



Walla Walla Public Schools Explorer Program Information

The Explorer Program is an enrichment program designed for students who demonstrate a general cognitive development that is significantly accelerated beyond that of their chronological peers. These students exhibit a remarkable potential of high performance in the areas of general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking and peer leadership ability.

The Explorers programming is designed for students in grades 3-5 who are:

- Academically advanced and demonstrate high intellectual capacity
- Independent learners who thrive on progressively challenging opportunities
- Able to utilize advanced problem-solving skills
- Needing in-depth study of curriculum matched to their demonstrated skills and capabilities
- Adaptable to advanced pacing at a higher level than a regular classroom
- Adaptable to being bussed to a different location one day a week
- Adaptable to being out of the general education classroom one half-day a week

Program Model, Location and Curriculum

The Explorer Program is a pullout model in which identified students participate for a half day each week. The Explorer Program is currently housed at the Walla Walla Center for Children and Families at 1150 W. Chestnut, Walla Walla.

The Explorer Program uses a variety of strategies that focus around inquiry and project learning. The program follows the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) standards with an emphasis on academic enrichment and social emotional development of highly capable learners. Learning encompasses a variety of disciplines that focus around math, science, technology, reading, writing and some social studies. Field trips are incorporated into the learning. The teacher will provide a syllabus of anticipated topics that will be covered over the school year in September.

Attendance

Once a student has decided to participate in the Explorer Program, a commitment has been made to attend on a regular basis. Because students work on many continuing group activities, they need to attend programming each week. Each child's success, as well as the group's, is dependent upon the regular weekly attendance of all Explorer students. Please consider rescheduling non-essential appointments on days that do not interfere with the Explorer day.

Participation Expectations

This is a program designed for students who need acceleration and enrichment. Students who participate in the Explorers Program are expected to participate in challenging activities that are part of the extension of learning. Students who choose not to participate in classroom activities may need to take a break from the program for the remainder of the school year.

Opting Out of Explorers

Students have the right to opt out of the Explorers Program if it is not a good fit for a student's current needs. Student needs will be re-evaluated at the end of the school year to discuss options for the following school year. Students who opt out of the program are still considered Highly Capable and provide differentiation in the classroom in areas of their identified academic strength. The teacher may also initiate a review of a student's continued need for program services during the school year if a student demonstrates indicators that the program is not matching their child's current needs.

Homework

Homework is an expectation for Explorers. The homework activities are an extension of the learning in the classroom or an opportunity to finish work that was not completed during the allotted class time.

Explorers should not be required to complete all assignments given in their regular classroom while attending Explorers. However, being absent from the classroom one day a week may require a student to learn a concept that was presented while s/he was out of the room. Classroom teachers can administer pre- or post- tests that can help determine whether an Explorer has already mastered a skill. Students should check with their home school teacher regarding procedures and expectations.

Open House and Student Led Conferences

Families are invited to two Open Houses in the fall and spring. In the fall, your child will share their current learning experiences as well as goals for the year. In spring, Explorer students share what has been learned and accomplished during Explorer time. The Explorer teacher will be available for questions, but does not lead. If there are specific concerns or questions about a student, the teacher will schedule a separate time to meet with the family. Parents may also request a time to speak with the teacher outside of the Open House schedule.

Communication

The Explorer Teacher will send out weekly newsletters to inform families about events that took place in the classroom. Students will receive a paper copy at the end of each Explorer day that includes a recap of the day and homework. Families will receive an emailed copy. Reminders about projects and other information will be sent via email. If a family does not have email, they can request the paper copy that was sent home with their child.

Bussing, Schedules, Food Services, and Transportation

Students ride buses to and from home schools to the Explorer Program. Details regarding bussing schedules, specific class day and times, food services, and the syllabus for the school year will be provided to families in September of the school year. A *Question and Answer Zoom* meeting for newly identified students will be held in June. Orientations for new Explorers and families are held in the classroom at the beginning of the school year. Please check your email/Parent Square the latter part of August for an orientation invitation.

Start Date

Explorers typically start the 3rd or 4th week into the school year to give students time to settle in their general education classrooms. The official start date will be announced at the end of August.

Questions

For testing and placement into the Explorers Program, families should contact the Learning Specialist at their child's home school. For questions or concerns regarding the Explorer classroom program, families should contact the Explorer teacher. Email is often the best way to reach the teacher.

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