



GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION Handbook

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT..... 1

DEFINITIONS..... 1

PERSONNEL..... 2

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT..... 3

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT..... 4

IDENTIFICATION..... 5

IDENTIFICATION..... 6

APPEALS..... 7

EXIT..... 8

PROGRAMMING..... 9

CURRICULUM..... 10

PROGRAM EVALUATION..... 11

MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS..... 12



MISSION STATEMENT

Gifted programming is an ongoing process through which we develop the emerging strengths of each identified student in intellect, motivation, creativity, and leadership. By offering differentiated learning opportunities, we provide a rigorous academic environment to meet the educational needs of advanced learners.

Our Mission

Equip all students with the skills to be productive members of society.

Vision

We are a destination district built on relationships, collaboration, and a culture of excellence.

DEFINITIONS

Arkansas Department of Education: Gifted and talented children and youth are those of high potential or ability whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated educational experiences and/or services. Possession of these talents and gifts, or the potential for their development, will be evidenced through an interaction of above average intellectual ability, task commitment or motivation, and creative ability.

Federal Javits Act: The term gifted and talented student means children and youth who give evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to fully develop such capabilities.

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC): Children are gifted when their ability is significantly above the norm for their age. Giftedness may manifest in one or more domains such as: intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or in a specific academic field such as language arts, mathematics, or science.

PERSONNEL

Selection Process

Open positions will be advertised in the Fort Smith Public Schools Open Announcements on the FSPS Human Resources website.

Candidates must meet licensure qualifications as well as be able to model the cognitive, creative, and leadership qualities the program develops in students. At a minimum, all candidates should be able to:

- recognize the learning differences, developmental milestones, and cognitive/affective characteristics of gifted and talented students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and identify their related academic and social-emotional needs
- design appropriate learning and performance modifications for individuals with gifts and talents that enhance creativity, acceleration, depth and complexity in academic subject matter and specialized domains
- select, adapt, and use a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to advance the learning of gifted and talented students.

Candidates selected from the pool of applicants will be interviewed by at least the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Campus Support (if not already employed in the district) and the Supervisor of Special Programs. Principals and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program coordinators may be invited to participate in the interview.

Licensure

A teacher of the gifted shall be a specialist who has attained standard state licensure and earned, through successful coursework and testing, an add-on endorsement in gifted education. Teachers who do not possess a current certificate will have a completed Additional Licensure Plan (ALP) on file with the district and DESE Office of Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement and be actively pursuing the endorsement.

Teachers in the Advanced Placement program will be state licensed and College Board certified in their content area. They will attend periodic AP training as required by the state. Teachers who do not possess a current certificate will have a completed Additional Licensure Plan (ALP) on file with the district and DESE Office of Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement and be actively pursuing the endorsement. AP teachers will have their course syllabi approved by the College Board. Pre-Advanced Placement teachers will also meet licensure requirements and receive periodic pre-AP training as required by the state.

An administrator of gifted services must be state licensed in administration. A GATE coordinator will hold a state endorsement in gifted education.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The district will provide funding and released time to support professional development for our GATE specialists.

GATE Specialists:

- Will participate in all state and district required professional development training.
- Will participate in ongoing professional development specific to the needs of gifted learners (characteristics both intellectual and social/emotional, assessment, curriculum planning, instruction, learning environments, programming, and equity) through:
 - District provided workshops
 - State or national gifted conferences
 - Educational cooperative meetings
 - Webinars
 - Collaborative meetings among specialists
 - Listserv postings
 - Membership in professional associations for gifted children
 - Articles from professional journals
 - Lists of resources and websites

General Classroom Teachers and Administrators:

Whenever possible, GATE specialists will provide information and/or training on identification of, needs of, and resources for gifted learners through:

- District website
- Print materials
- District-wide or school-based workshops.

Advanced Placement and Pre-Advanced Placement Teachers:

- Will attend required College Board approved trainings every five years
- (As needed or desired) access resources appropriate for teaching AP courses.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The district appreciates the resources such as parents and community members.

- Representatives for the group may include parents, community members, GATE specialists, representative principals, representative general classroom teachers, and the Supervisor of Special Programs.
 - The Advisory Council will meet at least once a year.
- Speakers and mentors from the community will be sought to enrich student learning.
 - When possible, community members will serve as an audience for student products.
- Parents and staff input will be gleaned through such avenues as questionnaires and focus groups to provide information for program evaluation.

Community partnerships are strengthened with frequent and effective communication.

Communication with parents and the greater community may consist of:

- FSPS Gifted and Talented Website
- Newsletters (electronic and/or print)
- Teacher technology site
- E-mails or printed notes on student progress and highlights
- Brochures
- Newspaper articles on student achievements or GATE learning activities
- Recognition of state-level academic competition winners at school board meetings and FSPS Facebook
- Open Houses
- Community Fairs

When needed, forms and communication will be translated into other languages for parents. Parents may request an interpreter for meetings.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification for the GATE program is ongoing from grades Kindergarten – 12th for the purpose of careful and comprehensive identification of students who need special programming and qualitative differentiation to develop their exceptional cognition, skills, and abilities. Identification procedures are clearly stated, uniformly implemented and communicated to all stakeholders. These procedures are also found on the FSPS website under the Gifted and Talented tab.

Students in Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade classrooms receive enrichment lessons each week by the GATE specialist and the classroom teacher. During these lessons, students complete enrichment lessons designed to explore students' thinking, reasoning and creativity. The GATE specialists as well as the classroom teachers look for gifted characteristics in the work that students produce. At least one work sample per quarter is kept by the GATE specialist for students who demonstrate characteristics that may lead to referral for GATE in the future. Teachers of all grade levels are also encouraged to share student work, which exemplifies exceptional ability, with the GATE specialist.

Referrals of students for the program may be made at any time beginning at the end of the 2nd grade school year. A nomination may be submitted by any stakeholder such as: a parent, a teacher or administrator, the student, a community member, or a peer. The nomination process involves completion of a *Referral of Student for GATE Program* form, referral documentation including but not limited to: universal screening test scores, standardized test scores, communication contact logs, narratives, etc. This information will be submitted to a GATE specialist.

Identification Measures

Testing for placement in the GATE program will occur throughout the school year. A Case Study will be developed for each referred student which will include a variety of sources in order to obtain an overall picture of the nominated student's abilities. The Case Study will include a minimum of 2 subjective and 2 objective measures, one of which will address creativity. Also considered are narratives, anecdotal notes, student grades, whole group enrichment booklets, student work samples, and scores on other criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests, comments from Referral form and Parent Questionnaire, and Teacher Questionnaire.

Identification Procedure

The process is as follows:

1. Identification information and referral forms will be available through the GATE specialist. This information, and the list of the FSPS GATE teachers, is also found on the FSPS website under the Gifted and Talented tab.
2. A *Notice of Program Referral and Description of the GATE Program* and the identification procedures are clearly stated, uniformly implemented and communicated to all stakeholders. A GATE specialist informs the parents of the criteria for placement in the GATE program and secures a completed *Permission for Comprehensive Assessment* prior to administering any assessments.
Gifted definition from Arkansas State Standards: *Gifted and talented children and youth are those of high potential or ability whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated education experiences and/or services. Possession of these talents and gifts, or the potential for their development, will be evidenced through an interaction of above average intellectual ability, task commitment and/or motivation, and creative ability.*
3. Procedures used in the identification process are non-discriminatory with respect to race, cultural or economic background, religion, national origin, sex, or handicapping condition. The GATE specialist will ensure that any appropriate accommodations for the test and that are defined as allowable by the testing publisher, are made available on the assessment to ensure scores are valid.
4. A GATE specialist administers the tests, gathers identification data, and compiles results on the *Student Profile Summary Sheet*.
Student data on these forms may be anonymous when presented to the GATE Placement Committee, but this is not required.
The GATE Placement Committee is composed of at least five members chaired by a trained specialist in gifted education, including administrators, teachers, and/or counselors. The committee analyzes data, maintains appropriate records, and makes professional decisions on placement of students.
5. Student placement decisions are based on multiple criteria with no single criterion or cut-off score used to include or exclude a student from services.
6. Parents are informed in writing of the placement/identification decision; GATE specialists are available to explain scores to parents. Parent permission will be obtained for their students to receive services beyond the classroom curriculum before any services will be provided. Parents have the opportunity to appeal any decision in which they do not feel will best serve their child.
7. Instructionally pertinent information about individual students obtained during the identification process is communicated to instructional staff regardless of the placement decision.
8. Student placement in GATE will be reviewed annually.

9. Records of placement decisions and data on all referred students will be maintained for at least five years or for as long as needed for education decisions. After that point, records will be appropriately and confidentially destroyed.

APPEALS

Parents or staff members may appeal a placement/identification decision through the following process:

1. Person requests a conference with the building GATE specialist. The building principal should be included in the conference. Scores from the identification process will be explained, and additional considerations may be voiced.
2. If any stakeholder still feels the committee's decision is not in the best interest of the student after explanations, a written placement appeal may be filed with the District GATE Coordinator. The written appeal may include additional data to be added to the Case Study.
3. The GATE Specialist may collect any further data which might assist in an identification decision with parental permission.
4. The GATE Placement Committee will convene to review the initial case study, including creativity, district and state guidelines, and additional data/information provided and determine the most appropriate placement for the student based on all available data.
5. The decision of the GATE Placement Committee will be communicated in writing to the person making the appeal.
6. No single criterion or cut-off score will be used to include or exclude a student from services.

Transfer within District

Students transferring to another school within the Fort Smith Public Schools will be automatically placed into the GATE program in the receiving school.

Returning to District

If a student in the GATE program moves out of the district and then returns, his/her assessment data (if less than a year old) will be reviewed by the GATE Placement Committee for immediate placement. If data is beyond a year old, the student will be processed as a new referral with parent permission.

Transfer from another District

If a student was in a GATE program in another district prior to enrolling in the Fort Smith Public Schools, the GATE Specialist will request his/her GATE placement records from the original

district. The GATE Placement Committee will review scores within a valid time period and will be considered if results from tests comparable to those utilized by the FSPS identification process. If scores are not in the valid time period or tests are not equivalent, the student will be processed as a new referral with parent permission. Placement decisions will be communicated to parents. If GATE services are recommended by the placement committee, parent permission will be obtained before services begin.

EXIT

Exit from the Fort Smith School District's Gifted Program may be initiated by a GATE specialist, classroom teacher, parent, or student. A recommendation for discontinuation of gifted services must be based on proper documentation of multiple criteria, which will include at least two objective and two subjective measures (one of which assesses creativity) that indicates a student's needs are not being met through services of the gifted program. This data may include unsatisfactory annual reviews, lack of motivation and/or task commitment in the GATE classroom and other information as needed.

Before the exit procedure is initiated, a parent conference will be held in an effort to support student needs. If the student's performance continues with no improvement, the GATE Placement Committee will make the decision which may or may not be to exit the student from the program based on data sources and/or test scores. The GATE Placement Committee will review an updated Case Study to determine the most appropriate placement for the student.

A parent or teacher may appeal the exit decision in accordance with the district GATE placement appeal procedures.

PROGRAMMING

Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd Grades: Whole-Group Enrichment

GATE specialists provide enrichment lessons once a month in each Kindergarten through 2nd grade classroom. Follow-up lessons are provided by the classroom teacher under the direction of the GATE specialist. During these enrichment lessons and throughout any learning experiences in the classroom, both the general classroom teacher and the GATE specialist document findings of students who demonstrate exceptional critical and creative thinking skills. This information, along with student work completed during enrichment lessons, may be utilized in the identification process of gifted learners.

Grades 3rd – 5th: Resource Room Pull-Out

Students leave their regular classrooms for a total of 150 minutes each week for GATE instruction. During this time, a GATE specialist provides lessons and facilitates their learning (see Curriculum and Instruction sections) in a resource pull-out setting. GATE specialists are available to provide additional information and support to the regular classroom teachers on meeting the needs of their gifted learners.

Classwork Policy Grades 3rd – 5th:

Established by representative committee of elementary principals and Instruction Department personnel on October 30, 1985:

Students will be responsible for concepts taught in their regular classroom while they are attending the GATE Program; however, they will not be required to make up classwork.

Consultant Teacher:

An approved teacher of the gifted meets regularly with identified students and designs differentiated activities to meet their needs. The approved gifted teacher works with the regular classroom teacher in delivering services by developing management plans, providing demonstration lessons if needed and supervising the progress of the gifted students. Students will have differentiated lessons/ activities for a minimum of 150 minutes per week.

Grades 6th – 8th

In addition to participation in pre-Advanced Placement (pre-AP) courses, identified students may elect to participate in GATE Seminar, a course taught by a GATE specialist. The class meets daily according to the period structure of the school. (See also Curriculum and Instruction sections) Extracurricular academic competitions and activities are available.

Grades 8th – 12th

All students have the opportunity to take pre-AP, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and concurrent courses. A variety of extracurricular academic competition and leadership

opportunities are provided. Students may also have access to a secondary GATE specialist via Schoology.

CURRICULUM

As mandated by the Arkansas Department of Education, the Gifted and Talented Programs' curriculum differs not only in degree, but in kind from curriculum in the regular classroom. The curriculum is not "more of the same," although it is coordinated with the districts' basic curriculum objectives and assists students in skill development vital to student success according to Arkansas Standards. Curriculum modifications in the program are made in content, process and/or product from those of the regular classroom. Differentiation is also found in level of complexity, pace of learning, and degree of abstractness.

The Gifted and Talented Program curriculum involves students in process skills as mandated by the state gifted standards and in the state curriculum requirements. Products are the main means of practicing GT skills, materials, and forms.

Areas of study, which are the vehicles for skills development, are unitized into term or semester length themes. Other units of study focus on student interest. Pretest and post-tests may be used to determine growth. Students also design and/ or utilize scoring rubrics for a variety of learning situations. Students are encouraged as independent learners and are involved in research that requires competence in utilizing various technologies. Communication skills are fostered through the sharing of ideas and projects.

The curriculum is a living, changing entity which relies upon the synergy of a freethinking, high expectation, limitless atmosphere of learning that honors affective growth.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation is a form of disciplined inquiry designed to assist in making judgments about our district's program for the purpose of making it better serve students while maintaining state mandated standards. It provides a way to gather, consider, and report information to parents, staff, the school board, students, the community, and those officials at the State Department of Education responsible for overseeing gifted programs throughout our state.

Evaluation results are used to document the need for the program and the effectiveness of program implementation. Information gained through program evaluation is useful in determining program strengths and weaknesses, and looking at the impact the program has on participating students, the school, and community at large.

Program evaluation reflects a commitment to creating and maintaining a quality program for our children and ensuring accountability. The benefits of effective program evaluation include realization of ways to effect meaningful improvement in the program coupled with enhanced relations between and with all stakeholders.

KEY EVALUATION COMPONENT AREAS:

- Identification Process
- Curriculum /Instruction
- Program Administration/Management
- Parent/Community Involvement
- Program Evaluation

KEY STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE EVALUATION:

- School board members
- Community members
- Advisory Committee
- Parents
- Classroom teachers
- School administrators
- Students

DATA RESOURCE ITEMS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION:

- Interviews

- Observation
- Surveys
- Focus Group Discussions
- Student Products
- Pretest and Posttest
- G.T. Newsletters and other communication
- Staff Professional Development Handouts

MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

All records of student information will be maintained and kept confidential.

Parents will be granted permission to view their child's student records in the GATE folder upon request. Access to testing documents are confidential and are not accessible by parents.

Participation in the GATE program will be noted in the district electronic database, as well as the student's GATE file folder in the GATE building (elementary) or in the GATE classroom (secondary).

GATE file folders will contain the following documents:

- identification process and placement forms
- relevant notes are dated or documents anecdotal

GATE specialists will also keep annual documentation related to their lesson plans, professional development, parent and staff communication, and public notice of student success. This documentation will be maintained for one previous year and current year by the Supervisor of Special Programs for review during state monitoring.