specific subjects. We will use the Purdue checklists as a template for individual subjects to personalise, should they wish to.
- Time and training opportunities for all – if we require input from all staff members into all aspects of this program, appropriate time and specialist training will be required.

**Monitoring and Evaluating: Reflect, react and refine.**

We fully acknowledge that giftedness has many dimensions and just as the identification process reflects this multidimensionality, so too must the monitoring and evaluation of the program. It is a continually ongoing process. It is essential that we prioritise the periodic assessment and evaluation of not only our gifted learners’ Education Action Plans (as outlined on page 5), but also the program itself that seeks to provide the framework for their development.

Reflection, reaction and refinement is therefore key.

Figure 2: Flow diagram outlining monitoring and evaluation of the program.

