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Advanced Learning | Talent Development Program

A message for families about how we support your child next year

Dear Families,

We know that when it comes to supporting your student's academic growth, the details matter and we want to be clear and direct with you about what is changing, what is staying the same, and why we believe these changes will benefit students.

We are moving from a traditional Gifted and Talented (GT) model toward a Talent Development (TD) model, guided by Minnesota's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MnMTSS). This shift is not a reduction in services, it is a redesign of how we deliver them, so that every student with advanced learning needs receives support that is intentional, data-driven, and documented.

> *Your student will still receive support. What changes is how that support is planned, delivered, and tracked so we can be sure it is actually working.*

What is the Talent Development Model?

A Talent Development model recognizes that every student has strengths worth developing and that students who demonstrate advanced ability or potential deserve consistent, research-based instruction, not just enrichment that looks different depending on which building they attend.

Rather than giving students a label like 'gifted' and delivering support based on that label, we use ongoing data to identify what students need and match them with the right level of support, from classroom enrichment all the way to individualized, intensive instruction. Supports are organized into three tiers:

TIER 1
All students

Enrichment and differentiation for every classroom

Your student's classroom teacher, supported by the Advanced Learning Teacher, will use flexible grouping, higher-order thinking tasks, and differentiated instruction to challenge all students within the regular school day. The Advanced Learning Teacher partners with classroom teachers through co-planning, modeling, and professional development to support the quality of instruction district-wide.

TIER 2
Targeted students

Targeted, data-based instruction in small groups

Students who demonstrate advanced performance or potential in literacy will receive targeted instruction during WIN (What I Need) time Students. 4th and 5th grade students who demonstrate mastery of standards in upcoming math units will receive acceleration within that specific mathematical strand. Groups are based on current data and shift throughout the year as student needs change. In grades 3–5, the Advanced Learning Teacher provides direct instruction. In K–2, the focus is on supporting classroom teachers to differentiate effectively within the classroom.

⏱ *3rd–5th Grade Literacy WIN groups: 90 min/week · 4th–5th Grade Math groups: 120 min/week*

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TIER 3 Intensive services

Deliberate, individualized instruction with goals and data

Students performing at the 98th percentile and above, and students identified as Twice Exceptional (2e — meaning they have both advanced ability and a learning difference), will receive structured, intentional instruction aligned to their specific strengths and needs. This is new for next year: rather than random or inconsistent support that looks different at every school, Tier 3 students will have goal-setting conversations, interest surveys, and tracked progress data.

Weekly scheduled time: 45 min · Includes goal-setting, interest surveys, and progress monitoring

What is new for 2026–2027?

Here is what will be different and better for students with advanced learning needs next year:

- Students in the 98th percentile and above will receive deliberate, scheduled instruction not just access to harder worksheets.
- Twice Exceptional (2e) students will receive targeted instruction aligned with their Special Education goals, planned in collaboration with their special education team.
- Goal-setting and interest surveys will be used for Tier 3 students, so instruction reflects who they are as learners, not just where they score on a test.
- Support will be consistent across all buildings, with a clear plan attached to every student receiving Tier 3 services.

A note about staffing

In some buildings, the amount of time an Advanced Learning Teacher is present will be different from previous years. Each building will be served by an Advanced Learning Teacher at 0.5 FTE (half-time).

> *Less time in the building does not mean less support for your student. It means the time that exists is fully planned, clearly structured, and tied to your student's actual data and goals.*

In the past, what happened during 'gifted time' could look very different depending on which school a student attended and which teacher was providing the service. Some students received meaningful challenge; others received time that wasn't clearly connected to their needs. We are fixing that by designing a consistent model with defined time blocks, documented goals, and tracked outcomes.

How the Advanced Learning Teacher's time is used each week	
3rd, 4th & 5th Grade Literacy WIN groups	**90 minutes**
4th & 5th Grade Math groups	**120 minutes**
Tier 3: 98th percentile & 2e students	**45 minutes**
Tier 1: Primary grade support (K–2)	**55 minutes**
Lesson planning & data review (prep)	**50 minutes**

Your questions are welcome

We understand this is a change, and change can bring questions. Please reach out to your building principal, advanced learning teacher or the District MnMTSS/Talent Development Coordinator if you would like to talk through how this model applies to your student specifically.

We are committed to being transparent about how decisions are made, how students are identified for each tier of support, and how you can stay informed about your student's progress within this model.

Thank you for your partnership. We are building something better for students and your student is the reason why.

Sincerely,

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