



LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION HANDBOOK

INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Rev. 8/2026

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Overview	2
GATE Program Frequently Asked Questions	4
Glossary of Terms	5
Differentiation: What's it all About?	6
School Plans	7-8
How are Students Identified as GATE?	9
GATE Identification Multiple Measures Worksheet	10
Parent/Guardian Notification	11
Staff Support	11
Elementary Student Goals	12-13
Thurston Middle School Student Goals	14-15
Additional Parent/Guardian Resources	16
Directory	16

OVERVIEW

Every child is unique and should receive an education appropriate to their needs and abilities. Special care should be taken in planning and providing an education that will affirm and support each child's talents that enhance their life and the life of the community.

LBUSD Vision

We take ownership of each child's learning in our schools, accepting no limits on potential.

LBUSD Mission

Each student gains the knowledge, experience, world perspectives, and skills needed to become a lifelong learner and producer in a competitive and interconnected world.

LBUSD Commitments

Every Student, Every Day
Relationships Matter
Continuous Improvement

LBUSD Definition of Giftedness

The District has adopted from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) the following definition of GATE-identified students:

Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement in the top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains. Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).

Program Description

Meeting students' needs is fundamental to the Laguna Beach Unified School District's purpose. The programming for students identified as GATE is designed to provide a differentiated curriculum in accordance with the intent of the law and spans elementary, middle, and secondary students. Accommodations are made for individual student needs.

Program Options

At El Morro Elementary School, Top of the World Elementary School, and Thurston Middle School, programming is in place to meet the needs of students identified as GATE in grades 4-8.

Student programming includes:

- Cluster groupings
- Differentiation of curriculum
- Enrichment activities

District Guiding Principles

- During grade 3, students will be identified as GATE based on the District's identification procedure outlined in this handbook.
- The District clusters students in grades 4-8 heterogeneously while maintaining academically balanced grade-level classrooms.
- The high school course options are rich in Honors, Advanced Placement, and enrichment courses that provide differentiation for students identified as GATE. Athletics, drama/music opportunities, and various clubs also provide enrichment.
- The Depth and Complexity critical thinking tools, or icons, have been identified as the common set of strategies to deepen and differentiate instruction for all learners. Ongoing professional development will be provided for teachers.

Student Goal Setting

The purpose of the student goal-setting activity is to establish and monitor personal student goals for each student identified as GATE. This is in addition to the students' grade-level report card. The goal-setting document will include information about the goals the student has selected. It is used as an additional method for teachers and students to reflect, monitor, and communicate student progress. Classroom teachers at the elementary level will be responsible for completing the goal-setting page for each student identified as GATE. At the middle school level, the site GATE Coordinator will meet with students identified as GATE to help them set goals for the year.

GATE Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How does GATE programming support students beyond the rigorous curriculum provided to all students?**

While the academic content standards adopted by the state of California provide the basis for a rigorous core curriculum, LBUSD has chosen to focus on providing differentiated learning experiences, goal-setting conferences, and enriching activities for students.

2. **Will LEAs be required to provide a differentiated curriculum for students identified as gifted and talented within the regular school day per *Education Code* Section 52206 and Title 5 Section 3840?**

California Senate Bill 971 (signed into law in September 2014) repealed all prior *California Education Code* provisions that referred to GATE as a categorical program. The language contained in *Ed Code* sections 52200-52212 is no longer in effect. Districts may determine program guidelines and policies regarding all aspects of GATE.

3. **What programs do local high schools offer to students identified as GATE?**

A variety of courses and programs for students identified as GATE are offered in most California high schools. Individual high schools make decisions about how to serve accelerated students, including options such as optional enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, dual-enrollment college courses, and CTE courses.

4. **With the repeal of *Education Code* Sections 52200-52212 under California Senate Bill 97,1 what guidelines should districts follow for their GATE programs?**

Because the *Ed Code* sections related to GATE as a categorical program have been repealed, the State Board of Education no longer provides specific GATE guidelines to schools and districts.

5. **What resources are available to families of GATE children?**

Each school and district individually determines the resources available for families of students identified as GATE. Families may contact the school's main office or visit the district's website for additional information.

Glossary of Terms

The following glossary contains words commonly expressed in Gifted and Talented Education literature.

Vocabulary Relating to How Students Are Grouped

- **Ability Grouping:** The practice of grouping students according to their achievement levels in classes and/or subjects.
- **Cluster Groupings:** The practice of grouping pupils within a regular classroom and providing appropriately differentiated activities from the regular classroom.
- **Heterogeneous Grouping:** Students are randomly assigned to classes rather than ability-grouped. Within the heterogeneous classroom, the gifted student is frequently provided with a variety of activities, including opportunities to interact with other students of similar abilities and interests in cluster groupings.
- **Homogeneous Grouping:** Groups of students are formed based on their ability to work together.
- **GATE Vocabulary Relating to High School:** As students transition into high school, the term GATE is no longer used to refer to students. Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in rigorous coursework as they prepare for a variety of options after high school, including, but not limited to, four-year college and university opportunities. Students can access Honors coursework, Advanced Placement coursework, and industry-aligned College and Career Advancement (CCA) courses.
- **Advanced Placement:** College-level courses provided at the secondary level for which students may receive college credit by examination.
- **Honors:** More rigor; homework and tests are more challenging.

Other Commonly Used GATE-Related Vocabulary

- **Acceleration:** Students engage in more advanced coursework.
- **Enrichment Activities:** Activities that are supplemental and advanced opportunities planned to augment a student's regular educational program.
- **Qualitatively Different Program:** A program that is modified for a student based on their giftedness.
- **Underachievement:** When a student's academic progress/performance falls far below their potential.
- **Compacted:** Coursework that is taught in a shorter span of time.

Differentiation: What's it all about?

In the Laguna Beach Unified School District, students identified as GATE are clustered in groups within the heterogeneous classroom to provide differentiated learning and opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

LBUSD teachers have been trained to provide differentiated instruction for all learners, including students identified as GATE. Dr. Sandra Kaplan's Depth and Complexity critical thinking tools/icons have been integrated into classrooms to deepen, extend, and differentiate learning. Differentiation does not mean "more of the same" or "harder" work that is unrelated to the core curriculum. Rather, differentiation is an extension of the core curriculum to ensure meaningful levels of student engagement throughout the entire learning process. Four ways we do this include:

1. ACCELERATION: This is done when students progress at their individual pace, which may mean moving more rapidly through a particular sequence, with the result of receiving the curriculum earlier than it would normally be received. Students work on more advanced curricular concepts.

2. ADDING DEPTH: This is done by giving a student the opportunity to extend and elaborate on a topic of interest. As the student moves from concrete to abstract, they uncover more details and new knowledge. An example would be offering additional resources (books, speakers, periodicals, videos) and supporting Howard Gardner's theory of "multiple intelligences" to challenge high-achieving students after a core science unit on the central nervous system.

3. INCREASING COMPLEXITY: This is done by enabling students to view concepts at a more sophisticated level, analyzing and evaluating issues, problems, themes, and relationships from different perspectives. An example would be using a variety of resources to investigate Abraham Lincoln's 1860 presidential campaign and election, then analyzing how it differed from and/or resembled President Bush's campaign and election over 130 years later.

4. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NOVELTY: This is done by providing students with an opportunity to motivate their own learning because of a need they have to learn more. The approach to learning is personalized and varies from student to student. Students test their ideas with one another and against established interpretations. An example would be a student who studies current political issues, develops a new method for raising campaign funds, and submits the idea to a congressman for reaction.

School Plans

El Morro and Top of the World Elementary Schools

Goals

Students identified as GATE in elementary schools are provided with a program offering differentiated learning opportunities.

Goals include:

- 1) Challenging students to develop academic, creative, and social abilities
- 2) Helping each child realize their full potential
- 3) Recognizing and valuing the uniqueness of all students

Classroom Strategies and Practices

- **Questioning techniques**
- **Tiered assignments**
- **Flexible skill-based grouping**
- **Learning/interest centers**
- **Differentiated, collaborative projects**
- **Interest-based activities**

Available Co-Curricular Enrichment Opportunities

Co-curricular enrichment supplements in-class differentiated instruction. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Coding Club | ▪ Improv |
| ▪ Destination Imagination | ▪ Speech and Debate |
| ▪ Eco Challenge | ▪ Spanish |
| ▪ 3D Printing & Lasercutting | ▪ Honors Chorus |
| ▪ Lego Engineers | ▪ Watercolor |

School Plans

Thurston Middle School

Goals

The goal of Thurston Middle School is to promote creativity and higher-level thinking skills.

Cluster Groupings and Courses

Students identified as GATE are placed in grade-level clusters in language arts and math classes. Students have the opportunity to test into compacted math courses 6/7 and 7/8. Additionally, Thurston Middle School offers a variety of challenging elective courses available to students, such as:

- Foreign Language
- STEAM
- Leadership
- Forensic Anthropology
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Advanced Drama
- Computer Art
- Choral and Instrumental Music
- Multimedia
- Coding

Available Co-Curricular Enrichment Opportunities

Co-curricular enrichment supplements in-class differentiated instruction. Opportunities are provided to enrich and extend learning in a variety of areas. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Jazz Band
- Art Club
- French Club
- Ecology Club
- Book Club
- Model UN
- Coding Club
- Destination Imagination
- National Spelling Contest
- Spanish Club
- Dungeons and Dragons
- Running Club
- Forensics
- Mock Trial

Differentiated instruction is accomplished in the classroom in many ways, including but not limited to:

- in-depth projects and research; not additional assignments
- extended activities
- flexible pacing
- interest groups
- encouragement of complexity and novelty
- questioning techniques
- modifying product and student response

Laguna Beach High School

Students identified as GATE at LBHS are encouraged to enroll in courses that meet their unique individual needs. LBHS offers an array of Advanced Placement (AP), Honors, CTE, and elective courses. In addition, there are a variety of electives and extracurricular sports, clubs, and events students can choose to participate in. To view current offerings, please go to the LBHS website.

How are Students Identified as GATE?

1. The primary identification tool for GATE is a screening test given each year to all grade 3 students. Students qualify for GATE by scoring at the 95th percentile or better on the National Percentile Ranking (NPR) Total Score.

If a student does not qualify after taking the screening test in grade 3, they can be nominated to take the test once more at the elementary level and once more at Thurston Middle School. Thus, a student has a total of three opportunities to qualify for GATE if they attend LBUSD schools in grades 3-7. All grade 4-7 students nominated to retest will be given the screening test at the same time as grade 3 students. Students nominated after the annual screening test will be provided an opportunity during the following school year.

Teacher/Parent/Guardian Nomination

In grades 4-7, teachers may nominate students not already identified as GATE. Parents/guardians of students in grades 4-5 may discuss assessment opportunities with their child's teacher. Parents/guardians of students in grades 6-7 may discuss possible identification with the school counselor and/or school site GATE coordinator. Parent requests for additional GATE testing must be sent in writing or via email. The teacher will then complete the Student Referral form and submit it to the District GATE Coordinator. Students can test once in 3rd grade and once more at the Elementary level. Students can test once at the Middle School level.

2. If #1 above is not met and the student scores between the 92nd and 94th percentiles on the Screening Test, they will be evaluated using the GATE Identification Multiple Measures Worksheet.
3. A student who transfers into Laguna Beach Unified School District may enroll as a student identified as GATE if their previous qualifications meet the Laguna Beach Unified School District's requirements. Parents/Guardians of new students must submit evidence of GATE identification upon registration. All documentation from the previous district will be evaluated. The district may convene a Students Study Team meeting to review documentation and assessments provided by the previous district and make a final decision regarding eligibility.
4. Private testing by a **licensed psychologist** may be used as evidence in support of a referral for GATE identification. Parents/guardians must submit a fully completed report for consideration, including the tests administered and the subtest and full-scale scores. The District is not responsible for any non-LBUSD GATE-related assessments. The district may convene a Students Study Team meeting to review the findings and make a final decision regarding eligibility. Private testing must be administered within 12 to 18-months of the GATE determination window.



LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
GATE Identification Multiple Measures Worksheet

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____	School Site: _____ Date Completed: _____	☐ 3 rd Grade ☐ 4 th Grade ☐ 5 th Grade ☐ 6 th Grade ☐ 7 th Grade
Compelling Evidence (1-5)		
1. Aptitude (district-determined assessment)	<u>Percentile</u> _____ 95 th percentile or higher = Student identified as GATE _____ 92-94 th percentile= 5 points	Points from Assessment _____
2. Report Card	ELA A = 5 points B = 4 points Math A = 5 points B = 4 points	Points from ELA: _____ Points from Math: _____
3. State (CAASPP): English Language Arts	2600 = 4 points 2550 = 3 points 2500 = 2 points	Points from ELA: _____
4. State (CAASPP): Mathematics	2600 = 4 points 2550 = 3 points 2500 = 2 points	Points from Math: _____
5. Special Considerations	a. Student has language or cultural differences that may impact the child's success in school (2 points) -OR- b. Economic level and/or environmental factors which may interfere with the child's success in school (2 points) -OR- c. Visual and/or Performing Arts Excellence & Evaluation (2 points)	Points from Variables*: _____ * 2 points max
<u>Total Points Required**</u> 20 and above = GATE High Achieving 19 and below = Does not qualify	Scores verified by: _____	Total Points: _____ ☐ Student qualifies. ☐ Student does not qualify.

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Parent/Guardian Notification

- Results of the assessments administered are maintained by the Instructional Services Office at the District Office.
- If eligibility is determined:
 - Written parent/guardian approval for placement in the GATE program will be requested
 - A parent/guardian input form will be provided to parents/guardians
 - The qualifying student will also have an opportunity to offer their input by completing an inventory that includes an academic and personal self-assessment

These forms will be kept in individual students' GATE folders and maintained by the GATE Site Coordinators at each site.

- If ineligibility is determined, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing.

Staff Support

Teacher Responsibilities for Classes with Clusters of GATE-Identified Students

- Teachers will provide differentiated lessons throughout the year for all students.
- Elementary teachers of students identified as GATE will support students with personal goal-setting.
- The middle school site GATE Coordinator will help students complete personal goal-setting forms in the fall.
- Teachers will conduct a reflection meeting with students at the end of the school year. All completed forms will be filed in the students' GATE folder at the site.

Site GATE Coordinator Responsibilities

- Support fall goal-setting and spring reflections at their school site
- Administer GATE screening tests for students in grades 3-7
- Support all-district GATE activities
- Provide resources and support for teachers with the GATE Clusters
- Evaluate screening test results

LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
GATE Goal-Setting & Reflection Form
El Morro and Top of the World Elementary School

Student: _____ Teacher: _____

Grade Level: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Academic (Create a goal for two or more areas.)

Opportunities for novelty, rigor, depth, and complex extension within the California Standards.

Language Arts Examples:	Goal Completed ☐
Math Examples:	Goal Completed ☐
Science Examples:	Goal Completed ☐
Other (research, computer science, social studies, communication, etc.) Examples:	Goal Completed ☐

Personal Characteristics (Create a goal for one or more areas.)

Opportunities for novelty, rigor, depth, and complex extension within the California Standards.

Responsibility	Goal Completed ☐
Examples:	
Social Interaction	Goal Completed ☐
Examples:	
Leadership	Goal Completed ☐
Examples:	
Personal Strengths	Goal Completed ☐
Examples:	

Student End-of-Year Reflection

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Teacher Signature Fall Meeting _____

Parent/Guardian Signature Fall Meeting _____

Student Signature Fall Meeting _____

LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
GATE Goal-Setting & Reflection Form
Thurston Middle School

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Read about each Habit of Mind quality and select which statement best reflects you as a student.

	Consistently Like Me	Most Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Not Like Me
Persisting	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing Impulsivity	☐	☐	☐	☐
Listening with Understanding and Empathy	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thinking Flexibly	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thinking about Your Thinking	☐	☐	☐	☐
Striving for Accuracy and Precision	☐	☐	☐	☐
Questioning and Problem Posing	☐	☐	☐	☐
Apply Past Knowledge to New Situations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gather Data Through all Senses.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Creating, Imaging, and Innovating	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responding with Wonderment and Awe	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taking Responsible Risks	☐	☐	☐	☐
Finding Humor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Thinking Interdependently	☐	☐	☐	☐
Remaining Open to Continuous Learning	☐	☐	☐	☐

Choose one habit of mind that is already a strength of yours. Explain how you apply it at school. (Be specific/give examples.)

Choose a habit of mind that is a challenge for you. How will you strengthen it; how will you build the habit? (Be specific/set goals/outline steps.)

Is there another habit of mind that you would like to focus on this year? Explain how you will.

To be a successful student, it is important that you are challenged to meet your individual needs. Which class do you think is one where you feel most confident?

- ☐ English/Language Arts
- ☐ Math
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Other

Which class is one where you feel that you might need more support to grow?

- ☐ English/Language Arts
- ☐ Math
- ☐ Social Studies
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Other

Additional comments (optional)

Additional Parent/Guardian Resources

California Association for the Gifted (CAG):

CAG is an organization for both teachers and parents/guardians of students identified as GATE.

Website: www.CAGifted.org

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

NAGC staff and leaders support and develop policies and practices that encourage and respond to the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. NAGC supports and engages in research and development, staff development, advocacy, communication, and collaboration with other organizations and agencies that strive to improve the quality of education for all students.

Website: www.nagc.org

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page

There are many resources and links to help parents/guardians support their child.

Website: www.hoagiesgifted.org

Directory

District GATE Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Kannenberg	Director of Assessment and Accountability	949-497-7700
Kimberly Voge	District GATE Coordinator	949-497-7780
Annie Bochenek	EMS GATE Coordinator	949-497-7780
Marie Bammer	TOW GATE Coordinator	949-497-7790
Kimberly Mattson	TMS GATE Coordinator	949-497-7780