



GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Handbook

Revised 2017

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MISSION STATEMENT

Educators of the Fort Smith Public Schools are committed to providing a rigorous academic environment to meet the educational needs of advanced learners. Gifted programming is an ongoing process through which we develop the emerging strengths of each identified student in intellect, motivation, and creativity. By offering differentiated instruction and opportunities, the students will become competent and productive citizens.

DEFINITIONS

Federal Javits Act: 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.

National Association for Gifted Children: Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude or competence in one or more domains when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment.

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 and/or motivation, and creative ability.

See also "Common Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students" on the webpage.

PERSONNEL

Selection Process

Open positions will be advertised on the district website in the Human Resources section.

Candidates must meet licensure qualifications as well as must be able to model the cognitive, creative, and leadership qualities the program develops in students. Strong instructional skills are expected.

Candidates selected from the pool of applicants will be interviewed by at least the Executive Director for Human Resources (if not already employed in the district), one principal, and the Supervisor of Special Programs. Other appropriate people may be invited to participate in the interview.

Qualifications

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. Specialists who are working on a gifted endorsement will have a completed Additional Licensure Plan on file with the district and state gifted offices 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 Training Plan on file with the district and state gifted offices. AP teachers will have their course syllabi approved by 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.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Gifted Specialist will

- Advocate for the needs of gifted students,
- Participate in professional development opportunities to remain current in practices and resources for gifted students,
- Keep accurate documentation regarding identification, student attendance, provision of services, and communication.
- Assess program candidates using district approved instruments,
- Chair the Building Level Review Team,
- Interpret and communicate assessment results with staff and parents,
- Collaborate with other district gifted specialists in developing lessons to meet the needs of identified students,
- Locate, plan, and utilize a variety of material, technological, and human resources appropriately and in good stewardship to achieve lesson goals,
- (Secondary) prepare and submit materials requests which appropriately utilize supply funds in a fiscally responsible manner,
- Facilitate enriching and advanced lessons and experiences designed to meet individual student academic needs and interests,
- Accurately and fairly evaluate student progress on meeting program and content goals,
- Communicate feedback and evaluation data on an ongoing basis with students and parents,
- Serve as a consultant and provide resources for regular classroom teachers who have gifted students,
- Communicate on an ongoing basis program and lesson objectives and activities with school and district staff and parents,
- Conduct professional development for staff in the district and/or school as needed,
- Participate in Advisory Council meetings,
- Inform students and parents of enrichment opportunities which are extra-curricular and hosted by either the school or another educational agency,
- Conduct activities eliciting input from various stakeholders for program evaluation, and
- Assist the gifted coordinator in the performance of his/her duties.

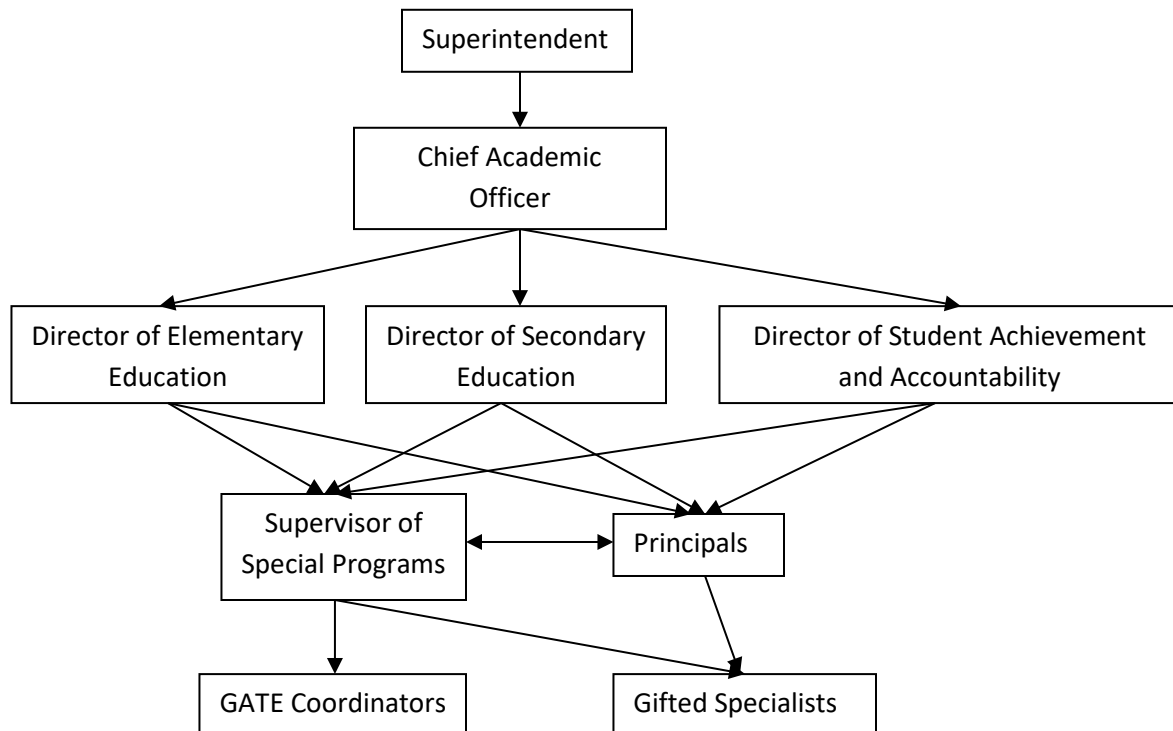
Gifted Coordinator will

- Assure that all documentation is completed accurately by the specialists and records are maintained appropriately,
- Collaborate with the other coordinator and the program administrator in completion of the Program Application each year,
- Consult with the other coordinator and the program administrator in an annual program evaluation and envisioning/implementation for program improvement,

- Coordinate with the Supervisor of Special Programs and specialists on professional development needs,
- Provide information and resources to include on the district gifted webpage,
- Plan and facilitate Advisory Council meetings, and
- Communicate student achievements and program activity highlights to the district Elementary Director, Secondary Director, Student Achievement and Accountability Director, Supervisor of Special Programs, and Executive Director of Communication and Community Partnerships.
- (Elementary Coordinator) complete and submit for processing any materials requests.

Supervisor of Special Programs will

- Assure that the program meets compliance criteria for state rules and regulations and national standards,
- Maintain accurate and complete records documenting achievement of state rules and regulations regarding gifted education,
- Accurately code identified students in the district electronic database,
- Collect and interpret student data for evaluation purposes,
- Conduct meetings with coordinators for program evaluation and planning,
- Consult with building and district administrators on program needs,
- Oversee the program budgets and approve expenditures,
- Supervise the district webpage on gifted education,
- Participate in interviews and selection of specialists and coordinators, and
- Conduct classroom visits of specialists providing feedback on curriculum and instruction.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The district will provide funding and released time to support professional development.

Gifted Specialists:

- Will participate in all state and district required professional development trainings, and
- Will participate in ongoing professional development specific to the needs of gifted students (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, and/or
 - Lists of resources and websites.

General Classroom Teachers and Administrators:

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

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

Advanced Placement and Pre-Advanced Placement Teachers:

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

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The district appreciates the resources of our parents and community members.

- Representative parents and community members will be invited to participate on the Advisory Council along with the 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:

- GATE page on the district website,
- Newsletters (electronic and/or print),
- Teacher protopages accessible to all,
- E-mails or printed notes on student progress and highlights,
- Brochures on the program,
- Newspaper articles on student achievements or GATE learning activities, and
- Recognition of state-level academic competition winners at school board meetings.

When needed, forms and communication will be translated into another language for parents.

Parents may request an interpreter for meetings.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification for the GATE program is ongoing from grades K-12. Characteristics of gifted and talented children are communicated to parents, community members, and staff through the GATE webpage on the district website, professional development sessions, and brochures/forms at building open houses.

Throughout grades K-2 during gifted enrichment sessions and regular classroom learning activities, student strengths are observed and noted monthly by the gifted specialist and regular classroom teacher on the *Observation Inventory*. Names of students who appear frequently on these inventories are compiled for additional information and consideration in the identification process. Teachers are also encouraged to share with the gifted specialist copies of student work which exemplifies exceptional ability.

Referrals of students for the program may be made at any time of the year and in any year of the child's educational journey. A nomination may be submitted by a parent, a teacher or administrator, the student himself/herself, a community member, or a student-peer. The nomination process involves completion of a *Referral of Student for GATE Program* form and presenting it to any GATE specialist.

Identification Instruments

Administration of tests will occur at least twice each year. Instruments include:

- Otis Lennon School Ability Test (objective, includes a non-verbal section)
- Cognitive Abilities Test (objective, includes a non-verbal section)
- Abbreviated SIGS (subjective)
- Slocumb-Payne Rating Scale by teacher(s) (subjective)
- Williams' Exercise in Divergent Thinking (objective)

Also considered are student grades, scores on other criterion-referenced and norm-referenced tests, comments from *Referral* form and *Parent Questionnaire*, and data from the *Observation Inventories* (if available).

Identification Procedure

The process is as follows:

1. Identification information and referral forms will be available at all times on the GATE webpage and through the specialist; information and forms will also be made available at school open houses.
2. A few weeks prior to each testing, the GATE specialist will inform staff (through a variety of avenues) of the testing event and request referrals. Reference will be made to the characteristics of gifted and talented students.
3. A *Notice of Program Referral* and *Description of the GATE Program* are sent to parents. GATE specialist secures a completed *Permission for Comprehensive Assessment* Prior to administering any assessments.

4. GATE specialist administers the tests and compiles results on the *Student Profile Summary* and *Student Profile Supplemental Information* forms.
5. Students having an IEP will be allowed those testing accommodations on the GATE identification assessments. Students who are ELL will be allowed the testing accommodations noted on their Individual English Language Acquisition Plan during GATE identification assessments.
6. Student data on these forms is anonymous when presented to the Building Level Review Team to remove bias. Student names are not included but are given an identifying code for a blind screening.
7. Student information relevant to interpreting the scores (learning disability and English language learner status) are included on the form. More weight may be placed on non-verbal scores for certain populations.
8. GATE specialist convenes the Building Level Review Team consisting of a minimum of a building administrator, two classroom teachers, the counselor, and the GATE specialist.
9. The student profiles are considered holistically without cut-scores. Placement decisions are made and recorded.
10. Parents are informed in writing of the placement decision; GATE specialists are available to explain scores to parents.
11. Students who do not qualify may be retested after one year for test validity.
12. GATE specialist provides a program orientation session for the parents of identified students and secures their signature(s) for placement.
13. Identified students usually begin participation in the GATE classes at the beginning of a semester.

Appeals

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

1. Person requests a conference with the gifted 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 the parent/staff member still disagrees with the committee decision after the explanations, a written *Placement Appeal* may be filed with the Supervisor of Special Programs.
3. The Supervisor of Special Programs will collect any further data which might assist in an identification decision including possible additional testing.
4. A Placement Appeal Committee will be convened with at least five professional educators including a blend of original Building Level Review Team and new committee members. The person submitting an appeal has the right to address the Placement Appeal Committee, but he/she does not have the right to be present during the committee deliberation.
5. The decision of the Placement Appeal Committee will be based on multiple criteria. The decision will be communicated in writing to the person making the appeal. This decision will be final.

Within District Transfers

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

Leave the District and Return

If a student was in the GATE program in the Fort Smith Public Schools, moves out of district and then returns, his/her assessment data (if less than a year old) will be considered again by the Building Level Review Team. Test scores older than one year will require going through the entire identification procedure again.

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. Scores less than one year old will be considered if resulting from tests similar to those utilized by the FSPS identification process. If scores are older than one year or tests are not equivalent, the student will go through the entire identification procedure.

Annual Review

Student placement continuation is considered every year in late spring based on the student's performance toward GATE goals. The GATE specialist completes the *Annual Review* form on each student. At the junior high level, students are expected to participate in a minimum number of two pre-AP courses for continued placement. High school students must complete the requirements for an honors diploma. Lack of performance and/or inappropriate behavior in the regular classroom is not an automatic determination of exit from the GATE program.

Exit

Occasionally, a student no longer evidences need for the program or placement no longer seems to be in the best interest of the student according to ADE Standards 7.05. Prior to exiting the program, the gifted specialist should have implemented the following:

- At least two conversations with the parent(s) and student about the student's lack of interest, performance, and/or behavior in the GATE class, and
- An *Improvement Plan* or a change in programming/service delivery drafted in consultation with the student and parent(s), and
- Time allocated in which to see improvement.

If efforts have not led to improvement, the Building Level Review Team will consult and sign an *Exit* form. Exit will be implemented immediately upon the decision.

Parent signature on a secondary course enrollment form where the student is not meeting pre-AP/AP expectations will constitute consent for program exit.

Furlough

A student, parent, or staff member may request a furlough from the program for a stated length of time not to exceed twelve months. The Building Level Review Team needs to approve any furlough. Reasons for a furlough could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Emotional problems or trauma stemming from self, school, or home,
- Prolonged illness preventing school attendance, or
- Inability to participate due to scheduling conflicts.

A furlough is not a disciplinary tool and should be granted without undue pressure or prejudice to the student. Re-entry may automatically occur at the end of the stated furlough period. If a student elects to exit the program at the end of the furlough, exit procedures will be followed.

PROGRAMMING

K-2nd Grades: Whole-Group Enrichment

Gifted specialists provide enrichment lessons once a month in each kindergarten through 2nd grade classroom. Introductory and/or follow-up lessons are provided to the classroom teacher.

During these enrichment lessons and throughout any learning experiences in the classroom, both the general classroom teacher and the gifted specialist note on an *Observation Inventory* the names of students who demonstrate exceptional critical and creative thinking skills. This information is utilized in identifying high-potential students to test for the GATE program.

Differentiation

The development of advanced potential requires differentiation in these ways:

- Learner—appropriate pace to rapidly assimilate content but also to allow reflection, pursuit of individual areas of interest, consideration for level of intensity and sensitivity
- Environment—with a trained specialist in gifted education and with peers of similar ability
- Curriculum (Content)—accelerated and enriched content, advanced complexity of material and skills, interdisciplinary
- Instruction (Process)—based on previous knowledge and experience, adapted to personal learning preference, and aimed at high cognitive levels. Students work to construct their own and new knowledge and make connections across disciplines using methods authentic to the disciplines.
- Assessment (Product)—targets authentic products shared with as authentic an audience as possible and which demonstrate high levels of thinking, problem solving, extension of content, and communication skills.

Grades 3-6: Resource Room Pull-Out

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

Classwork Policy Grades 3-6

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.

Grades 7-9

In addition to participation in pre-AP courses, identified students may elect to take a gifted class taught by a gifted specialist. The class meets daily. (See also Curriculum and Instruction sections). Students also have the option of participating in extracurricular academic competitions such as BEST Robotics and Quiz Bowl and leadership development in Junior National Honor Society.

Grades 7-12

All students have the opportunity to take pre-Advanced Placement (pre-AP) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the core content areas of English, math, science, and social studies with the goal of an honors diploma. Students taking AP courses may take the College Board AP exam in the spring; high scores on the exam may result in earning college credit for that course while in high school. A variety of extracurricular academic competition and leadership opportunities are provided.

CURRICULUM

Units of study will be aligned with the Western Arkansas Educational Service Cooperative K-12 Gifted and Talented Education Curriculum Frameworks, the Arkansas State Standards, and district expectations. Some choice in content and product will be provided to individualize for students. Pace and acceleration/scaffolding of content will be adjusted according to student need. The curriculum will be culturally responsive.

Learning will focus on developing:

- **Cognitive abilities within a discipline**
 - Understanding with conceptual depth,
 - Making connections,
 - Observing/perceiving with detail and insight,
 - Analyzing critically,
 - Considering multiple viewpoints,
 - Inferring beyond surface level,
 - Planning,
 - Discriminating,
 - Solving problems,
 - Questioning evidence and reasoning,
 - Researching authentically,
 - Summarizing and drawing conclusions, and
 - Assessing strengths and weaknesses or match to criteria.
- **Creative abilities within a discipline**
 - Comfort with ambiguity,
 - Comfort with diversity,
 - Curiosity,
 - Flexibility,
 - Willingness to take acceptable risks,
 - Desire for the unique or unusual, and
 - Sensitivity to environment, aesthetics, and ideas.
- **Social adjustment**
 - Identification and understanding of personal strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and interests,
 - Accept or change personal characteristics including perfectionism and under-achievement,
 - Establish personal priorities,
 - Practice considerate and respectful behavior,
 - Appreciate the strengths and contributions of others to work collaboratively, and
 - Understand benefits and limits of competition (win and lose graciously).
- **Leadership skills including habits of mind**
 - Ethical behavior,
 - Task commitment and perseverance,

- Drive for precision and accuracy,
- Drive to go beyond minimum requirements,
- Envision possibilities,
- Impulse control,
- Accept responsibility for one's actions, and
- Expending of efforts in constructive ways toward common good
- **Vocational and career awareness, and**
- **Effective communication through various media.**

INSTRUCTION

Instruction will both accelerate learning and enrich (extend and deepen) learning.

Instructional strategies will be founded on research of effective practice and be selected and adapted from a wide repertoire. Pre-assessment of student level in knowledge and skills will guide instructional decisions. The instructional process will be individualized based on student needs, preferences, and input.

Multiple and varied resources will be utilized to meet content standards and student needs.

The physical learning environment will be enriching and conducive to student learning needs and curricular goals. It will foster a shift in responsibility from teacher to student, provide access to advanced resources, encourage an inquiry approach, and promote the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning. The emotional learning environment will support trust, respect diversity, and value originality above conformity.

Groupings will be varied and flexible including opportunities for independent work.

Studies will result in products (of varying types and formats) which reflect authentic practice in the discipline, depth of investigation, and creative outcomes rather than reproductive exercises. Student work will be communicated in a quality presentation to an authentic audience.

Students will be provided with product assessment criteria in advance. Progress toward learning goals will be monitored by the student and the specialist with substantial formative assessment and guidance. Feedback will focus on effort and learning from failures rather than talents. Elementary students will receive a GATE report card each quarter; secondary students will receive a grade for the GATE class.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation will be an ongoing process responsive to needs and issues raised by any stakeholders.

Evaluation may target any component of the program including identification, professional development, goals and objectives of the program, programming options, curriculum, and community involvement.

- An annual review will be conducted of student achievement data from such sources as criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments and Advanced Placement exam results.
- Periodic examination of GATE program and Advanced Placement participation by demographics (e.g., race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, ELL status) will be conducted.
- Input from parents, staff, and students through questionnaires and/or focus groups along with the Advisory Council will be utilized in making any changes in programming.
- Gifted specialists will collaboratively evaluate effectiveness of units of study through discussion of student products and through comments sought from community review of products.

Evaluation results will be shared with district administrators and principals both informally and formally; community members and staff may view results on the district website.

MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

All print records of student information will be kept confidentially.

Parents will be granted permission to view their child's student records in the GATE folder. Access to testing documents will not be permitted.

Participation in the GATE program will be noted:

1. In the district electronic database,
2. In 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,
- Annual Review, and
- Any other relevant notes or documents.

Student records will be maintained securely until five years after the student has graduated from high school. Once that time has elapsed, documents will be securely shredded.

Gifted 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 five years by the Supervisor of Special Programs for review during state monitoring.