

# Stafford Township Public Schools

## Gifted and Talented Program



## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Stafford Township School District is to promote excellence in an environment that engages students in meaningful learning experiences. In partnership with students, dedicated staff, families, and community, the district provides a strong educational foundation that will empower our students to:

- Achieve their unique potential
- Embrace self-directed, lifelong learning
- Develop the skills necessary for appropriate risk-taking and responsible decision-making
- Respect themselves and others
- Problem-solve individually and collaboratively
- Become contributing members of a diverse, global society

## **Gifted and Talented Curriculum Committee Members**

- Nadine Burgess
- Ann Chiodi
- Noreen Gale
- Emily Johnson
- Jannett Pacheco
- Carolann Pfeiffer
- Kelly Reese
- Anne Reilly
- Timothy Serabian
- Jenny Ulbricht

## Vision

The Stafford Township School District Gifted and Talented program fosters a love of learning. We believe in a program where each student's passion can be explored.

We are committed to a model that values differentiated instruction, one in which classroom teachers work to tailor instruction and content to match student ability level. Our Gifted and Talented program is designed to address the unique social and emotional needs of students by promoting self-understanding, awareness of needs, and cognitive and affective growth.

We hope to inspire and support this special group of learners to embrace challenges and opportunities.

The intent of all levels of Gifted and Talented programming is to honor the "whole child, every child" in developing student competencies that forge lifelong learners and create Global and World changers!

The Stafford Township School District believes that meeting the needs of all students is paramount to providing a thorough and efficient education. Our goal is to empower students to reach their highest potential; physically, academically, emotionally and socially. Students will find the challenge and support needed to help them function in a world that requires:

- Competence in academics and the arts;
- Excellence in communications;
- Adaptability, creativity, and critical thinking;
- Valuing of diversity; and
- Development of character

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) in ELA, Mathematics, and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), are intended to promote higher levels of learning for all students, emphasizing analytical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills. These standards provide a rigorous framework for instruction at each grade level in terms of content and progression of skills. As gifted and talented students typically grasp curriculum concepts more quickly and deeply than peers their age, they also need additional learning experiences that extend and enrich the standards and require students to apply complex, creative, and innovative thinking to authentic problems.

In order to identify and provide for the many diverse talents of our students, we have developed an enrichment triad model for grades 3-6. This model has been adapted from Joseph Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Program and is based upon the Enrichment Triad Model, which was developed and field tested over a ten year period throughout the United States and Canada (Renzulli, 1990). At the heart of the model is differentiation of instruction. The Enrichment Triad Model is based upon the following four general goals:

- To improve the extent and quality of enrichment for all students and promote excellence throughout the school environment;
- To provide various types and levels of enrichment to a broader spectrum of the school population than usually served in traditional gifted programs;
- To integrate the program within the classroom, with opportunities to enhance learning experiences in a collaborative pull-out setting;
- To minimize concerns about exclusiveness and the negative attitudes that are often expressed toward students participating in only special programs for the gifted.

## **Standards for Gifted and Talented**

The following standards are from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). These standards provide a framework in which to develop opportunities for gifted and talented students.

### **Standard 1: Learning and Development**

*Description:* Educators, recognizing the learning and developmental differences of students with gifts and talents, promote ongoing self-understanding, awareness of their needs, and cognitive and affective growth of these students in school, home, and community settings to ensure specific student outcomes.

### **Standard 2: Assessment**

*Description:* Assessments provide information about identification, learning progress and outcomes, and evaluation of programming for students with gifts and talents in all domains.

### **Standard 3: Curriculum & Instruction**

*Description:* Educators apply the theory and research-based models of curriculum and instruction related to students with gifts and talents and respond to their needs by planning, selecting, adapting, and creating culturally relevant curriculum and by using a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies to ensure specific student outcomes.

### **Standard 4: Learning Environments**

*Description:* Learning environments foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership in the 21st century to ensure specific student outcomes.

### **Standard 5: Programming**

*Description:* Educators are aware of empirical evidence regarding (a) the cognitive, creative, and affective development of learners with gifts and talents, and (b) programming that meets their concomitant needs. Educators use this expertise systematically and collaboratively to develop, implement, and effectively manage comprehensive services for students with a variety of gifts and talents to ensure specific student outcomes.

### **Standard 6: Professional Development**

*Description:* All educators (administrators, teachers, counselors, and other instructional support staff) build their knowledge and skills using the NAGC/CEC Teacher Standards for Gifted and Talented Education and the National Staff Development Standards. They formally assess professional development needs related to the standards, develop and monitor plans, systematically engage in training to meet the identified needs, and demonstrate mastery of standard. They access resources to provide for release time, 10 funding for continuing education, and substitute support. These practices are judged through the assessment of relevant student outcomes.

## What is Giftedness?

Although interpretations of the word “gifted” seem limitless, there are a handful of foundational definitions that may be categorized from conservative (related to demonstrated high IQ) to liberal (a broadened conception that includes multiple criteria that might not be measured through an IQ test).

### **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)**

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 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).

### **Federal Definition**

This definition is taken from the Javits Act, which provides grants for education programs serving bright children from low-income families:

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

### **U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) (1993)**

In the report titled National Excellence and Developing Talent, the term “gifted” was dropped. Their definition uses the term “outstanding talent” and concludes with the sentence:

“Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.”

### **State Definitions of Gifted and Talented**

Each state has its own definition of gifted and talented.

- The New Jersey Administrative Code’s (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1) definition of gifted and talented students states the following: “Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.”
- Code N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1(a)5ii requires all district boards of education to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students.

Gifted and talented students are those who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance and are identified by qualified teachers. These are students who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

**Characteristics of Giftedness**  
**(Below are only some of the characteristics)**

*Adapted from (Source: Janice Szabos, Challenge Magazine, 1989, Issue 34)*

<b>A Bright Student:</b>	<b>A Gifted Learner:</b>
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Is attentive	Is mentally and physically involved
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail, elaborates
Top group	Beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good memorizer	Good guesser
Enjoys sequential presentation	Thrives on complexity
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical

## Program Description

At the Tier I and II levels, differentiation, within the classroom, occurs on an ongoing basis in order to provide enrichment for all students. At the Tier III level, additional enrichment occurs, tailored to meet the needs of students identified as gifted and talented. This tier serves that percentage of students who exhibit high levels of ability, creativity, and task commitment in school activities and have been identified through the district's screening process.

Beginning in grade three, in addition to the differentiation that occurs for the gifted learner in the classroom, a supplemental pull-out program is utilized to enhance program offerings. This consists of instruction provided by the school's G & T teacher. Instruction is provided one and a half hours per week and can either be by grade level or multi-grades, based on individual student needs. The goal of this instruction is to bring together gifted students in order to collaborate and provide opportunities for project-based learning that extends beyond grade level expectations.

At the middle school level (5-6), differentiation for the gifted learner continues to occur throughout the school day by content area teachers. In addition, gifted students are pulled together for instruction, by grade level, two periods a week, during science and social studies periods. This instruction is performed by the G & T teacher.

The curriculum for the pull-out program was developed to coincide with the four marking periods that occur throughout the school year. It offers students an accelerated understanding and application of knowledge in the following three areas of study:

1. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics)
2. Humanities (Literacy, Technology & Social Studies)
3. Self-Selected Learning (Choose Your Own Adventure)

Program goals are as follows:

- Develop and enhance critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills
- Accommodate individual learning styles and interests, while challenging students' cognitive abilities
- Encourage local, national, and global awareness through inquiry-based research of real-world issues/concepts
- Promote effective communication skills through public speaking and writing
- Foster collaborative relationships through team investigations and challenges



## **Overview of Enrichment Triad Tier Model**

While differentiation is a hallmark of good instruction and expected in every class for all disciplines, the Enrichment Triad Model provides additional opportunities to enhance student learning. The Enrichment Triad Model provides for three tiers of enrichment:

- Tier I: Whole Group Curriculum Extensions
- Tier II: Individualized Curriculum Opportunities
- Tier III: Gifted and Talented Program

Tier I and II involve all students in enrichment opportunities. Tier III is designed for students identified as being gifted and talented in one or more academic areas.

### **Tier I: Whole Group Curriculum Extensions**

Tier I includes general exploratory experiences for all students designed to provide exposure to critical thinking and problem-solving opportunities within a variety of novel topics, ideas, and fields of knowledge. This type of enrichment is implemented into various planned activities throughout the school day. Enrichment is also built into multi-leveled tasks and projects within each discipline of our board approved K-6 curriculum.

In addition to participation in open-ended, multi-leveled tasks within each of the disciplines, the following programs are also examples of Tier I enrichment:

- Assemblies
- Classroom interest centers
- Field trips/ Virtual field trips
- Guest speakers
- Interdisciplinary instruction
- Projects
- Related arts units
- School-wide projects/activities
- Use of multimedia technology
- STEAM labs
- Arbor Day essay contest
- Poster contests (Arbor Day & Fire Safety)
- Student government Day
- Anti-bullying assemblies
- Safety
- Math league
- Peer leader
- Project Aware (6th grade)

## **Tier II: Individualized Curriculum Opportunities**

Tier II enrichment enhances general classroom differentiation through individualized opportunities to explore curriculum concepts. It assists all students in refining and enriching their individual development of higher order thinking processes.

Tier II opportunities vary by grade level, both in and out of the classroom. Some Tier II activities are embedded in the specific components of the daily schedule for all students (e.g., Reader's Workshop, choice time). Other activities occur weekly for students, and are based on ability or interest.

In addition to participation in open-ended, problem-solving tasks within each of the disciplines, the following programs are also examples of Tier II enrichment:

- After school clubs
- Math groups
- Choice courses
- Welcome buddies
- Peer leader
- Band
- Jazz band
- Strings
- Chorus
- Math league
- Safety
- Plays
- Student government day
- Ocean County Math League Contest

### **Tier II Program Criteria**

The following goals have been developed for Tier II enrichment activities and/or courses of study. These goals represent characteristics of intelligent behaviors adapted from the work of Arthur Costa and focus on the development and extension of these characteristics over time. These include:

- Persistence/persevering
- Listening to others
- Flexibility in thinking
- Metacognition: awareness of own thinking
- Checking for accuracy and precision
- Ingenuity, originality, insightfulness: creativity
- Depth of understanding/insight applying prior knowledge/making connections

These characteristics form the basis of course evaluation and student assessment in Tier II.

### **Tier III: Gifted and Talented Program**

Tier III enrichment involves students who have been identified as gifted and talented based on district criteria. This tier serves that small percentage of students who exhibit high levels of ability, creativity, and task commitment in school activities (Renzulli, 1978). The goal of this tier is to enable students to become more independent, self-directed learners, leaders, and contributors to local and global society. Individuals who participate in Tier III enrichment are offered opportunities to explore real world problems via self-identified tasks. This tier provides students with challenging and engaging instruction, materials, and collaboration to meet specific needs in varied academic curricula.

The district honors the students creativity during the Gifted and Talented family night.

## **Stafford Township School District Gifted and Talented Program Identification/Selection Process**

Stafford Township uses multiple measures to determine if a student meets the criteria for the Gifted and Talented program when compared to grade level peers. This is an ongoing process throughout the school year. Nominations can originate from teachers, parents and community members during the nomination period. Report card grades are reviewed before nominated students are informed with a formal nomination letter. The recommendation for participation in the program is reevaluated annually by the current classroom teachers. Students must maintain A's and B's in all subject areas to remain in the program.

Students transferring into the district who were eligible for, or were active participants in a Gifted and Talented program in their previous district, will be considered upon entry into the Stafford Township school district. The principal or classroom teacher will review the documentation of the student's participation in or eligibility from their previous district's program. The student's records, including any achievement test scores, will be reviewed. Review and notification process will follow as described in this section of the document.

### **Screening/Assessment Process**

A student profile is used to identify those students who perform at remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to their age, peers, experience, or environment. The criteria used will be a combination of qualitative and quantitative instruments which include the following:

- Performance in Testing- **InView Test** (2nd Grade students only) is a cognitive abilities aptitude test that measures verbal reasoning, sequences, analogies, and quantitative reasoning.
- DRA Level and/or Achieve 3000 Lexile Level
- Report Card Grades (all subject areas)
- I-Ready Diagnostic End of Year for Reading and Mathematics
- Teacher Recommendation- Classroom teachers are to complete the Recommendation for Gifted and Talented Teacher's Checklist for any student that meets the criteria for the Gifted and Talented program. (No Cs on report cards)

A rubric score is utilized to establish an entrance criteria into the Gifted and Talented program. Students going into third grade must score between 12 to 14 points on the rubric. Students going into fourth through sixth grade must score 15 to 17 points on the rubric.

## **Selection Process**

The student profile identifies the student's strengths and weaknesses. The percentiles and/or scores from the assessment instruments are plotted on the student profile. Each student's profile is individually evaluated by the Gifted/Talented Selection Committee through a blind (no name) process. The decision is based on the committee's observation of the preponderance of the evidence on the student's profile.

The selection committee consists of teachers, administrators, and parents. All committee members are trained in nature and needs of gifted students. The selection committee makes a professional judgment based on the recorded student profile data. As the committee evaluates the data on the students who were nominated, the committee has three options:

- The preponderance of profile data indicates the student would benefit from the services offered in the Gifted/Talented program and services will be offered to meet the educational needs of the student.
- There is insufficient evidence in the documentation at this time, indicating the student's educational needs would best be met by the Gifted/Talented program. The preponderance of evidence indicates the student's educational needs would best be served with the services of the regular curriculum.
- Further information is requested for the committee to make a placement decision.

Once the identification process is complete, parents or guardians are notified of the Selection Committee's decision via U.S. Mail. Parents, of all screened students, may request a conference to examine their child's assessment results. Request should be made through the student's home campus.