

EXCEL Overview



EXCEL
GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM
ROCKFORD AREA SCHOOLS

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EXCEL Mission Statement

The EXCEL mission is to recognize students with gifts and talents and appropriately meet their unique academic, social, and emotional needs to continue Rockford Area Schools' mission of providing challenging opportunities to engage, inspire, and educate globally-minded citizens.

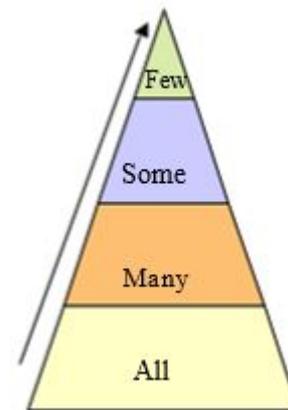
EXCEL Program Objectives

- Identify students who exhibit unique abilities or potential significantly beyond that of their peers of similar age, experience or environment
- Enrich and extend the general education curriculum to engage and challenge highly able learners
- Discover and nurture the unique talents and interests of students
- Develop exceptional citizens

Levels of Service Model

The EXCEL Gifted and Talented program model is based on Treffinger's "Levels of Service," which is a model built around four levels. In this model, services are leveled; not students. Through the identification process, we will strive to provide the appropriate service or services that individual students need to be engaged and challenged. Level I and II services do not necessitate formal identification. Level I services will be available to all students and Level II services to most students. Identification for Level III and IV services will be more specific, using the subjective and objective criteria listed. EXCEL services are grounded in research-supported best practices in gifted and talented education. Programming will include a combination of send-out services, collaborative teaching, varied grouping strategies, acceleration, differentiation of curriculum and instruction, enrichment and talent development opportunities, and individualized educational plans.

- Level I services are available to all students and may be provided by the classroom teacher, EXCEL coordinator, a guest speaker or volunteer, media specialist, arts specialist, environment/STEM specialist, or any person with knowledge or expertise that could enrich the general education curricular environment. Services may be offered in the form of presentations, lessons differentiated by level and choice, Arts & STEM Magnet programming, site-based learning, and extracurricular opportunities. The EXCEL educator will also be available to collaborate with classroom teachers and provide support.
- Level II services are available to many students and may be accessed by student choice or teacher referral. Examples include participation in Battle of the Books, Book Club, History Day, Arts Magnet opportunities beyond the curriculum, STEM opportunities beyond the curriculum, Destination ImagiNation, Young Scientist Roundtable, or additional curricular or extracurricular opportunities deemed appropriate.
- Level III services are available to identified students (approximately 10-15% of students per grade level) who meet specific criteria. Students will be clustered in mathematics and language arts classrooms with students who have similar abilities. Identified students may also be sent out of the classroom to participate in extracurricular opportunities. Examples of Level III services provided within the classroom may include Fermi Math, Stock Market Game, Envirothon, Perennial Math, and Word Masters. The curriculum is modified and accelerated in ways determined by the classroom teacher or resource teacher to be necessary for students to be challenged and engaged.
- Level IV services extend to approximately 5 - 7% of the student population who are selected based on specific criteria and who demonstrate abilities far beyond those of their grade-level peers (generally at least two grade-level deviations). Level IV services may be offered in the classroom setting, but more likely will occur through send-out programs, grade acceleration, subject-level acceleration, mentorship, or individualized academic programs. Send-out services will be designed as needed to include extension opportunities in the areas in which a student demonstrates exceptional abilities, as well as providing social and emotional education. EXCEL educators will work directly with individual students to meet their specific needs. Though the process will include many data-driven factors, it will be imperative that strong collaboration exists between parents/guardians, general education teachers, students, and EXCEL educators.



Kindergarten through 3rd Grade

- Fridays @ REAMS
- Push in model
- Primary Education Thinking Skills PETS Lessons
 - G&T assessment and informal identification opportunities for all K-3 students at REAMS
 - Enrichment and diagnostic thinking skills program with the dual purpose of identifying academically talented learners and developing higher level thinking skills in ALL students
- Purpose and Rationale Explanation for [Parents](#) and [Teachers](#)
- PETS [Website](#)
- Book [Resources](#)
- Subject acceleration, grade advancement, individualized academic programming as needed
- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) Screening for qualifying students K - 2
- [Identification Process](#)

4th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services

- Monday - Thursday pull-out during 4th grade WIN time @ REAMS
- Student roster created using [formal identification process](#) Visual Representation of [Identification Process](#) (formal and informal)
- Two-fold classroom focus: **Thinking Skills** and **Social and Emotional Affective** needs of gifted and talented students
 - **Weekly Thinking skills** activities focus on strategy, logic, creativity, analysis, inquiry
 - Weekly Brain Teasers ([Jennifer Stewart TPT](#))
- **Social/Emotional Affective** lessons focused around an issue/characteristic relevant to gifted and talented learners to;
 - help them develop self understanding regarding their unique characteristics; i.e., perfectionism, intensities, dealing with high expectations, self-advocacy, persistence, etc.
 - help them develop a “toolbox” of skills to support them when facing and overcoming challenges, e.g., how to persist and try 30 times instead of the once or twice they usually only have to try before they can do something.

4th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services Cont.

- **Affective Curriculum with Social & Emotional Lessons** include: Interests, more than Smart, Gifted & Talented definitions, Asynchrony, Multiple Intelligences, Personality Type, Learning Strengths and styles, Motivation style, Executive Functioning Skill strengths and weaknesses, Overexcitabilities, Qualities of and Goals for EXCEL students, G & T Stressors (Perfectionism, over and under achievement, fear of failure, making mistakes), Friendships & Relationships, Making the best of brain power, and Advocacy.
- **Genius Hour** - Based on a **Google** practice that they use with their development team (Watch this [video](#) for more information). It is an inquiry based, student-directed learning project in the classroom where students are allowed to explore their own passions and wonders for 20% of their total class time.
- **Extreme Venn Diagrams** created by me to meet curricular goals
- **School Building Inquiry Project** created by me to meet curricular goals
- **Personality Project** - Don Lowry's system of True Colors based on the research by psychologists Isabel Briggs-Myers, Katherine Briggs, and David Keirsey

4th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services Cont.

Resources

- When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers (Delisle/Galbraith)
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). [Thinking and Learning Teaching Principles for Creative, Talented and Gifted Students](#). American Psychological Association
- Developing Self-Understanding and Resilience in Gifted Students (Danforth)
- [The Gifted Guide](#)
- [Byrdseed TV](#): streaming video for parents, teachers, and students. Find differentiated lessons, challenging projects, and information about the unique social and emotional needs of gifted learners, all presented in quick, practical videos.
- Emotional Intelligence Units (Illinois Extension Office)
- [Big Ideas for Little Scholars](#). (2021, June 29).
- Living and Learning with Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities (Strickland)
- The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids: for ages 10 & Under (Galbraith, J., Bratsch, M., & Meyers, N. (2015) revised & updated 3rd edition) & Classroom set of 1999 copyrighted 1st edition
- Help gifted children in the elementary grades realize they're not alone, they're not "weird," and being smart is a bonus, not a burden. First published in 1984, this book has become the classic introduction to growing up gifted. This edition of the Survival Guide has been fully revised and updated for today's bright, creative, gifted children. Based on 1,000 surveys of gifted kids, it speaks directly to all gifted kids, in their language.
- Teaching gifted kids in today's classroom: strategies and techniques every teacher can use. (Winebrenner, S., & Brulles, D. 2018) Free Spirit Publishing

5th - 8th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services

- Monday - Thursday pull out during 5th - 8th Grade BOOST times @ RMS-CES
- Student roster created using formal identification process
- Research based elements intended to enrich gifts and launch potential
 - Interdisciplinary units written for gifted and talented students in the content areas of Math, Social Studies, STEM, and Language Arts
- Subject acceleration, grade advancement, individualized academic programming as needed
- Visual Representation of the K-8th Grade Identification Process (informal and formal)

5th - 8th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services Cont.

- Interdisciplinary units written for gifted and talented students in the content areas of **Math, Social Studies, STEM, and Language Arts**
Gifted students have the potential to learn material earlier and faster, to handle more complexity and abstraction, and to solve complex problems better. This potential, however, needs stimulating experiences from home and school or it will not unfold. These books are designed to help teachers provide the stimulating curricula that will nurture this potential in school. The units presented in this series are based on research into how these students actually think differently from their peers and how they use their learning styles and potential not merely to develop intellectual expertise, but to move beyond expertise to the production of new ideas.
 - [Year A-D Curriculum Map](#)
- **Genius Hour** - Based on a **Google** practice that they use with their development team (Watch this [video](#) for more information). It is an inquiry based, student-directed learning project in the classroom where students are allowed to explore their own passions and wonders for 20% of their total class time.
- [Philosophy Slam](#) (every other year) - The Mission of the Kids Philosophy Slam is to give kids a voice and to inspire kids to think by unlocking their intellectual and creative potential through a unique and powerful philosophical forum.
- [Novel Engineering](#), National Science Teaching Association Press 2020, An integrated approach to teaching engineering and literacy.

5th - 8th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Services Cont.

Resources

- **Challenging Units for Gifted Learners: Teaching the Way Gifted Students Think** By Kenneth J. Smith, PhD.
Language Arts (2010), **Social Studies** (2011), **Science** (2011), **Math** (2011)
Gifted students have the potential to learn material earlier and faster, to handle more complexity and abstraction, and to solve complex problems better. This potential, however, needs stimulating experiences from home and school or it will not unfold. These books are designed to help teachers provide the stimulating curricula that will nurture this potential in school. The units presented in this series are based on research into how these students actually think differently from their peers and how they use their learning styles and potential not merely to develop intellectual expertise, but to move beyond expertise to the production of new ideas.
- **Philosophy for Kids: 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder About Everything!** (2001) By David A. White Ph.D.
The book offers young people the opportunity to become acquainted with the wonders of philosophy. It is arranged around the topics of values, knowledge, reality, and critical thinking. Each activity allows kids to increase their understanding of philosophical concepts and issues and enjoy themselves at the same time. Students will grapple with the questions philosophers have discussed since the ancient Greeks. Questions include: “Who are your friends?,” “Can computers think?,” “Can something logical not make sense?,” and “Can you think about nothing?” Philosophizing sharpens students’ ability to think critically and experiencing the enjoyment of philosophical thought enhances a young person’s appreciation for the importance of reasoning throughout the traditional curriculum of subjects

Social and Emotional Materials

- **When Gifted Kids Don’t Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs (2002)**By: Judy Galbraith & Jim Delisle, J.
Gifted kids are so much more than test scores and grades. Still, it’s sometimes difficult to see past all that achievement and potential to the child, adolescent, or teen who may bring. This book offers proven, be perfect, lonely, alienated, confused, and unsure of what the future may bring. This book offers proven, practical suggestions for encouraging social and emotional growth among gifted, talented, and creative children and youth. The authors take a close-up look at gifted kids from the inside out (their self-image and self-esteem) and the outside in (challenges to their well-being from their family, school, peers, and society in general).
- **The Gifted Teen Survival Guide: Smart, Sharp, and Ready for (Almost) Anything (2011)** By: Judy Galbraith & Jim Delisle, J.
Support gifted teenagers with this one-of-a-kind book full of sage advice to help them understand themselves, relate well with others, and reach their potential in life. Based on new surveys of nearly 1,400 gifted teenagers, this updated classic is the ultimate guide to thriving in a world that doesn’t always support or understand high ability. Full of fresh illustrations, surprising facts, cutting-edge research, revealing quizzes and survey results, step-by-step strategies, inspiring teen quotes and stories, and insightful expert essays, the guide gives readers the tools they need to appreciate their giftedness as an asset and use it to make the most of who they are.

6th - 8th Grade Level 4 EXCEL Math Course

- Monday - Friday pull out, 1st hour
- 6th - 8th Grade Qualifying Students using **formal identification process**
 - Math Watch data spanning from K-6th grade
 - Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test
 - FAST Assessments
 - Parent/Teacher/Student/Curriculum Director Input
- Fee based Service
 - ½ payed by families
 - ½ payed by district
- **Art of Problem Solving** provides instruction and curriculum
- Classroom teacher manages students, work, grades, and communication with families
- **Beast Academy** books for 3rd - 5th grade enrichment (crates with resources in math rooms - dependent on teacher's use)

Additional Coordinated EXCEL Services

- **District Spelling Bee** 5th - 8th Grade
 - Scripps National Spelling Bee
 - Coordinated via Resource Training and Solutions
- **REAMS Spelling Bee** 1st - 4th Grades
 - Unofficial and just for fun, coordinated by me
- **Spark STEM Conference** 5th & 6th Graders
 - Coordinated via Resource Training and Solutions
- **Young Authors, Young Artists** (YAYA) 3rd - 6th Graders
 - Coordinated via Resource Training and Solutions
- **Universal Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)** Screening and Testing
 - New and referred students
 - 3rd Grade wide screening
 - Full Test to qualifying students
 - 6th Grade wide screening
 - Full Test to qualifying students
- **Perennial Math** (use copies) - 3rd-8th grade classrooms
- **Word Masters Contest** (use copies)- 3rd - 5th grade classrooms
- Purchased Gifted **Jacob's Ladders & William & Mary Reading Curriculum** for 4th & 5th Grade high reading classrooms (dependant on teacher's willingness to teach)