

EVALUATION OF THE PORT WASHINGTON GIFTED PROGRAM



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Evaluation of the Port Washington, New York Gifted Program
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Section I Introduction to the study

The purpose of this evaluation of the Port Washington Public Schools Gifted Program was to render recommendations for program and instructional improvement to move the program forward to the next level of excellence. Four key beliefs drove the evaluation: 1) the fundamental role of evaluation and review is to provide information that can be used to improve and advance gifted programs, 2) evaluation and review is a collaborative enterprise among various stakeholders and the consultant, 3) the use of multiple data sources helps to illuminate the complexity and salience of program issues that need to be considered, and 4) rational decision-making is mediated by values. Therefore, the nature and degree of change to be made in a program are influenced by the social and political variables at work in a given context.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the design and implementation of the gifted program evaluation. These questions provided multiple lenses for viewing the program:

1. To what extent is the gifted program being implemented according to its stated goals and objectives? Investigation of this question focused on describing and defining the current model of operation, including curriculum and instructional delivery, teacher quality, assessment, and student benefit.

2. To what extent is the district using best practices that would identify representative numbers of students from poverty? In what ways are underrepresented populations of students served once they are identified? Investigation of these questions involved analyzing data from the Report to the Board, done in 2016 on demographic profiles of PEP students, and conducting a comparative analysis of identification practices used in the district to best practices in the field of gifted education. Classroom observations, focus groups and selective interviews yielded additional data on program opportunities.

3. To what extent are instructional components of the program perceived to be effective by relevant stakeholders? Investigation of this question focused on assessing the perceptions of parents, teachers K-6, students in Grade 6, and administrators in the district, including principals on benefits and liabilities of relevant components of the program.

4. To what extent is the program aligned with best practices in the field of gifted education? Investigation of this question focused on assessing the congruence of the gifted program with the 97 best practices cited in the NAGC Program Standards.

5. What are the strengths and areas for improvement in the instructional component of the program? What are the recommendations for improvement in this area? Investigation of these questions focused on the triangulation of data collected and analyzed for Questions 1-3.

Study design

Data collected to investigate Question #1 involved both empirical and perceptual sources. Onsite visits to each school designated in the sampling plan were conducted at grade levels K-6.

Data collected to investigate Question #2 were classroom observations, the teacher focus group, and selective interviews in addition to analysis of existing demographic data available on underrepresented groups and best practices for identification.

Data used to address Question #3 were focus groups with parents, teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who provide direct and indirect services to gifted students, students in Grade 6 served by the program, and administrators.

Data collected to address Question #4 involved consultant expertise in conducting a discrepancy analysis between the P-12 gifted program standards from the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Port Washington Gifted Program to determine the alignment of best practices in the six areas of interest: Learning and Development, Assessment, Curriculum Planning and Development, Learning Environments, Programming, and Professional Development. Areas of strength as well as gaps were determined by this analysis.

Finally, Question #5 was addressed through the triangulation of all data sources probed in order to make valid inferences about the nature and scope of program strengths and weaknesses and recommendations to be suggested for an action plan.

Sampling procedures

The sampling plan for this evaluation study focused on classroom observations, using the structured form described in the instrumentation section, within Grades 1-5 at the elementary level, and Grade 6 at the middle school level. All elementary schools were visited with classrooms observed at Grades 3-6. The middle school PEP program at Grade 6 was also observed along with other selected classes. Eighteen observations were conducted in all, with four at the middle school sixth grade level.

Focus groups were held, comprised of stakeholders related to the program, purposefully organized into groups of 10-15. Final group size varied, based on attendance issues. Four focus groups were held, one of students at Grade 7, teachers, parents of students both in the program and not in the program, and administrators.

Finally, the evaluator analyzed the extent to which Port Washington is meeting the NAGC standards for programs in gifted education in consultation with the Assistant Superintendent.

Instrumentation

In order to assess instructional practice in the gifted program in Port Washington, it was necessary to employ an instrument for use in classrooms to observe instructional practice. The Classroom Observation Scale-Revised (COS-R) was used for this purpose. The COS-R is a 26-item instrument that assesses the extent to which teachers are employing practices of differentiation in their teaching. It has been used in several studies, with strong technical adequacy (.82 for inter-rater reliability). Content validity was established by an expert panel. See Appendix A for a copy of the instrument with tallies.

In addition, focus group questions were developed for use with stakeholder groups that probed the perceived effectiveness of the program in respect to key features such as identification, curriculum, and teacher effectiveness. Each group responded to the same core set of questions so that comparisons of responses might be made across groups. See Appendix B for a compilation of responses by stakeholder group.

A student benefit survey was administered to each of the ten students convened for the student focus group. The survey assessed the extent to which the major goals of gifted programs were being addressed in the program in Port Washington and the extent to which students felt the program was addressing them. Results of the survey are discussed in the student focus group findings (Section III) of the report.

Finally, the use of a structured checklist was employed to judge the program's congruence with best practice in gifted education nationally. This checklist indicated whether or not 97 indicators for 6 standards have been met by the program. Areas include learning and development, assessment, curriculum, professional development, programming, evaluation, and learning environments. See Appendix C for a completed copy of the checklist.

Data analysis and interpretation

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in the analysis of the data collected. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were used to present the classroom observation data. Data were aggregated across school sites and classrooms. Interpretation of the findings from the observations were made by the consultant to make recommendations, along with other data.

Content analyses and identification of patterns or themes were used to report findings from the focus groups. Discrepancy analysis was employed to assess compliance with the national program standards. Numerical tallies and qualitative analyses were used to report program discrepancies with national standards.

Recommendations and Reporting

The findings were reported by research question as well as by data source. Conclusions drawn regarding these questions were based on the support available across data sources.

Recommendations made to the district for program improvement in all aspects of the gifted program were based on these findings. While the study did not include the accelerated offerings at middle school or the high school options per se, I have included relevant data from these programs when it was available as the offerings at these levels impacts the thinking about the PEP program as well. For example, what is the talent trajectory for gifted students in the district and how might a PEP program be facilitative of more students doing advanced work at earlier levels?

Section II. Program Descriptions and Materials

The evaluator reviewed materials provided related to the program that consisted basically of online program descriptions, descriptions of selected advanced courses and the criteria employed for entry to these courses, and curriculum materials provided by PEP teachers. The identification process was provided for review as a separate document. Additionally, course guides for both the middle and high school were provided for review along with the 2016-18 Professional Development Plan. A slide show of 18-slides was provided on the topic of enrichment.

Current Program Description

Based on an analysis of committee reports for the past three years and conversations with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and with PEP teachers, the evaluator has discerned that the current program consists of:

- 1) Third grade assessment of students for the program which involves:
 - teacher completion of an evaluation form
 - an analysis of student MAP scores in achievement in reading and math, ensuring they meet 95% or higher
 - the administration of a nonverbal assessment test
 - upon meeting 3 out of four criteria, the administration of the WISC-5, with a cutoff score of 130 for qualification

Testing on the WISC-5 is outsourced to district psychologists. Other testing is done as a part of the district annual assessments. PEP teachers are responsible for the aggregation of data on students from each school.

- 2) The program officially begins in fourth grade as a pullout program, consisting of two hours and 15 minutes once a week with a trained resource teacher of the gifted. Fifth grade operates in a similar way and on a similar schedule. Students focus on self-selected units of study as the core basis of their curriculum across the year. Teachers provide additional enrichment, however, in the form of puzzles, games, and challenging activities, predominantly in math and science.
- 3) The program at sixth grade level continues in a similar way as far as content is concerned. A dedicated period on the regular middle school schedule is devoted to the PEP classes. The focus of sixth grade is on debate and social studies topics like the election. No continuation of formal core PEP group programming is offered beyond sixth grade.
- 4) Domain-specific programs are available by middle school for students in math, science, and art. Specific criteria are provided to govern the identification of students for each of these programs. An appeals process and exit procedures have also been worked out.

- 5) The high school program consists of honors projects in each core area at ninth and tenth grade, a research opportunity in 11-12th grades, and Advanced Placement coursework in selected areas at Grades 11 and 12.

History Timeline

The evaluator reviewed a timeline of the history of the PEP Program in Port Washington, which began as a pullout program in 1978, and steadily expanded to 1.0 FTE per building in 1989 where the PEP teacher both served a core group of identified students but also worked with regular classroom teachers. In 2003, the program further expanded to include lunchtime workshops and enhanced FTE per elementary buildings to 1.5. Weber maintained 2.0 positions. From 2004-2010, the program experienced cuts that led to a total of 6.0 FTE, one per building. In 2010, the core group services were eliminated for 7th and 8th grade. In 2012, the program was further reduced to 3.0 FTE staff, with requisite services also reduced. Most recent program redesign in 2016-17 has brought about a further reduction in resources allocated to the program.

The program was subject to self review in 1990, a BOCES review in 1996, a Teachers' College review in 2001, and an inside review and changes to the identification aspects of the program in 2015. These reviews (BOCES and TC) all suggested expansion of the program, coupled with greater articulation of the curriculum and its alignment to the regular program curriculum. The report recommendations also suggested more emphasis on professional development of regular classroom teachers in gifted education and more "spillover" gifted opportunities for regular students in classrooms. The latest iteration of the PEP program, that of clustering students in one school for the delivery of services, was initiated in the fall of 2016. This action coincided with the onsite review of the program, conducted during the last week of September.

General curriculum emphases

The curriculum base in the district employs high level materials that are commonly used in other districts across the country. The use of the Teachers' College materials in language arts, and the Singapore math series (*Math in Focus*) are examples of such materials. Although they do not constitute differentiated materials for the gifted per se, they provide a strong basis in the fundamentals of the subjects they are addressing. The use of these programs provides a base on which to build a further defined program of studies for advanced learners. Used flexibly, these materials are strong tools to promote such opportunities. In the case of the writing approach used in the district, the professional development provided has stressed the opportunity for student choice in writing strategies employed as well as topics, time to write in class, followed by individual consultation. These approaches provide opportunities for differentiation in strategy, topic, and questions asked by the teacher, all possible ways that may benefit a gifted learner. In respect to the professional development in math, the consultant has focused on the topics to be studied and the problem-solving techniques to be employed, again providing gifted learners with opportunities to study important topics and skills in mathematics.

The issue is one of whether these materials on their own provide sufficient challenge for all gifted learners at the requisite stages of development. Typically, they do not as has been seen in at least one classroom in the district where the teacher was engaged in greater use of differentiation in math for her top students.

The district has initiated a STEM program entitled Project Lead the Way that has involved one of the PEP teachers in training during the summer of 2016 in addition to four regular classroom teachers, with the intent of implementing “push-in” whole class enrichment in Grades 2-3 this academic year. The program features the use of hands-on instruction and collaborative problem-solving. The program’s 10-hour modules are flexible and customizable and can be implemented independently or in tandem with one another, in each of the elementary grade levels. The program is aligned to the Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS) and the CCSS in language arts and mathematics. Again, the implication is that such a program is sufficient for gifted learners at the elementary level. Since hands-on science is so desirable for all learners, it is difficult to suggest that the program is not appropriate for the gifted. Observations of this program suggest that the move to make this the enrichment emphasis for Grades 2 and 3 has merit. Use of cluster grouping within these classrooms might further enhance its effectiveness with these learners.

PEP Curriculum

The curriculum materials for the PEP program consist of unit outlines developed by teachers on selected topics and other materials related to individual class sessions. There does not appear to be a scope and sequence in the program from Grades 4-6. Content specialists operate the programs in the subject-specific areas at Grades 7-12. The information on the PEP program curriculum was obtained from teachers in the program from printouts from the website and from the Assistant Superintendent.

PEP program goals focus on the:

- development of thinking skills, especially creative thinking skills
- self esteem
- independent learning
- collaboration
- public speaking and communication skills
- metacognitive skills
- conversational skills
- individual responsibility and accountability
- technology use

Second and third grade PEP

Second and third grade “gifted level opportunities” are provided by the PEP staff within the regular classroom. They consist of units on mystery festival and coding at Grade 2. STEM challenge activities from Project Lead the Way (PLTW) are also provided weekly for up to eight weeks. Engineering and visual thinking activities are provided at Grade 3. No core group opportunities for gifted learners are provided at these grade levels, however.

Fourth and fifth grade PEP

Unit topics for Grades 4 and 5 include the following:

Grade 4--DNA, cells, biodiversity, genetics, codes and ciphers, deductive reasoning, optics, computer coding and robotics, and Math Olympiad.

Grade 5—Economics and the stock market game, engineering, computer coding and robotics, and Math Olympiads

Sixth grade PEP

The sixth grade PEP program has a 6-page description of its operation from the years 2011-12, which was reviewed by the evaluator. The program had 65 students who met for one period on alternating A/B days. The curriculum consisted of several components that included:

-- a section on play that used the topics of fun with physics and toys, Newton’s Laws of Motion, advertising analysis and development, and commercial creations,

--a section on ideal city creation (world or city) that involved the use of analysis, creation, and presentation skills,

A short description follows:

Students do a group project on civilizations, being asked to create their own according to a set of specifications and selected topics. They create a brochure, a report, a poster, and/or a PowerPoint presentation. Parents and students are provided the grade sheet ahead of time and sign off on the dimensions of the project required. The work on the civilization project consists of 10 sessions of 41 minutes each, according to the PEP teacher interviewed.

--a section on “going green “ inventions to help the environment that also involve analyzing the related consumer protection laws,

--creating public service announcement videos,

--educational game design, with beta testing, and

--contest opportunities.

In discussions with current teachers in the sixth grade program, there will now be a major emphasis this year on debate skills in the program, with students deciding on debate topics of interest. Sample topics might be:

Should we have state tests?

Should students have homework?

Should we have online programs instead of books?

Should there be clubs where you can do extra languages?

Should the government invest in more alternative energy sources?

Students will choose a topic and do the research in preparation for the debate. A focus on the election this year is also planned.

The current course guide description of the 6th grade program reads as follows:

The Port Enrichment Program (PEP) of Weber Middle School is a 6th grade program that promotes the ideals of creative critical thinking, effective problem solving, and the true value of discovery learning. By providing our students opportunities for enrichment, we strive to develop students' ownership within their educational experiences. Our goal is to develop a balance between independence and interdependence that will guide students toward a genuine appreciation for learning as a lifelong process.

Weber PEP focuses on enrichment for students through high levels of engagement and the use of enjoyable and challenging learning experiences that are constructed around students' interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression.

Lunch-time enrichment at Weber

Students also have access to lunch School-wide Enrichment sessions, open to all students in Grades 6-8. These sessions in the past (2011) focused on particular topics of choice by students including code breakers and makers, star book-making, junk to jewelry, and Math Olympiad competitions and contests. Other artistic opportunities have also been provided in art and literature. The current status of these enrichment sessions is unclear since the cuts this school year.

It appears that the Math Olympiad option will continue for all interested students at Grades 6-8. The focus of the program is on non- algorithmic problem-solving and provides five tests per year for students to compete on world-wide. This option is provided over the student lunch hour on a voluntary basis for all interested middle school students.

Student products from 4th grade

The evaluator reviewed three student products produced in the fourth grade PEP program. Each of the products was done by individual or teams of two students. The projects focused on the creation of a civilization, done according to a set of criteria that the students could create. Each of the three reviewed included a half page commentary on at least five areas such as language, transportation, the arts, government, laws, and occupations. Two out of the three were power point presentations. The third was a self-contained book of writings. Students had done class presentations on their work.

Project titles included:

--Itopia

--Legend of In Between

--My City

Each product had been judged, using a rubric for providing feedback to students. Criteria for judgment emphasized creativity, research, presentation attractiveness, mechanics of the writing, and cooperation of group members. The projects took three months to do during the school year. They are considered exemplary of PEP project work assigned. The work was done in class, not as homework.

PEP Scheduling

A new model for core group instruction was implemented the week of this review. As previously stated, students in grades 4 and 5 from three elementary schools were bused to a central location (i.e. Sousa Elementary School) for core group activities for 2.5 hours weekly. One PEP teacher is assigned to cover the sixth grade program at Weber, which is embedded in the regular schedule, meeting on alternate days for 41-minute periods. At Grades 4 and 5, students congregate at Sousa for one 135 minutes per week session while students at South Salem elementary school receive core group instruction in their own school. A primary PEP teacher shares responsibility across all schools for whole class enrichment sessions at second and third grade levels.

The secondary domain-specific opportunities for gifted learners (Grades 7-12)

The PEP program per se currently ends at Grade 6, with the students being able to choose to apply for advanced work in selected content areas that begin at varying levels of the middle school experience.

All secondary programs in Port Washington that provide opportunities for gifted learners are run by specialist teachers within the core subject areas and departments at the high school level. The one exception is the Grade 6 PEP program described earlier in this report.

Middle school

Middle school offerings include Advanced Math at Grades 7-8, Art at Grade 8, and Earth Science at Grade 8. Since the programs have their own identification systems and course syllabi, students identified for the earlier PEP program may or may not qualify. The technology department also provides individualized advanced instruction across the middle school years that is based on student mastery of skills.

The criteria for entry into the advanced math, science and art programs at middle school level are set by content specialists and a committee of teachers and administrators as are placement and selection procedures with approval by the building principal and assistant superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Each program is described as “accelerated” and requires a test in the subject area for entry purposes, with cut off scores designated at the 80% level. In science, the use of a test that focuses on analytical science skills, math competency and English expression in addition to quarterly grades in 7th grade relevant subjects are the criteria employed. In math, a test of general math knowledge, problem solving, independent learning, and mathematical competency governs placement along with satisfactory grade level performance in 6th grade in math. Very advanced students may double skip grades in order to begin high school with both Algebra and Geometry credits accrued (a practice currently not in use).

Graduation credit is awarded for Algebra I in math and Earth Science in science if students maintain a B average throughout their accelerated program experience. A description of the accelerated Regents Earth Science course follows:

By means of numerous laboratory investigations, students study the basic processes and principles that produce changes in the Earth’s crust, atmosphere, oceans, and surface. Theoretical aspects of the subject are covered through class work, hands-on laboratory activities, mathematical abstractions, field work, and independent investigations. The course is rigorous and fast-paced with math, physics, and chemistry integrated throughout the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on the development of critical thinking skills including the use of charts and graphs.

In art, a student–developed portfolio of four pieces is assessed on the criteria of observational skills, control of media, composition, creativity and imagination. There is also a performance-based art exam, consisting of three drawing tasks. A full (1.0) or half (.5) high school credit is given for the 8th grade course, designated as Foundations of Studio Art and counts as an Art credit or an elective, depending on the course option selected. Credit designation is determined by the level of performance on the qualifying criteria and the spaces available in each section (N=24).

Program curricula or texts for these courses were not available for review. However, the evaluator did review the course guides from both the middle and high schools. In each guide,

there was a listing of courses designed for gifted learners as designated by their titles (eg. Regents Earth Science) or honors projects or Advanced Placement. Each offering that carried such a designation was described as being advanced and therefore appropriate for gifted learners in that dimension. All offerings are designed, using New York State curriculum guidelines. Courses are designed by teachers and approved by the district committee with administrative oversight.

High school opportunities

High school level options include the research program for Grades 10-12, offered in the social sciences, math, and science, and Advanced Placement courses in selected subjects, offered at Grades 11 and 12. Advanced courses are offered in the arts as well up to the AP options of Studio Art and Art History. Honors courses are offered in both math and science at Grades 10 and beyond. Both the honors program and the research program stress independent work in an area of interest, with a culminating portfolio or project to illustrate growth.

Satisfaction surveys have been sent to graduates of the research component of the Port Washington program, based on teacher submission of names (N=70). A 27% return rate yielded interesting results, suggesting that half of the students who responded (N=12) would recommend the program to others. Individual students commented on the utility of the program for work at post secondary levels. One student suggested expanding the program down to freshman year in order to provide more time for building the critical research skills learned.

Earlier evaluation/program review reports

Two reports were reviewed in respect to the gifted program in Port Washington. One of these was done by BOCES in 1996, and one done last year by your Assistant Superintendent. No other evaluation or status reports on the program were available for review.

The 1996 review noted several findings about the program that were useful to review:

--that parents who had children in PEP held different views from parents who did not have students in the program as one might expect, given a general lack of understanding about the program to begin with. Survey data showed these differences in respect to attitudes about the efficacy of identification practices, the benefit of the program for all students, and the access of PEP experiences for all. Non-PEP parents saw the identification process as flawed and both access and benefits of the program to all not a reality.

--that PEP students performed well in high school and beyond on core subject achievement and non-core curriculum participation and leadership

--that strong collaboration existed between PEP teachers and regular staff

--that the PEP program activities were of high quality and the teaching consistent with recommended best practices by the national content organizations, based on observation of classes

--that PEP curriculum should be examined for improvement in respect to choice of topics, linkage to the regular curriculum, and level of challenge.

The Suffolk BOCES, the agency that did the review of the Port Washington gifted program in 1996, made several recommendations at that time, some of which still are in need of implementation today. They made the following suggestions:

1. Allow PEP teachers instructional autonomy in respect to the curriculum but also connect their work to the core curriculum and ensure that challenging activities appropriate for gifted learners are the staple of the program.
2. Provide professional development to regular classroom teachers on the characteristics and needs of PEP students for purposes of identification and programming for them in the regular classroom.
3. Several recommendations emerged regarding the selection process, including the following: building-based committees to do the selection, use of a Likert scale for teachers to recommend students, use of a parent referral process, instituting an appeals process, and more attention to minority identification.
4. Increase in staffing (one PEP teacher per building) was recommended, with middle school allocations determined by master schedule integration of the program beyond sixth grade.
5. Evaluation of the program annually should be undertaken.
6. Discussion of full differentiation of curriculum and instruction in all classrooms was recommended.
7. Expansion of the PEP program at two levels was recommended: 1) enrichment in the regular classroom and 2) clubs, both options which were seen to serve not just identified PEP students but also those not selected for the CORE program but who had a special talent or interest.

Based on this analysis of the current program, most of these recommendations were attended to at the time. However, there has been disregard for or erosion in others. For example, the PEP program was not aligned with the core curriculum as recommended even though teachers were given autonomy for instruction and curriculum development. Annual evaluation was not undertaken. Additions to the program that occurred after the 1996 recommendations were

dropped, beginning in 2012. Professional development for regular classroom teachers has not focused specifically on differentiation for gifted students.

There are many reasons for why this situation may have occurred, not the least of them being the 2% imposed tax cap in New York which has rendered many districts, including Port Washington, strapped in respect to financial resources. Additionally, there have been many changes in administration since that time as well, including building leadership as well as central office. Consequently, a program like PEP, which is not mandated, may lose resources and not be monitored as closely as other programs may be. However, it should be noted that careful attention has been given to the identification standards for the program, with annual review conducted by the PEP committee, comprised of classroom and PEP teachers and the Assistant Superintendent. Changes to criteria for eligibility have been made each of the last three years, with an eye to increasing the numbers of students who may participate.

In 2015, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction conducted an analysis of data related to students identified for the PEP program. Of particular interest from that analysis were the following generalizations:

-There is an underrepresentation of minority students in the program, especially Hispanic and ELL populations. Low income students are also underrepresented by a factor of almost 6.

--Grade point averages for PEP students have consistently over the past five years been a point or at least a .5 higher than for non-PEP students, with honors and awards more often going to them as well.

--SAT scores for PEP students have consistently been higher than for non-PEP students over this same five-year period. Ranges on the ACT were from 28-34 for PEP students and 25-27 for non-PEP students, suggesting a greater range of results for PEP students on that test. Results from both tests for college admission suggest that PEP students do very well (90% level nationally) in score levels as do non-PEP students who score just below the excellence level.

--University selection of both PEP and non-PEP students tended to be at selective universities and colleges across the country.

--PEP students have won many national distinctions for their academic abilities. For example, "In reviewing the data for the graduating classes of 2011-2015, there were a total of 41 students who were named National Merit Scholarship Semi-finalists, Winners, or Commending. Of these students, 35 (85%) were PEP students. Three of these students were both National Merit Scholars and also Intel winners. For the graduating classes of 2011 – 2014, there were eight Intel winners. Five (63%) were PEP students. "

While the majority of winners were PEP students, a fair percentage were not, suggesting that factors other than general ability impact on performance and success later in a student's career.

--7-24% of students have been identified for PEP by school this academic year at the elementary schools. Manorhaven selects the largest percentage of students for the program. At 6th grade level, 16% of students were identified for the program at Weber.

-- In respect to the process of screening to selection, percentages vary considerably. Ideally, a district would be selecting 50% of the pool that was nominated. In some schools here in Port Washington, that is the case. In other schools, the process yields many fewer or many more students for the program, suggesting that there is wide disparity among schools in how the process is implemented and/or the nature of the population.

--The review of other Long Island school districts suggests that the programs are quite similar to Port Washington in respect to scope, structure, and content area emphasis. Several districts use the Renzulli SEM model. Two districts have discontinued their program. One other offers advanced math only at selected grade levels.

Advanced Placement data

The data on Advanced Placement coursework over the past seven years was sent to the evaluator for review. These data reveal patterns of participation and performance of gifted students in rigorous coursework at high school levels. Sometimes these data may also be linked to earlier opportunities provided to gifted learners in a school district. In the case of Port Washington, the data were not disaggregated by identified gifted students, and therefore inferences related to their program status could not be made.

The AP data available (BOCES warehouse) documented the participation rates and performance levels of students at Port Washington Schreiber High School. Data reported included the following: number of students tested, number of students scoring at 3, 4, and 5 levels on the AP exams, and the percent of tests at passing rates. They document that 1025-1314 tests were taken each year across the last seven years with an upward trend over the last four years to the high of 1314 in 2015. The data do not report numbers of students but rather numbers of exams taken. Approximately 69-73% of students who have taken the AP exams have performed at passing rates on the exam (scores of 3, 4, or 5) over the past seven years. These scores are highly commendable for the population of Port Washington as a whole. However, participation rates of identified gifted students are not known nor is how they have performed.

Of interest also is the number and range of courses offered over that period. Port Washington has offered 33 out of 38 available AP classes over the last several years. The chart notes subject areas offered and actual numbers of test takers per course in 2015. Highest subscribed courses in descending order by domain area are listed in the chart below. It is highly commendable that Port Washington both offers the scope of AP courses in respect to subject areas but also provides a wide distribution of opportunities within subject areas. A list of AP courses by number of courses per subject and enrollment may be found in Appendix E. Upward trends over the past seven years are notable for four courses in the social sciences—US History,

Psychology, Macro-economics, and US Government. Newer AP offerings instituted within the last three years are Human Geography and Latin and French Literature.

Advanced Placement Course Distribution for 2015

Social sciences (8 AP courses offered)

US History (183)*
Psychology (112)*
Macro-Economics (107)*
Micro-Economics (107)
European History (97)
US Government (58)*
Comparative government (21)
Human geography (1) +

Science (7 courses offered)

Physics B (54)
Physics I (52)—one year's data only
Environmental Science (51)
Biology (27)
Chemistry (13)
Physics-Mechanics (24)
Physics-Electro Mag (24)

English (2 courses offered)

English Literature (51)
English Language (45)

Math (4 courses offered)

Calculus AB (45)
Calculus BC (45)
Statistics (40)
Computer Science (37)

The Arts (3 courses offered)

Studio Art (38)
Studio Drawing (28)
Music theory (5)

World Languages (9 courses offered)

Italian (25)
Latin Literature (23)+
Latin Vergil (17)
French Language (17)
French Literature (13)+
Spanish Language (21)
Spanish Literature (14)
German (1)
Japanese (1)

*Upward trend in course-taking across the 7 years
+ last 2-3 years of data only

Listed in the *2016-2017 Paul Schreiber High School Program Planning Guide* are additional data regarding the meritorious and widespread involvement of students in AP coursework. Total AP enrollment of 550 students (49.9% of 10th - 12th graders) was noted as was the *average* number of AP courses taken during high school by seniors who have taken at least one AP course as being 4.39.

For this past year alone, the passing rates (scores of 3-5) over all courses was 84%, with English at 97%, History and Government at 85%, Math at 73%, and Science (Biology, Environmental Science, Chemistry, Physics) courses at 94%. Port Washington outperforms the published scores for world-wide AP performance by 15 percentage points; the global AP pass rate overall was 69% for 2015.

Within this dataset, it is fair to suggest that many if not all of the identified gifted students in the district are represented. Disaggregation of the data by identified gifted students, however, would be desirable to answer the questions of whether all gifted students are taking AP, and what their performance levels are. Expectations for gifted learners in this regard would be taking at least 3 AP courses (if available) and performing at levels of 3 and above on each of them.

Additional data of interest to this study in the *Program Planning Guide* were the average scores of students on SAT I and SAT II, both above national averages in all areas.

Summary

There was very little to review in respect to the PEP curriculum per se. No complete units were made available if they exist. Bits and pieces of activities, assignments, rubrics, and resources were provided upon request. Lesson plans from teachers were not reviewed as a part of this evaluation.

As noted in respect to the secondary curriculum opportunities, the focus of the written material available was on the selection process, not on the course syllabi. Based on the acceleration model employed for art, math, and science at middle school levels, the evaluator would assume that the courses are advanced to the level necessary to receive high school credit. AP data are strong across all subjects.

Several findings emerge from reviewing the written materials on the program:

1. Port Washington does not designate a differentiated curriculum base for gifted and advanced learners in its PEP program. While goals have been identified, they have not been developed into outcomes, strategies, and assessments that would provide a framework for the work. They also need to be specifically aligned to current New York standards, CCSS, and the NGSS. This is essentially the same recommendation that was made in 1996. However, now there are new national standards in each core subject area and new gifted standards for programs as well.
2. The program and curriculum lack coherence at both elementary and middle school levels. The PEP program appears to be in a constant state of flux as seen from the curriculum committee notes from 2011-2016 and interviews with school personnel. Moreover, there is a disconnect at the middle school level between the continuation of the PEP elementary model and the desire to provide accelerated coursework in selected areas. Currently, the two initiatives are separate from one another in respect to selection, programming, and philosophy.
3. Within the acceleration model, there is also a lack of consideration for the development of talent in all domains of learning, with options being offered in only three areas and only at one level of schooling in the case of art and science. A middle school set of accelerated options should be provided across the three years in as many subjects as needed, given the level of performance and interest of prospective students. This idea is embedded in the art selection criteria and procedures for placement but not in the approach used in math or science. For instance, what would prevent advanced learners with English, social studies, and world language capability from being able to access advanced options comparable to the offerings in art, math, and science as early as sixth grade?
4. The PEP program suffers from not having a fulltime or even parttime person coordinating activities. As much as the Assistant Superintendent does for the program (eg. meetings with teachers and other staff, designing new options, etc.), there is still a need for deeper work in the areas of curriculum development, professional development in gifted education, and working with PEP teachers to refine the program. No one other than the Assistant Superintendent currently has responsibility for the program, a situation that is not the case in special education, ELL, technology or the creative arts. Clearly, the program suffers from not having someone solely in charge of basic programmatic activities.

5. The AP program at the high school is functioning very effectively in respect to overall participation and performance records from the past five years as well as examining this last year in particular. However, data on gifted student participation and performance were not available.

Section III: Focus Group data

The conducting of interviews and focus groups was done during the site visit to Port Washington School District. Each session lasted for approximately one hour. A structured protocol was used to conduct the focus group sessions. Questions were asked and responded to on 3x5 cards one at a time; group discussion comments were tracked on a chart. All data were transcribed for analysis.

Informal interviews were held with the Superintendent and the Associate Superintendent to gather an understanding of the district and program context. Informal interviews were also held throughout the evaluation with the PEP staff.

Student focus group results

Seventh grade PEP students (N=10) met in the Weber library as a focus group to discuss questions related to the gifted program. The students answered the same questions as other stakeholder groups. The students had matriculated from the five different elementary schools in the district, thus providing a district-wide perspective.

Overall, the students had a positive response to the gifted program, called PEP. They found it challenging, interesting, and enjoyable. One student indicated that it encouraged students to try harder, and a second student indicated that the right learning techniques were used. One student called the program “mind-blowing.” They did feel that the program was more challenging in the earlier years and less so by sixth grade.

Students had mixed reactions about the results of the identification process. Three students believed the “kids who need to be in the program, are in the program.” Four students had some reservations and believed that some students in the program were not willing to do the extra work and activities and therefore should not be in the program. These same students indicated that some students, who should be in the program, were not in the program. All of the students strongly supported the idea that if you were in the program, you should have a good attitude and be willing to work. They also expressed concern about the exclusion of underrepresented groups.

All of the students in the group made positive comments about the PEP curriculum, finding it challenging and fun. Students mentioned projects that interested them and made them feel more knowledgeable and informed on contemporary issues than their classmates. Yet they also felt that the topics could be improved and be more relevant to contemporary issues of interest to them.

Three students specifically indicated that their teachers “asked the right questions.” While several students thought their teachers were “awesome”, others felt their capacity to work effectively with them varied by grade level and school. Students were especially positive about their teachers providing interesting and challenging work in math and science.

Students explained how they knew what they had learned. Four students described doing well on tests as a measure of what they had learned. One student also cited grades. Two students mentioned homework and projects as other indicators of what they had learned. Two students also indicated that they knew that they had learned when “it comes easier to me” and when they knew how to do something they had not known how to do before.

Students indicated that major strengths of their program included the teachers and their way of teaching. They also mentioned projects and activities as strengths. Benefits of the program were perceived to be in the areas of new knowledge and skills, a sense of belonging through finding a peer group, and self confidence.

Improvements to the program were suggested by all the students. They felt the identification process might be improved and that the program could be expanded to eighth grade and intensified in respect to being fulltime at Grades 3-5. They also believed that core extensions might be used as a vehicle for more middle school opportunities. Concerned about overlaps in the curriculum, they suggested using a wider range of topics to study for the program that were not related to the regular curriculum.

Student survey responses

Table 1 reflects the survey responses of the student focus group members individually when asked to comment on the perceived benefits of the program to them directly. Each of the students in the group of ten had been in the program since its inception at 3rd grade and were now in 7th grade. They were instructed to comment on the questions as they considered their experiences across years in the program, mark their responses and turn in the form. No discussion of this survey was conducted with the students.

Analysis of the form was accomplished by collapsing the first two categories and the last two categories to get a dichotomous view of responses. Frequencies and percentages of responses were computed for each item on the scale, which ranged from “to a great extent” to “not at all”.

All of the students saw the major benefits of the program to be in the areas of: higher level thinking skill development and research skills. Ninety percent (90%) of students saw the program as beneficial in respect to creative thinking and acceleration, while 80% saw it as highly beneficial in respect to understanding new concepts and ideas.

They also cited “trying ways to make me learn differently” (80%), “working with others” (90%), and “reflecting on my learning” (80%) as other benefits of the program.

In respect to regular classroom opportunities to benefit from advanced learning, 70% said they had acceleration opportunities while 30% said they did not. In comparing the challenge of PEP to the regular classroom, only 20% said that PEP was challenging while none found regular

classroom work challenging. Seventy per cent (70%) found PEP challenging “to a little extent” while only 40% found that to be true of the regular classroom. A full 50% of PEP students did not find the regular classroom challenging “at all”. It should be noted that this was a small sample of students who were interviewed (N=10), and that their results cannot be generalized to all PEP students at that grade level nor beyond.

These data, however, do suggest that the PEP students interviewed believe they are learning important skills and concepts in the PEP program. However, they do not, for the most part, find the program challenging. Also problematic is the finding that half of these students do not find the regular program challenging “at all”. Table 1 shows the tallies for this survey.

Table 1 : Student responses to questions on the Gifted and Talented Program in Port Washington

N= 10

Number of years you have been in the gifted program (Circle one): 1 2 3 4 **more than 4 (all)**

Your current grade level (Circle one): 5 6 **7 (all)** 8 9 10 11 12

For each item, circle the number that tells the extent to which you agree with the statement.

	To a Great extent	To Some Extent	To a Little Extent	Not at all
1. Being in the gifted and talented program helps to develop my higher level thinking skills.	4 7 (70%)	3 3 (30%)	2	1
2. Being in the gifted and talented program helps to develop my research skills.	4 4 (40%)	3 6 (60%)	2	1
3. Being in the gifted and talented program helps to develop my communication (speaking and writing) skills.	4 4 (40%)	3 3 (30%)	2 3 (30%)	1
4. Being in the gifted and talented program helps to develop my creative thinking skills.	4 6 (60%)	3 3 (30%)	2 1 (10%)	1
5. Opportunities are given to accelerate (go faster) in my gifted or advanced classes.	4 5 (50%)	3 3 (30%)	2 1 (10%)	1
6. Opportunities are given to accelerate (go faster) in my regular classes.	4 4 (40%)	3 3 (30%)	2 3 (30%)	1
7. The gifted class work or advanced class work is challenging.	4	3 2 (20%)	2 7 (70%)	1 1 (10%)
8. The regular class work is challenging.	4	3 1 (10%)	2 4 (40%)	1 5 (50%)
9. Being in the gifted and talented program helps me try different ways to learn.	4 2 (20%)	3 5 (50%)	2 2 (20%)	1 1 (10%)
10. Being in the gifted and talented program helps me understand new ideas and concepts.	4 8 (80%)	3	2 2 (20%)	1
11. Being in the gifted and talented program helps me learn to work with others.	4 4 (40%)	3 5 (50%)	2 1 (10%)	1
12. Being in the gifted and talented program helps me reflect on my learning.	4 3 (30%)	3 5 (50%)	2 1 (10%)	1 1 (10%)

In comparing student focus group responses to the survey form responses, the greatest discrepancy lay in the issue of finding their school programs not challenging, either the PEP program or the regular program. These data tend to suggest that students may not be sharing all of their perceptions about the program through a focus group approach, making the survey model important to use for comparison purposes. The discrepancy in student responses across forms also suggest that the core gifted group assessed (N=10) values certain aspects of the PEP program but does not find it challenging across years; of great concern is also their perception of the regular program as having lacked challenge.

Parent focus group results

Parents of both PEP students and non-PEP students (N=14) met to discuss questions related to the PEP program. Each of the questions asked corresponded to the focus group questions asked of other stakeholders. Perceptions of the parents regarding the program were varied, based on the grade level, school, and experiences with the district in respect to the program admissions criteria. Some parents had more than one student in the program at different levels and therefore knew about program experiences in different schools.

Overall impressions of the program were mixed. Some parents found the program challenging and engaging while others thought it was not rigorous. Reactions to assigned projects was also mixed, with a few parents seeing them as busy work while others saw them as stimulating. Parents expressed concerns about not receiving information on the program that might help them work with their child at home.

Mostly, these parents did not understand the identification process used. However, several felt it was too narrowly constructed around the use of a single test which limited the diversity of students in the program. They also felt it had improved over the past several years. However, they strongly felt that teachers who had no background in gifted were doing the nominations that kept students from being tested for the program.

Several parents felt the curriculum was fragmented and not coherent, lacking alignment to the general curriculum used in the classroom. They also felt it was tilted toward math and science, leaving out opportunities for students in verbal areas. Seven reported no knowledge of the curriculum. These may have been non-PEP parents who voiced concerns but did not appear to understand the program well.

Parents appeared pleased in general with their child's PEP teachers although they saw a degree of unevenness across the staff, based on school. A few parents noted the unevenness in the teaching quality. All agreed that regular classroom teachers needed more background in differentiation of instruction for bright children.

Views of effective assessments were limited in that many parents did not comment on this question due to lack of knowledge (N=6). They perceived that the assessment system did not vary for gifted learners at the elementary level.

Strengths of the program were perceived to be the challenge of the program in its focus on higher level thinking skills. The PEP classes were perceived to be stimulating and taught at a pace conducive to gifted student learning. Other strengths were cited as the peer group that the students had in the program, the development of self esteem, and the fact that “it provides a spark to learning for disengaged, deadened, and bored gifted learners in the district”.

Areas for improvement centered on the need for stronger communication to parents from the school and district, indicated by almost half of the parents attending, and a plea for more coherence and connectedness of the PEP program to the general curriculum. They also wanted to see more resources going to the program, more time provided for PEP each week, and more emphasis on advanced language arts and social studies. Several also cited the need for improving the identification process.

Teacher focus group results

The teachers in Port Washington met for a meeting with the evaluator at the end of a school day. The group included both PEP and non-PEP teachers. The same questions asked of other groups were asked of the teachers as well. The session lasted one hour and a half, with some teachers staying after the session to discuss issues to a greater extent. They asked who had requested the evaluation, to which I replied the School Board. They voiced general concern about support for the program, feeling that the Board and administrators did not “value the program sufficiently for it to function well.”

Their overall perceptions of the program centered on the challenge and stimulation it provided to a group of students who needed it. Moreover, their stance on the program came through early in their remarks, noting that it had been decimated in respect to resources in a climate that pushes for inclusion and does not philosophically support what the gifted program represents.

In respect to identification, the teachers felt that there was a desire to find and identify more students for the program, especially from underrepresented groups some of whom have increased in numbers in the district. Nevertheless, they felt that the process represented clarity.

In regard to curriculum, teachers commented on various fronts. They noted a lack of acceleration in the program, favoring enrichment approaches. One noted that there were “Not enough opportunities for acceleration and deeper enrichment.”

A few commented that class size interfered with being able to differentiate effectively. Others noted that: “Differentiation varies by classroom and school”, suggesting that there is an unevenness in the use of differentiation in regular classrooms. Several commented that cutting clubs, math Olympiad, and lunch discussions have downgraded the program and its effectiveness. They also suggested that the models of pullout and push-in were limited in time and effectiveness. It was noted by one teacher that there was not time for art, and that the

district was behind in technology, although this comment was not substantiated by the data from other sources.

The teachers noted that teachers in PEP all have the added endorsement of gifted in New York's licensure requirements. Others in the regular classroom have experience but no formal training, spending more time on working with struggling learners in the classroom. The group also felt the lack of support for the program from building principals in about half the schools. There also was a feeling of lack of communication with limited contact with each other and related staff through meetings and other forms of communication.

In respect to the use of differentiated learning assessments with the gifted, the group cited the use of portfolios to showcase learning for parents, self assessments on projects, reflections, and presentations with rubrics developed with students.

The teachers in the focus group felt that the benefits of the program were many and diverse, in both cognitive and affective domains. Almost all of the teachers saw the program benefits of the PEP enrichment offered by the curriculum, the self esteem and peer group membership afforded the students to be strong. Several noted that PEP students "embraced challenges, and exhibited an eagerness to deepen and broaden their knowledge base." They also felt that students benefitted greatly from an accelerated curriculum in math, art, and music (N=9). Four teachers felt that risk-taking was cultivated through exposure to new opportunities and successful navigation of them. Enhanced motivation to learn and excitement with real world learning was cited by three teachers as major benefits as well.

Areas for improvement cited by the teachers were: greater support for the program in respect to resources and general respect. Nine teachers noted the need for greater staffing. Six cited the need for teacher preparation, both to identify and differentiate for these students in the regular classroom, a role they had assumed before cuts to staffing had occurred. They, as other groups, cited the need for more attention to the identification of underrepresented groups. More time for direct instruction of PEP students was noted by three teachers.

Administrator focus groups results

Two focus groups were held with administrators in Port Washington. One was composed of three central office administrators, including the Assistant Superintendent. The second was held with twelve other administrators in the district including principals and/or their assistant, supervisors of programs in the district, and pupil personnel service administrators including the Director of Guidance. Results from each discussion were reported as one group except when there was clear divergence between them. In most areas of the discussion, this was not the case.

"The program is either loved or hated" one administrator remarked, summing up the perspectives of the group as a whole who seemed split on the importance of PEP to the district. Many were concerned about the underrepresentation of minorities in the program and small

numbers, noting the teacher-controlled access to the testing as a lever to keep numbers low. They also acknowledged that the program has sustained a 50% cut in teacher services this year as well as cuts earlier, making it vulnerable on many fronts. Administrators perceive that the decisions about the program content are parent-driven.

The identification process was described as “evolving from using a strict set of criteria to being more inclusive”. Many felt it was excellent except for not finding more minorities, proportional to numbers in the district. Each aspect of the program uses different identification practices; however, most administrators saw the criteria used to identify for PEP at third grade as the critical point and problem area. Both nonverbal assessment and teacher appraisal are currently included to enhance underrepresented group admission yet problems remain. A few administrators thought the teacher scale was not valid or reliable and also not culturally sensitive, accounting for the problem noted.

In respect to the curriculum, some administrators felt it was rigorous but not differentiated and that did not happen until the accelerated math at 7th grade. Others were unsure about the curriculum, admitting unfamiliarity with it (N=4). A few felt it was not standardized enough, too open to individual teacher interpretation and little direction for gifted students. One felt the art program was strong due to hiring procedures. Several felt that the general curriculum was more rigorous due to special programs initiated like STEM.

Although the administrators saw the teachers as dedicated and bright, teacher preparation was viewed as limited for both PEP and regular classroom teachers in gifted education, given the lack of district training in this area. They admitted the need for professional development in this area, focused on differentiation and vertical articulation.

The assessment of learning for gifted students is the same as for other students in the district except for the pullout PEP program where assessments are more tied to projects, using rubrics. Because the district does not assign grades at the elementary level, little pressure is exerted to assess the gifted learner per se.

One administrator suggested that the PEP students “feel like rock stars” as a result of being in the program. Others felt that “like minds being together was a major benefit.” Still others saw the advanced skill development important in both critical and creative thinking areas. Several commented on the variety of the stimulation provided by the program and the challenge of learning advanced material in a relatively small group.

Administrators saw the improvement of the program to rest on getting the resources necessary to carry it out appropriately, improving the identification process to find more underrepresented groups, and using project-based learning approaches such as STEM and STEAM. One administrator was vocal about not giving more resources to the program if it took away from funding for at risk students whom he saw as the district’s number one priority. Others felt the program should be expanded to include areas not receiving programming emphasis at the present time such as the verbal arts and social studies. One administrator

explained: “PEP has been significantly altered over the years with the staff working hard to still provide a meaningful and enriched experience for the students.” Many of the administrators felt that professional development for both PEP teachers and regular class teachers would be important for improvement in the program as differentiation practices appear to be spotty.

Findings of focus group data across all groups: emergent themes

The data from all focus groups were synthesized into a set of major themes. In order to be considered a theme, more than one group of stakeholders had to identify it as a major strength, issue or concern. The major themes that emerged for stakeholders were the following:

Lack of coherence and connection within the PEP curriculum and alignment to the general curriculum

Parents, students, and even some teachers found the curriculum to be fragmented and disconnected from the core curriculum in the school district, thus hampering the needed connections to ongoing learning that the students might experience. Moreover, these same groups saw the curriculum as uneven, challenging in the early years but not so by sixth grade.

Identification process unresponsive to underrepresented groups

All groups voiced concerns about the identification process, which included comments on the lack of regular teachers’ ability to find gifted students, reliance on test scores, and lack of inclusiveness for underrepresented groups. Yet focus groups diverged on how to make it more effective, with some wanting the process to be more inclusive and others wanting it to be more focused on an optimal match to the curriculum to be offered. All groups felt that teachers should be trained to identify the gifted and that test scores should not be the only criterion for inclusion.

Uneven teacher quality

In general, teacher quality in the program was judged to be high yet with concerns for unevenness across schools. While many teachers were praised by students and parents for their effectiveness, others were seen to be ineffective in their capacity to work with gifted learners. This view was also expressed by the administrator group. Teachers saw themselves as mostly effective, hampered only by the limitations of time and resources.

Professional development

Professional development, linked to high level skills and competencies needed to differentiate effectively for the gifted, is needed for regular classroom teachers as voiced by administrators and teachers themselves. There was concern expressed that professional development on

gifted education for teachers is not mandatory, leading to the lack of differentiation observed in some classrooms.

Program articulation concerns

Concerns for K-12 program articulation were voiced by both teachers and administrators. These focus groups were concerned about the pathway for talented students to reach AP corridors at the high school level if there was not a consistent articulated set of experiences in each relevant subject area that led up to that level. Parents were also concerned about the alignment of the curriculum to the core and the lack of coherence that it created.

Lack of rigor and differentiation in both PEP and the regular school programs

There is a real need to address the differentiation of the program at middle school level, ensuring that the curriculum and the instruction are differentiated for advanced learners. Little evidence suggested that syllabi or instruction were differentiated in any subject area except math, earth science (8th grade only) and art (8th grade only) at middle school levels. In math, the focus was on one year acceleration while a second option for acceleration was dropped. No advanced coursework is offered beyond the sixth grade PEP option except for math, making the middle school unresponsive to the needs of these learners.

Summary

Focus group data suggest the need to: 1) improve the identification process, especially related to underrepresentation issues, 2) design curriculum that is challenging and connected at all levels, 3) provide professional development in identification and differentiation practices for regular classroom teachers, and 4) provide greater program articulation across all levels of the program. These themes are expressed by most of the focus groups as seen in Appendix B where the comparative analysis may be seen.

Section IV Classroom Observations

Introduction

The purpose of classroom observations is to gain firsthand knowledge of the classroom instruction being provided for gifted learners at all relevant grade levels. The focus of observations is not on the evaluation of individual teachers but on the prevalence of best-practice instructional behaviors for advanced students in these classrooms. The form used for classroom observations lists 26 different research-based, best practice instructional strategies. It is not expected that all instructional behaviors listed on the form will be seen during one observation. Having only 30 minutes per observation captures a snapshot of the overall instructional practices within a classroom. The program evaluator realizes the limitations of the form and its utilization across a small window of instructional time. Nevertheless, when multiple classrooms are observed, inferences can be drawn that support or refute data collected from other strategies such as focus groups and materials review.

Sample

To ensure a representative picture of gifted students and opportunities for them at school sites, the evaluator observed classes at each school site in the district where the program is functional. Consequently, all five elementary schools were observed, and PEP classes at the middle school in Grade 6 were observed along with other Grade 6 classes, which contained PEP students for core subjects. Four PEP classes were observed at Grades 4, 5, and 6 while 14 were observed at Grades 3-5. Thus it was possible to see how the classroom implementation varied by school and level of the program. Table 2 presents the breakdown of observations by school. A total of 18 classrooms were observed that contained 327 students. A range of 15-21 students represented classroom size across schools. Most regular classrooms observed had special education personnel assisting identified students in the room. No aides were assigned to PEP classes.

Table 2: Distribution of Classroom Observations by School

School	Total
Sousa	4
Salem	3
Manorhaven	2
Daly	2
Guggenheim	3
Weber	4
Total observations	18

Findings

The form for observation allowed the investigator to probe several areas of instruction: curriculum planning and delivery, accommodation for individual differences, critical thinking strategies, creative thinking strategies, and analysis and inquiry. These categories represent best practice in teaching in general as well as best practice for gifted learners in particular.

In regard to the first category related to *Curriculum Planning and Delivery*, three of the five items were observed in more than 70% of the classrooms observed. Two items that reflect on the use of metacognition in the classroom were rated lower across all schools and levels. One item related to planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning was observed in only 45% of classrooms. The last item that deals with having students reflect on what they learned was only observed in 27% of the classrooms. Teachers were on average rated "somewhat effective" in this category overall.

The behaviors in the second category, dealing with *Materials and Strategy Utilization*, were not as much in evidence. The lack of the usage of differentiated materials for the gifted in the classrooms was evident in 89% of the classrooms observed. Only half the classrooms used any discernible grouping approach for instruction. In only three classrooms (16%) was there the use of models of thinking. Finally, only half of the classrooms observed employed research-based instructional approaches such as concept mapping or graphic organizers.

Accommodations for Individual Differences, the third category of observation, were in evidence across a majority of classes observed (78%) in respect to opportunities for individual/group learning. About three-quarters of the classrooms demonstrated opportunities to promote depth in understanding content and allowed students to discover ideas through structured activities or questions. This latter instructional strategy is intended to encourage students to find meaning for themselves, rather than to parrot back predigested subject matter. Its widespread use is very positive. Less positive was the finding that only 33% of classrooms observed encouraged multiple interpretations of events. About half (50%) of classrooms accommodated individual differences through conferencing, different assignments or materials.

In the category dealing with *Critical Thinking Strategies*, only one of the four items was observed in over seventy per cent (71%) of the classrooms. An item dealing with engaging students in comparing and contrasting ideas was less in evidence, seen in only 44% of classrooms. In only three classrooms was there evidence of moving students from concrete to abstract ideas (16%). The fourth item on the scale, which dealt with student synthesis of information within or across disciplines, was not observed in any of the classrooms. In several of the PEP classes, teachers were rated very effective in their use of some of these strategies.

Most of the items in the category on *Creative Thinking Strategies* were infrequently observed. The most frequently observed item dealt with solicitation of diverse ideas. No classrooms showed evidence of an exploration of viewpoints to reframe ideas yet the provision of opportunities to develop and elaborate these ideas was apparent in 44% of the classrooms. About 11% of the classes encouraged open-ended thinking from students.

The final category, *Analysis and Inquiry*, was observed in the majority of classrooms in respect to the specific behaviors of using inquiry processes to encourage high level thought (89%) and encouraging students to draw inferences from data and represent them in appropriate forms (71%). The majority of classrooms (56%) used activities that encouraged analysis of text, models, or other forms of communication. However, the use of higher level questions was evident in only 22% of classrooms and building argument in only 10%.

The mean category ratings for effectiveness fall between 2 and 3 consistently, suggesting that teachers are doing a reasonable job with those areas of differentiation that they are addressing. However, there is much room for improvement across all six categories. Where differentiation strategies were not observed at all, it is suggested that professional development target the key behaviors not observed for new teachers and the teachers who are not practicing the strategies routinely.

The evaluator chose not to disaggregate the item data by grade levels or school because of the small sample size. However, she did examine the cluster means by school to see if any large discrepancies emerged. Since none were noted, these data were analyzed across schools, based on the categories of the COS-R instrument. Appendix A reports the numerical frequency and percentage findings from the Classroom Observation Scale (COS-R) that forms the backdrop to this discussion.

Summary

It should be noted that all observations took place in September when students and teachers are settling into new routines, procedures, and classroom approaches to learning. Consequently, the evaluator may not have seen “best instruction”.

The evaluator believes that the following findings are supported by the classroom observation data.

1. There is evidence across the classrooms observed that some instructional strategies that support learning for gifted students are being used by both PEP and non-PEP teachers. Moreover, where they are being used, they are also being used “somewhat effectively” and “effectively” by most of the teachers observed. In most instances, these strategies were seen in the use of math and science curricula, using STEM-related activities.
2. The extent of use (frequency) and the effectiveness of application of differentiation practices, including the use of advanced curriculum, high level strategies, and alternative assessments needs to be improved across most classrooms in the district to ensure that gifted students are being adequately challenged in the core areas of learning.

3. These classroom observation findings have implications for providing training and professional development that will ensure that regular classroom teachers have the skill sets they need to work effectively with gifted learners. The data also suggest the need to differentiate training for teachers ready to move to advanced strategies and those still needing basic support in the ideas of differentiation.

4. There is a significant difference favoring PEP teachers in the use of diverse differentiated teaching strategies with gifted learners. These teachers are an important resource to the district in respect to providing professional development to their peers on differentiation practices that will benefit the gifted and probably will benefit many more students as well.

Section V: Review of the Port Washington gifted program in relation to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Program Standards

The National Association for Gifted Children established a set of program standards for use by local school districts in upgrading their programs in 1998. These standards were upgraded again in 2010 to align with new teacher education standards for gifted education. They are divided into six categories related to planning, implementation, and maintenance of program development indicators. The six categories are the following: learning and development, curriculum planning, assessment, learning environments, programming, and professional development. A simple yes/no framework was used to determine the status of key indicators within each area assessed. Three additional categories of “uneven”, “developing”, and “not observed” were also added to accommodate special circumstances such as in Port Washington where budget constraints and administration changes have affected the capacity to deliver services consistently and at an exemplary level.

If the indicator was seen in only one of the schools or only at one level, the evaluator checked the item as “uneven”. If the item was seen by school personnel to be seen in the process of development, the item was marked as “developing”. Some items appeared to be inapplicable to the program so those items were checked as “not observed”.

The evaluator and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment discussed each item via a conference call in early October, after the onsite visit. They reached consensus on all items. The superintendent then reviewed the results to further verify accuracy of perceptions about the program status.

Although it is fair to note that the program in Port Washington was not designed with these standards in mind, it is fair to suggest that the field of gifted education has advanced in several ways since the late 1970's in respect to best practices in all facets of programming and that districts, regardless of the state in which they reside, should be cognizant of how their programs rank in respect to these standards. Most districts that I have reviewed personally over the years since the standards have been implemented tend to be rated at lower levels than they would be if the comparative standard were other districts in their areas. There may be several reasons for this. First, only stronger districts request to be evaluated in the first place. Port Washington, based on the reviews provided of programs in the area, rates #1 in respect to services to gifted students. Districts that are noncompliant with standards entirely never bother. Secondly, the standards set a high bar, assuming that districts have reasonable resources to provide services for these learners K-12 in all school-based areas where services may be offered. Thirdly, the standards are comprehensive in ways that programs begun in the 1970's rarely were. At that time the focus was on identification and providing elementary pullout experiences for limited time frames with an interdisciplinary focus on higher level thinking and problem-solving. The standards cover a range of areas that extend well beyond that to comprehensive programs and services that include counseling and guidance, curricular scope and sequence, and assessment.

Findings

In the area of learning and development (Standard 1), the district received 5 yeses, 5 unevens, 5 nos, 1 developing, and one not applicable. The areas of deficiency centered around the lack of a counseling program that addressed psycho social needs, academic planning needs, and career education needs of the gifted. Although the district provides such services for all learners, there is no tailored guidance program designed for the gifted. Moreover, items relating to underachievers, use of individual data to design programs and work with families on recommendations for their child did not appear to be regularly at work in the Port Washington programs.

In the area of assessment (Standard 2), the district identification and learning assessment approach was judged as meeting the standards on 15 items, uneven on four, not meeting the standard on two, and developing in one area. Regarding the identification aspect of the standards, the district follows New York State guidelines to a great extent in crafting identification policies and procedures. Use of multiple assessments, following procedures for the participation of educators in the process, and the sharing of information about the process to parents and students are all addressed in the district. In the aspect of the standard that deals with student assessment of learning, there is a lack of systematically collecting pre-assessment data and using them for curriculum and program planning and an absence of learning outcome data being collected and reported systematically. The New York state test results are only gross indicators of these students' performance and should be used cautiously and not in isolation in rendering judgments about individual learner capabilities or program efficacy. Regarding program evaluation, the district has not conducted annual evaluations in past years which are suggested by the standards but currently are addressing the standards related to having such an evaluation conducted.

In the area of curriculum planning (Standard 3), the district received 10 yeses, five unevens, and only 2 nos. Three areas are under development. Positive responses were given for the use of diverse learning experiences, the use of research-based differentiated strategies, and the individualized use of technologies for twice exceptional learners and others who may need such accommodation. The program was found deficient in the areas related to the lack of alignment of the gifted curriculum to the regular curriculum, the need for the use of pre-assessment and other accelerative approaches to learning, and metacognitive strategies that have shown to be effective in enhancing learning for all students, not just the gifted. Moreover, the lack of a systematized guidance component for identified gifted learners (ie. psycho-social counseling on gifted issues, guidance on advanced course-taking, and college and career counseling opportunities) also makes the uniform application of addressing social and emotional needs and career guidance haphazard for identified gifted learners.

In the area of learning environments (Standard 4), the district received 14 yeses and 3 unevens. The district is strong in setting high expectations for learning, but less effective in teaching specific affective strategies that would help students with psycho-social growth. An emphasis on leadership skills appeared to be limited but apparent in the social studies program at one

school. Lack of counseling and guidance services, specifically designed and designated to provide assistance to targeted gifted learners both individually on topics like perfectionism and developing relationships and in small groups on topics like juggling multiple academic/arts interests and career interests, based on aptitudes, led to negative responses on a few items in this category. A respect for cultural diversity and language diversity were evident in the classroom observations and materials selected.

In the area of programming (Standard 5), the middle school programs received 5 yeses, two unevens, and 5 nos. One item was not observed, related to the lack of accommodating the individual needs of gifted learners for personalized learning experiences such as mentorships, internships, and tutorials. The district received credit for offering programming to all qualified gifted students and for serving students as part of the regular school day. Grouping practices in the form of a pullout program at Grades 4 and 5 and a special class at grade 6 along with advanced math and science options at specific grade levels in middle school provide some support for gifted learners working together. However, the options do not connect to one another in an appropriate way and leave gaps in specific curriculum areas at given grade levels. Use of technology and communication skill development also received an affirmative response.

The areas of deficiency in programming appear to be in the lack of collaborative planning across general and special education in relation to the needs of the gifted, the lack of a guidance system, the lack of individualized options such as mentorships, and the lack of school/district policies that cite provisions for gifted students in acceleration. Budget delineation was not observed; the extent to which gifted programs receive a fair share of the district or individual school budgets was not probed in this review. Since budgetary concerns were cited as the rationale for reducing the staffing of the pullout program at Grades 4-5 by 50% this year and in prior years, there would appear to be a problem with equitable allocation of funding for the program.

The areas of positive response came from the qualifications of the PEP teachers who have met state and national endorsement standards for working with gifted learners. However, few regular classroom teachers have a formal background in working with the gifted. While somewhat uneven based on individual teachers, in general there is ongoing communication between parents and the PEP program staff. There is also evidence of resources and materials being provided to the program upon formal request.

In the area of professional development (Standard 6), the district received 5 yeses 2 unevens, and 2 nos. The area of greatest deficiency rests with the lack of qualification of some of the personnel working in the program in regard to formal preparation in gifted education and prior experience in working with gifted students. Most of the regular classroom teachers fail to have coursework in working with these learners, hampering their effectiveness to differentiate and to relate appropriately to gifted learners. New teachers lack professional development experiences that would socialize them to strategies and specific curriculum materials that might be employed to differentiate in content areas. Moreover, there was no evidence that teachers had designed their own professional development plan, based on assessments of their

performance. There is no overall district plan to provide ongoing professional development opportunities in gifted education. Other professional development being provided to teachers on the district core curriculum (ie. Math in Focus, Teachers' College writing workshops, etc.) provides a framework within which gifted student needs might be met if the delivery of the core curriculum allowed for flexible implementation, based on student needs. The evidence for this lies not in the materials used per se but in how teachers interpret both materials and professional development recommendations in the classroom.

Summary

Overall, Port Washington School District received a total of 40 yeses out of a total of 97 indicators in respect to the standards. This is a somewhat modest score overall although the category of identification is very strong. Areas in greatest need of attention appear to be in the routine use of advanced curriculum in core content areas at all levels of learning, assessment of gifted student learning, the need for a systematic approach to guidance and counseling, more individual opportunities for learning based on need, professional development for all teachers in gifted education, and better alignment and articulation of advanced curriculum opportunities by grade level and content area.

The standard indicator summary by category may be found in Appendix C.

Section VI: Evaluation Questions and Responses

In addition to the findings that were derived from the data sources and that have become the basis for the specific recommendations in the next section of this report, the evaluator has crafted responses to the specific questions that were formulated in the proposal to conduct the evaluation process. These responses are as follows:

1) To what extent is the program being implemented according to stated goals and outcomes?

There is no evidence that a differentiated curriculum framework is in place in Port Washington School district that delineates differentiated goals and outcomes for gifted learners. In the absence of such a working document, it is not clear how the curriculum and instruction practiced in the PEP program hangs together. Observation data confirmed that the curriculum implemented for use with the gifted in PEP was not connected to the regular classroom curriculum and lacked internal consistency as well. There was no evidence of a systematic approach to stating and measuring differentiated outcomes in the program. Focus group data also supported these perceptions. Lack of curriculum materials further suggested that there has been limited development of a viable program curriculum since it was first recommended in 1996 by the BOCES report, a report that is clearly outdated but does provide the history of the program.

2) To what extent is the district using best practices that would identify representative numbers of students from poverty? In what ways are underrepresented populations of students served once they are identified?

There is evidence of attention to the underrepresentation issue of low income and minority students in the gifted program through key features of the identification process including the use of a nonverbal measure and the use of multiple criteria that examine both ability and achievement data. No evidence suggests that attention is given to program alteration as a result of such students being selected, however. Observations and report data suggested there is a paucity of minority students in the current program. Focus group data further support the fact that stakeholders are concerned about this issue.

3) To what extent is there evidence of student growth and other benefits as a result of participation?

Evidence of program impact on students is anecdotal and relies on subjective self-report by students, parents, and teachers. At the present time, there are no tools used beyond regular teacher-designed grade level assessments and state assessments to demonstrate growth gains for gifted students annually. Off-level assessments, performance-based, and portfolio approaches are not routinely employed to show positive change. AP data are not disaggregated by whether students were identified as gifted or not. Nevertheless, some stakeholder group members perceive the program as highly beneficial to students. Gifted

students who have been in the program for four years or more hold mixed views of the program benefits, a small sample noting that units were not uniformly interesting nor the program challenging. AP data available do not disaggregate gifted student participation or performance. Thus it is not known how these students fare in this hallmark programming effort at high school levels. However, based on the overall data provided related to AP participation and performance in Port Washington, it is clear that the multiple options provided attract large numbers of students who perform at advanced levels (passing rates of 3,4, or 5).

4) To what extent is the instructional component of the program perceived to be effective by relevant stakeholders?

Overall, stakeholders are concerned with the current program and believe it is under-resourced and under-funded, making the operation of it difficult to accomplish. The majority of stakeholders voiced some concerns about key program components when the evaluator inquired about them. Concerns were voiced about the underrepresentation of minority students, the lack of a defined curriculum, and the vertical articulation of the curriculum and how the elementary program fits with middle school opportunities. While support is relatively strong for the existence of an instructional program for the gifted, there are several areas that need attention and improvement.

5) To what extent does the program meet the standards of best practice in gifted education, according to the 2010 NAGC Programming Standards?

The program needs to show progress in most areas of the national standards with the exception of identification where most standards were met. There is room for growth in respect to program, assessment for learning, counseling, professional development, and differentiation practices. Several of the program recommendations flow from the areas of deficiency noted through analyzing this data source.

Section VII: Commendations and Recommendations

The following commendations and recommendations are made, based on a triangulation of the data collected and analyzed from *four* different sources—a) interviews and focus groups, b) classroom observations, c) review of materials/program documents/reports, and d) national standards review. They are also made, based on the experience and expertise of the evaluator in gifted education work for 50 years. Program options were requested by the Board in order to consider alternatives to the present program model in place and they are included in Recommendation #2.

Commendations

1. The district deserves commendation for providing a wide array of program opportunities for all learners in the district, including new initiatives in STEM and STEAM. These initiatives appear to be functioning well in selected classrooms, engaging students in collaborative hands-on problem solving that is challenging.
2. The district professional development program for all teachers in the core subject matter areas of writing, science, and math appears to be well-planned and executed, with appropriate classroom follow-up. Some of the observed classrooms showed evidence of implementing these core programs in a flexible way that allowed gifted students to be well-served through opportunities for advanced instruction.
3. The district also deserves commendation for having a dedicated group of teachers, both in PEP and non-PEP classrooms who appear to be working hard to ensure that students are learning new material every day. Their willingness to work with individual students and their involvement in both lunchtime and after school programs is highly laudable.
4. The district takes pride in its program of studies and advancing the cause of “equity through excellence” as seen in its moves to increase the population of gifted students and to serve whole classes, using enrichment curriculum and strategies.
5. The district administration deserves credit for carefully executing sensible plans to offset budget shortfalls that might have seriously damaged the program by reorganizing the structure of it to retain student contact time integrity and regular classroom expansion of services at second and third grade.
6. The district is to be commended for its advanced opportunities at the high school level, especially the honors contracts in English, the research opportunities in the social sciences, math, science, and the range and extent of AP offerings. Follow-up data on these programs indicates a high degree of success. In AP, for example, routinely over the past seven years 69-73% of students taking the test received a 3, 4, or 5 on an

Advanced Placement exam, indicating advanced readiness to perform well in continued work in that subject area in college.

7. Student awards for contests and competitions have also been noteworthy across the years. While the majority of these awards have gone to PEP students, they have not exclusively done so, suggesting that opportunities for success in learning are open to all in different contexts.
8. Performance of Port Washington students on the SAT I and SAT II tests at high school level is noteworthy, outperforming national norms in all categories and subjects on SAT II. In addition to AP scores, it provides validation for the advanced level of achievement of the district's seniors.
9. The identification system for gifted students in the district is very carefully designed, developed and implemented. Although I am making some minor suggestions that may help address your underrepresentation of minorities, twice exceptional students, and low income students in the program, the overall approach is well-aligned with national standards, provides individual ability and achievement data on students not often available, and monitors its components annually.

Recommendations

1. Identification

The following commentary precedes some very specific recommendations for minor changes to the identification system which I would judge exemplary in respect to meeting national standards (see rating form in Appendix C). More detailed suggestions regarding each of these recommendations may be found in Appendix D.

The district has identified a concern for the low percentages of low income and minority students in the gifted program. This is a national concern, receiving attention from the field of gifted education for the last 50 years. Studies suggest that districts may adjust their identification systems in the following ways to increase minority and low income numbers: a) take in the top percentages of students within these groups (eg. based on multiple criteria, screen into gifted programs the top 10% of ELL students) (Lohman, 2012), b) use domain-specific measures to find more low income/minority students; look for peak performance (VanTassel-Baska, et al. 2008), c) use a combination of verbal and nonverbal measures (Naglieri, 2008), d) lower cut-off scores or percentages for nomination and/or selection to programs (Olszewski et al, 2003), and d) train teachers on materials that respond to specific abilities found in student profiles (eg. spatial ability) at young ages (Olszewski & Clarenbach, 2012).

Concerns about the lack of identification of low income and minority groups for gifted programs must begin with a strong and focused program early, prior to the years you are currently offering formal programs. Conducting a kindergarten screening for positive traits among the minority and low income children matriculating to the district would be one way to create a “watch list”. These students then would receive advanced opportunities in both reading and math that matched their emergent abilities. These opportunities could be made available in centers or stations in primary classrooms and be a staple for differentiated instruction from K-2. Assessment of achievement in math concepts and problem solving and in reading comprehension could be done every 6 months during this period of time. Any student, but with a particular focus on the underrepresented groups, could be added to the PEP-based intervention in either area of curriculum as readiness for advanced work is demonstrated.

Based on this discussion, I am recommending some specific changes to your current identification system in respect to: a) revising the teacher checklist, b) employing the Naglieri instrument as a part of your Grade 2 screening, and c) studying the results of using a modified identification system on the identification of more underrepresented groups.

2. Program Models

Consider one or a combination of the recommended program models that are delineated in Appendix D to stabilize and upgrade the elementary level gifted program. Each of these models

has been researched for effectiveness in serving gifted students and meets the following criteria for consideration:

- Provides opportunities for regular class participation with age and intellectual peers
- Provides opportunities for all learners in advanced opportunities for which they are ready
- Provides learning opportunities that integrate higher level skills with advanced content in each core area

The current program model at the elementary level, called PEP now, is one that has historically functioned in the district for the last 37 years (since 1979). Reports and perceptual data perused since 1996 suggest that the program has been successful at enhancing higher level skills in the core group of students selected, that they have enjoyed the program, and that the teachers are excellent. Current data are mixed on some of these points. Some students (N=10) who have been in the program for 4 or more years do not uniformly see the program as challenging nor providing them with the skills suggested by the stated goals of the program. Other groups of stakeholders grudgingly see it as providing a service to these students that they would not receive otherwise.

Moreover, the Board has allocated reduced resources to the program over the past several years. Since 2012, staffing has been reduced by half although direct services to students have continued on a reduced time model. Extra program initiatives such as lunch hour workshops have been reduced. Moreover, programs at whole grade levels have been eliminated such as advanced courses at Grades 7 and 8 in core subjects except math and now 8th grade science.

Both the current reactions to the program by stakeholders and the actions of the board suggest a negative perception of the program and a lack of understanding of what gifted programs represent. Gifted programs are not add-on; they should represent an integrated model of schooling for students who need them at each stage of their schooling and seen as fundamental services to students who have demonstrated needs.

3. Middle School Course Options

Develop additional talent development course options for gifted learners at the middle school level in English, social studies, and world language coursework, available at all the grade levels in the middle school (6-8). (Appendix D elaborates on this recommendation.)

Students who are gifted in specific domains should have available advanced opportunities in those domains at each requisite level of schooling. Middle school should not be an exception to that principle but rather a continuation of advanced study in areas of advanced aptitude and interest. Thus offerings at this level should provide for opportunities at all levels, (6-8) in all core and selected noncore areas. It is admirable that the district has an arts program that exemplifies this principle from Grade 7 on. However, gaps in opportunities for advanced work exist in most other subjects, beginning at 6th grade. In the case of English and social studies, no

advanced options are available until high school. World language opportunities exist at the middle school but do not offer advanced credit at the high school level.

4. Curriculum Development

Develop curriculum for the PEP program that provides a curriculum map and delineated outcomes, activities, strategies and assessments, appropriate to gifted learners. Employ the use of differentiated materials, designed for gifted learners and found effective through research.

Curriculum for gifted learners should provide opportunities that would not be accessible to all learners at the stage of development at which they are offered. For example, the math curriculum would be too advanced for typical learners, the reading selections would be too advanced, and the science experiments too complex. In general, the activity sets used in the current PEP program correspond to that criterion although they are fragmented and disconnected from the regular curriculum. Thus the work of the district in respect to curriculum for the gifted should lie with careful materials selection, curriculum development work in PEP, and training of more teachers to work effectively with these students in relevant content areas. (see Appendix D for more guidelines on this recommendation.)

5. Professional Development

Provide ongoing professional development to both PEP and non-PEP teachers on relevant topics in gifted education.

As indicated from all data sources, the district needs to provide more ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers in the differentiation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment of gifted learners. More extensive training of teachers to work with the gifted is also desirable. Continue to provide PEP teachers professional development in identified areas of interest and need that advance their skills in teaching in the program.

Ensure that secondary honors and Advanced Placement teachers have course work in gifted education. Provide administrative training in gifted education to all principals and other administrators in the district. This training should be a tailored course of study, using case study analysis and problem-based learning as major pedagogies. Finally, develop a professional development plan that reflects different delivery approaches for different educator audiences regarding knowledge and skills in gifted education that align with the NAGC best practices and district priorities for gifted program implementation. This plan should be multi-year to reflect the need for ongoing training and articulation of program options.

6. Program Materials

Design materials that represent the gifted program, its processes and procedures for all aspects of the program and services provided K-12.

As has been noted in the data collected, there is fragmentation in the presentation of the program to the public, with some information in course guides, other in minutes from meetings and still others on the website. There appears to be a clear need to compile all information on the program in a more comprehensive and compiled way. Develop a gifted program manual for use by internal staff that includes all aspects of the program at all levels and targets the key areas of curriculum, instructional models, assessment practices, and evaluation of progress. Many of the current separate information needs to be tied together to be a part of such a manual. Policies and procedures for each area of program development need to be delineated and highlighted in the manual. Design curriculum maps and talent trajectories for gifted students in each academic area from K-12 for distribution to relevant audiences. Finally, new courses of study may need to be designed and added to this list.

7. Role of Resource Teachers

Redefine the role of the current PEP resource teachers at the elementary level to ensure that 60-70% of time is spent on direct service to students through both in-class (push-in), co-teaching, and out-of-class (pull-out) opportunities. Additionally, work with teachers should be 25% of time, and related planning and administrative tasks should constitute 10-15% of time. A weekly schedule should reflect this distribution of time. Appoint one PEP teacher to each elementary building, bringing the number to 5 FTE's to carry out these roles.

Assign primary responsibility for the program district-wide to a person who has a background in gifted education and some administrative experience in implementing programs and services to that population. The coordinator of the program needs to ensure that program materials are developed, monthly meetings with staff held, monitoring of implementation is effected, communication with parents is regular, and programs and curricula are designed as indicated by the areas of need delineated in this report. This individual may be an existing administrator in the district. However, someone has to have clear oversight responsibility for the development of the gifted program to levels beyond current status, a task that requires at least 30% time.

Next Steps: Action plan for implementation

Based on the aforementioned recommendations, Port Washington School District should begin the process of implementing an action plan that capitalizes on the program commendations and systematically addresses the recommendations. One such approach is outlined below. Each recommendation area has been converted to a goal, with underlying outcomes. A gifted coordinator should be appointed to be responsible for overseeing the plan's implementation, a timeline for progress, and indicators of success. Previous experience of the program evaluator suggests that most of these recommendations will most likely take 2-3 years to accomplish, with careful monitoring and deliberate planning, resource support, and leadership.

Goals and Outcomes for the Action Plan

Overarching goal: To implement evaluation recommendations in respect to personnel and program model choices (Yr. 1)

- Assign a coordinator to the program who has training and background in gifted education.
- Examine the advantages stated for each option presented in the recommendations for the elementary program model. Decide which one or more is desirable for a phase-in in Year 2.
- Develop middle school extension opportunities in language arts, social studies, and world languages. Extend opportunities in math, science and art to all grade levels 6-8.
- Provide professional development for all teachers in relevant topics in gifted education, based on new models to be adopted.

Overarching goal: To create a revised system of identification of students for gifted programs, with a focus on including underrepresented groups. (Yr. 1)

- Analyze the recommendations provided and make suggested revisions.
- Select and monitor the progress of the top 10% of minority and low income students in the district, beginning at kindergarten level.
- Administer additional instrumentation as needed for 2017-18 for K-2 students and students at Grades 3 and 5.
- Develop middle school performance-based assessments as needed for suggested extension courses. Design protocols for selection to advanced classes.
- Train teachers on the revised checklist of gifted behaviors.

Overarching goal: To provide curriculum rigor, challenge and differentiation for advanced learners K-8. (Yrs. 1-3)

- Review and adopt research-based curriculum materials for gifted learners.
- Provide professional development on differentiated materials selected and related instructional strategies.
- Adopt curriculum implementation strategies, based on the program model adopted.
- Develop a scope and sequence of curriculum and materials for district-wide use.
- Develop a policy on acceleration.

Overarching goal: To provide an annual mechanism for assessing gifted student learning and gifted program improvement. (Yr. 1)

- Convene a group to examine data on gifted student performance at all levels. Employ the use of performance-based and portfolio models to judge performance.
- Collect pre and post assessment data, based on the use of gifted materials.
- Develop program accountability through modeling the annual use of the data sources employed in this review.

Overarching goal: To systematize the professional development of teachers for working with gifted learners K-8. (Yrs. 1-3)

- Develop a three-year professional development plan for teachers, based on defined program goals, strategies, materials, outcomes, and assessments.
- Define the role and expectations of teachers who work with gifted learners at all levels in respect to their role (e.g., use of differentiation, collaboration with other teachers and communicator to parents).
- Refine the role of the gifted resource specialists as appropriate to the program model adopted.

Overarching goal: To design and develop program materials (Yrs. 1-3)

- Develop new documents consistent with a new program plan and disseminate to relevant stakeholders.
- Develop web page material consistent with program and curriculum changes.
- Develop recommended curriculum materials.
- Develop a program handbook for ease in socializing new staff to program dimensions, with a separate section for parents.

Appendices

Appendix A Teacher observation data chart

Appendix B Focus group themes by stakeholder group

Appendix C NAGC Program Standards completed checklist

Appendix D Elaboration of recommendations

Appendix E Distribution of AP Course Offerings

Appendix A: William and Mary COS-R Observation Scale Results

Schools: All elementary schools and Weber Middle School
Subjects: PEP (interdisciplinary), math, science, ELA, and social studies
Levels: Grades 3-6
Number of Classes and Students: 18 classrooms and 327 students

3 = Effective	2 = Somewhat Effective	1 = Ineffective	N/O = Not Observed		
The teacher evidenced careful planning and classroom flexibility in implementation of the behavior, eliciting many appropriate student responses. The teacher was clear and sustained focus on the purposes of learning.	The teacher evidenced some planning and/or classroom flexibility in implementation of the behavior, eliciting some appropriate students responses. The teacher was sometimes clear and focused on the purposes of learning.	The teacher evidenced little or no planning and/or classroom flexibility in implementation of the behavior, eliciting minimal appropriate student responses. The teacher was unclear and unfocused regarding the purpose of learning.	The listed behavior was not demonstrated during the time of the observation. (NOTE There must be an obvious attempt made for the certain behavior to be rated "ineffective" instead of "not observed".)		
General Teaching Behaviors					
Curriculum Planning and Delivery		3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...					
1. set high expectations for student performance.		1 (5%)	14 (78%)	1 (5%)	2 (11%)
2. incorporated activities for students to apply new knowledge.			12 (67%)	2 (11%)	4 (22%)
3. engaged students in planning, monitoring, or assessing their learning.		3 (17%)	5 (28%)		10 (56%)
4. encouraged students to express their thoughts.			14 (78%)		4 (22%)
5. had students reflect on what they had learned.		1 (5%)	4 (22%)		13 (72%)
<p>Comments: <i>In general most lessons observed set high expectations and incorporated activities for students to apply new knowledge learned. There also were opportunities for student expression of ideas. This was true in PEP and non-PEP classrooms. The use of metacognitive activities was less in evidence, however, especially in the paucity of reflection activities.</i></p>					

Differentiated Teaching Behaviors				
Materials and Strategy Utilization	3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...				
6. showed evidence of using program-relevant differentiated materials for the gifted in math, science, social studies, or language arts. (circle which subject applied).		1 (5%)	1 (5%)	16 (89%)
7. used cluster , pull-out, self-contained, or advanced class grouping to target gifted learners for instruction. (circle one or more)	3 (17%)	5 (28%)	1 (5%)	9 (50%)
8. used models of thinking to promote deeper conceptual understanding and advanced content learning.		1 (5%)	2 (11%)	15 (83%)
9. employed evidence-based instructional strategies, such as graphic organizers, to enhance student higher level thinking.	3 (17%)	5 (28%)	1 (5%)	9 (50%)
Comments: <i>The use of differentiated materials was not in evidence in most of the classrooms. The PEP cluster grouping approach was activated to good effect in respect to student interest and participation. Busing students into a central location did not appear to be a hardship, but it is early in the year. Little cluster grouping of PEP students was evident in the regular classroom; heterogeneous grouping was strictly adhered to. Very little evidence of tools to enhance advanced thinking were employed in either PEP or non-PEP classrooms. Neither scaffolds nor advanced organizers were in evidence for promoting learning.</i>				
Accommodations for Individual Differences	3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...				
10. provided opportunities for independent or group learning to promote depth in understanding content.	1 (5%)	13 (72%)		4 (22%)
11. accommodated individual or subgroup differences (e.g., through individual conferencing, student or teacher choice in material selection and task assignments.)	2 (11%)	8 (44%)	1 (5%)	9 (50%)
12. encouraged multiple interpretations of events and situations.	2 (11%)	4 (22%)		12 (67%)
13. allowed students to discover key ideas individually through structured activities and/or questions.	3 (17%)	11 (61%)		4 (22%)
Comments: <i>Subgrouping by dyad or table/station was observed in several classrooms as routine ways to organize instruction. Teachers employed deliberate activities to advance new ideas with students although open-ended interpretation was not in evidence for the most part.</i>				
Critical Thinking Strategies	3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...				
14. encouraged students to judge or evaluate situations, problems, or issues.	2 (11%)	10 (55%)	1 (5%)	5 (28%)
15. engaged students in comparing and contrasting ideas (e.g., analyze generated ideas).	2 (11%)	5 (28%)	1 (5%)	10 (55%)
16. provided opportunities for students to generalize from concrete data or information to the abstract.	2 (11%)	1 (5%)		15 (83%)
17. encouraged student synthesis or summary of information within or across disciplines.				18 (100%)
Comments: <i>The use of critical thinking skills was sparse, with some evidence of analysis and evaluation activities, primarily in PEP classrooms.</i>				

<i>Creative Thinking Strategies</i>	3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...				
18. solicited many diverse thoughts about issues or ideas.		8 (44%)	1 (5%)	9 (50%)
19. engaged students in the exploration of diverse points of view to reframe ideas.				18 (100%)
20. encouraged students to demonstrate open-mindedness and tolerance of imaginative, sometimes playful solutions to problems.		2 (11%)		16 (89%)
21. provided opportunities for students to develop and elaborate on their ideas.		8 (44%)		10 (55%)
<i>Comments: Use of creative thinking strategies was also limited, occurring for the purpose of brainstorming of ideas and elaboration of student commentary in selected classrooms.</i>				
<i>Analysis and Inquiry Strategies</i>	3	2	1	N/O
The teacher...				
22. employed the inquiry process to stimulate high level learning.	3 (17%)	11 (61%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)
23. asked high level questions that encouraged students to think and ask their own questions.		4 (22%)		14 (78%)
24. employed activities that required analysis of text, use of models, or other symbolic sources.	3 (17%)	7 (39%)		8 (44%)
25. employed activities that required students to build argument orally, visually, in written form, or by using models and symbols.	1 (5%)		1 (5%)	16 (89%)
26. asked students to collect and draw inferences from data and represent findings in a relevant form.	1 (5%)	10 (55%)	2 (11%)	5 (28%)
<i>Comments: Math classes tended to be routine and used close adherence to Singapore math problems in the book; science classes were more open-ended but often lacked clear purpose. Social studies classes were used for team building activities, not geared to differentiation per se. Writing classes adhered to the district curriculum for guidance in content and process. PEP classes seemed to be composed of the same set of activities, regardless of grade level—diversified but disconnected, challenging for students in the moment but without carryover value. Very interesting math activities, however, that could have been easily connected to a unit on problem-solving.</i>				

Appendix B: Common Focus Group Themes by Stakeholder Role in Port Washington

	Administrators	Teachers	Parents	Students
Identification Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Identification process does not address underrepresentation effectively --Lack of objective criteria for selection —Lack of teacher input and overreliance on test scores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Identification concern—lack of finding underrepresented groups (eg. ELL, 2x, minority) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Not well-informed about the identification system in its current form --Concerned about the lack of informed classroom teachers in making the initial selection of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Identification process effective in general --Some students are in the program who should not be and others are not who should be.
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Concerns for program articulation (middle and high) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Concern for K-12 articulation (middle and high) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Challenging strong curriculum in PEP but also lacking coherence --Lack of connection and alignment to core district curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Program was challenging and interesting. --Students were positive about their curriculum at all levels except Grade 6
Quality of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Professional development needs that are linked to skills and competencies of a high quality teacher. --Unevenness in the quality of teaching in PEP --Regular teachers need to use differentiation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Teacher quality was judged to be effective, with teachers perceived to be working hard under difficult conditions of lack of support --More training needed for non-PEP and PEP teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Teacher quality was judged to be high in PEP. --More professional development needed for classroom teachers --Stronger communication with parents needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Students perceived teachers as highly effective and knowledgeable in their subject area, asking the right questions.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Lack of alignment of high level assessments --AP scores can serve as useful assessment tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Assessment concerns related to the alignment of district testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Informal means to assess learning employed in PEP such as presentations, performance tasks, projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Assessment was perceived in multiple ways by the students, including the evidence from project work

Appendix C 2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards National Association for Gifted Children

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Evaluation Checklist—Port Washington School District, New York

Gifted Education Programming Standard 1: Learning and Development

Introduction

For teachers and other educators in PreK-12 settings to be effective in working with learners with gifts and talents, they must understand the characteristics and needs of the population for whom they are planning curriculum, instruction, assessment, programs, and services. These characteristics provide the rationale for differentiation in programs, grouping, and services for this population and are translated into appropriate differentiation choices made at curricular and program levels in schools and school districts. While cognitive growth is important in such programs, affective development is also necessary. Thus many of the characteristics addressed in this standard emphasize affective development linked to self-understanding and social awareness.

Standard 1: Learning and Development		Indicators				
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.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 1		5	2	5	1	
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
1.1. <i>Self-Understanding.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate self-knowledge with respect to their interests, strengths, identities, and needs in socio-emotional development and in intellectual, academic, creative, leadership, and artistic domains	1.1.1. Educators engage students with gifts and talents in identifying interests, Strengths, and gifts.	X				
	1.1.2. Educators assist students with gifts and talents in developing identities supportive of achievement.	X				
1.2. <i>Self-Understanding.</i> Students with gifts and talents possess a developmentally appropriate understanding of how they learn and grow; they recognize the influences of their beliefs, traditions, and values on their learning and behavior.	1.2.1. Educators develop activities that match each student’s developmental level and culture-based learning needs.			X		
1.3. <i>Self-Understanding.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate understanding of and respect for similarities and differences between themselves and their peer group and others in the general population.	1.3.1. Educators provide a variety of research-based grouping practices for students with gifts and talents that allow them to interact with individuals of various gifts, talents, abilities, and strengths.	X				
	1.3.2. Educators model respect for individuals with diverse abilities, strengths, and goals.	X				

Key: Y indicates Yes; U indicates Uneven; N indicates No; D indicates Developing; N/O indicates Not Observed

Form completed by gifted education coordinator in collaboration with the evaluator.

Standard 1: Learning and Development		Indicators				
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.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
1.4. <i>Awareness of Needs.</i> Students with gifts and talents access resources from the community to support cognitive and affective needs, including social interactions with others having similar interests and abilities or experiences, including same-age peers and mentors or experts.	1.4.1. Educators provide role models (e.g., through mentors, bibliotherapy) for students with gifts and talents that match their abilities and interests.				X	
	1.4.2. Educators identify out-of-school learning opportunities that match students' abilities and interests.	X				
1.5. <i>Awareness of Needs.</i> Students' families and communities understand similarities and differences with respect to the development and characteristics of advanced and typical learners and support students with gifts and talents' needs	1.5.1. Educators collaborate with families in accessing resources to develop their child's talents.		X			
1.6. <i>Cognitive and Affective Growth.</i> Students with gifts and talents benefit from meaningful and challenging learning activities addressing their unique characteristics and needs.	1.6.1. Educators design interventions for students to develop cognitive and affective growth that is based on research of effective practices.		X			
	1.6.2. Educators develop specialized intervention services for students with gifts and talents who are underachieving and are now learning and developing their talents.			X		
1.7. <i>Cognitive and Affective Growth.</i> Students with gifts and talents recognize their preferred approaches to learning and expand their repertoire.	1.7.1. Teachers enable students to identify their preferred approaches to learning, accommodate these preferences, and expand them.			X		
1.8. <i>Cognitive and Affective Growth.</i> Students with gifts and talents identify future career goals that match their talents and abilities and resources needed to meet those goals (e.g., higher education opportunities, mentors, financial support).	1.8.1. Educators provide students with college and career guidance that is consistent with their strengths.			X		
	1.8.2. Teachers and counselors implement a curriculum scope and sequence that contains person/social awareness and adjustment, academic planning, and vocational and career awareness.			X		

Items 1.62, 1.71, 1.81, 1.82 are checked “no” in respect to a differentiated model of guidance for underachieving gifted students. All students receive general guidance services that provide personal identity development, academic planning and career awareness by middle school.

2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Evaluation Checklist

Gifted Education Programming Standard 2: Assessment

Introduction

Knowledge about all forms of assessment is essential for educators of students with gifts and talents. It is integral to identification, assessing each student's learning progress, and evaluation of programming. Educators need to establish a challenging environment and collect multiple types of assessment information so that all students are able to demonstrate their gifts and talents. Educators' understanding of non-biased, technically adequate, and equitable approaches enables them to identify students who represent diverse backgrounds. They also differentiate their curriculum and instruction by using pre- and post-, performance-based, product-based, and out-of-level assessments. As a result of each educator's use of ongoing assessments, students with gifts and talents demonstrate advanced and complex learning. Using these student progress data, educators then evaluate services and make adjustments to one or more of the school's programming components so that student performance is improved.

Standard 2: Assessment		Indicators				
Description: Assessments provide information about identification, learning progress and outcomes, and evaluation of programming for students with gifts and talents in all domains.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 2		13	1	7		
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
2.1. <i>Identification.</i> All students in grades PK-12 have equal access to a comprehensive assessment system that allows them to demonstrate diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness.	2.1.1. Educators develop environments and instructional activities that encourage students to express diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness.		X			
	2.1.2. Educators provide parents/guardians with information regarding diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness.			X		
2.2. <i>Identification.</i> Each student reveals his or her exceptionalities or potential through assessment evidence so that appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications can be provided.	2.2.1. Educators establish comprehensive, cohesive, and ongoing procedures for identifying and serving students with gifts and talents. These provisions include informed consent, committee review, student retention, student reassessment, student exiting, and appeals procedures for both entry and exit from gifted program services.	X				
	2.2.2. Educators select and use multiple assessments that measure diverse abilities, talents, and strengths that are based on current theories, models, and research.	X				
	2.2.3 Assessments provide qualitative and quantitative information from a variety of sources, including off-level testing, are nonbiased and equitable, and are technically adequate for the purpose.	X				
	2.2.4. Educators have knowledge of student exceptionalities and collect assessment data while adjusting curriculum and instruction to learn about each student's developmental level and aptitude for learning.			X		
	2.2.5. Educators interpret multiple assessments in different domains and understand the uses and limitations of the assessments in identifying the needs of students with gifts and talents.	X				
	2.2.6. Educators inform all parents/guardians about the identification process.	X				

	Teachers obtain parental/guardian permission for assessments, use culturally sensitive checklists, and elicit evidence regarding the child's interests and potential outside of the classroom setting.					
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The district follows state guidelines in respect to their identification practices. They also do individual IQ testing as a final step before placement of students in the program. Students who fall close to the cut-off score would usually be included in the program. There are no exit procedures currently in place.

Cuts to the program have limited parental involvement sessions that would be typically be run by the PEP teachers related to the identification process and program follow-up.

Program interventions are available from Grades 3-6 only. Not all third grade students are served nor are 6th grade students receiving services beyond the PEP period once a week.

Standard 2: Assessment		Indicators				
Description: Assessments provide information about identification, learning progress and outcomes, and evaluation of programming for students with gifts and talents in all domains.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices*					
2.3. <i>Identification.</i> Students with identified needs represent diverse backgrounds and reflect the total student population of the district.	2.3.1. Educators select and use non-biased and equitable approaches for identifying students with gifts and talents, which may include using locally developed norms or assessment tools in the child’s native language or in nonverbal formats.	X				
	2.3.2. Educators understand and implement district and state policies designed to foster equity in gifted programming and services.	X				
	2.3.3. Educators provide parents/guardians with information in their native language regarding diverse behaviors and characteristics that are associated with giftedness and with information that explains the nature and purpose of gifted programming options.	X				
2.4. <i>Learning Progress and Outcomes.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate advanced and complex learning as a result of using multiple, appropriate, and ongoing assessments.	2.4.1. Educators use differentiated pre- and post- performance-based assessments to measure the progress of students with gifts and talents.			X		
	2.4.2. Educators use differentiated product-based assessments to measure the progress of students with gifts and talents.			X		
	2.4.3. Educators use off-level standardized assessments to measure the progress of students with gifts and talents.			X		
	2.4.4. Educators use and interpret qualitative and quantitative assessment information to develop a profile of the strengths and weaknesses of each student with gifts and talents to plan appropriate intervention.			X		
	2.4.5. Educators communicate and interpret assessment information to students with gifts and talents and their parents/guardians.	X				
2.5. <i>Evaluation of Programming.</i> Students identified with gifts and talents demonstrate important learning progress as a result of programming and services.	2.5.1. Educators ensure that the assessments used in the identification and evaluation processes are reliable and valid for each instrument’s purpose, allow for above-grade-level performance, and allow for diverse perspectives.	X				
	2.5.2. Educators ensure that the assessment of the progress of students with gifts and talents uses multiple indicators that measure mastery of content, higher level thinking skills, achievement in specific program areas, and affective growth.			X		
	2.5.3. Educators assess the quantity, quality, and appropriateness of the programming and services provided for students with gifts and talents by disaggregating assessment data and yearly progress data and making the results public.	X				
2.6. <i>Evaluation of Programming.</i> Students identified with gifts and talents have increased access and they show significant learning progress as a result of improving components of gifted education programming.	2.6.1. Administrators provide the necessary time and resources to implement an annual evaluation plan developed by persons with expertise in program evaluation and gifted education.	X				
	2.6.2. The evaluation plan is purposeful and evaluates how student-level outcomes are influenced by one or more of the following components of gifted education programming: (a) identification, (b) curriculum, (c) instructional programming and services, (d) ongoing assessment of student learning, (e) counseling and guidance programs, (f) teacher qualifications and professional development, (g) parent/guardian and community involvement, (h) programming resources, and (i) programming design, management, and delivery.	X				

<p>*An evaluation of the program does not occur annually; however, when it is done, the executive summary is disseminated to relevant publics. Test results are shared with all parents; assessments are made available in Spanish to all families needing them. The MAP test allows educators to be apprised of all students' growth.</p>	<p>2.6.3. Educators disseminate the results of the evaluation, orally and in written form, and explain how they will use the results.</p>	<p>X</p>				
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2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Evaluation Checklist

Gifted Education Programming Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction

Introduction

Assessment is an integral component of the curriculum planning process. The information obtained from multiple types of assessments informs decisions about curriculum content, instructional strategies, and resources that will support the growth of students with gifts and talents. Educators develop and use a comprehensive and sequenced core curriculum that is aligned with local, state, and national standards, then differentiate and expand it. In order to meet the unique needs of students with gifts and talents, this curriculum must emphasize advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content within cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and leadership domains. Educators must possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies in delivering the curriculum (a) to develop talent, enhance learning, and provide students with the knowledge and skills to become independent self-aware learners, and (b) to give students the tools to contribute to a multicultural, diverse society. The curriculum, instructional strategies, and materials and resources must engage a variety of learners using culturally responsive practices.

Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction		Indicators				
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.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 3*		10	6	2	2	
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
3.1. <i>Curriculum Planning.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth commensurate with aptitude during the school year.	3.1.1. Educators use local, state, and national standards to align and expand curriculum and instructional plans.	X				
	3.1.2. Educators design and use a comprehensive and continuous scope and sequence to develop differentiated plans for PK-12 students with gifts and talents.			X		
	3.1.3. Educators adapt, modify, or replace the core or standard curriculum to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents and those with special needs such as twice-exceptional, highly gifted, and English language learners.				X	
	3.1.4. Educators design differentiated curricula that incorporate advanced, conceptually challenging, in-depth, distinctive, and complex content for students with gifts and talents.		X			
	3.1.5. Educators use a balanced assessment system, including pre-assessment and formative assessment, to identify students' needs, develop differentiated education plans, and adjust plans based on continual progress monitoring.				X	
	3.1.6. Educators use pre-assessments and pace instruction based on the learning rates of students with gifts and talents and accelerate and compact learning as appropriate		X			
	3.1.7. Educators use information and technologies, including assistive technologies, to individualize for students with gifts and talents, including those who are twice-exceptional.	X				

3.2. <i>Talent Development</i> . Students with gifts and talents become more competent in multiple talent areas and across dimensions of learning.	3.2.1. Educators design curricula in cognitive, affective, aesthetic, social, and leadership domains that are challenging and effective for students with gifts and talents.			X		
	3.2.2. Educators use metacognitive models to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.		X			

*Curriculum alignment work is in progress for all students; RTI in place for struggling learners predominantly.

Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Instruction		Indicators				
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.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices*					
3.3. <i>Talent Development.</i> Students with gifts and talents develop their abilities in their domain of talent and/or area of interest.	3.3.1. Educators select, adapt, and use a repertoire of instructional strategies and materials that differentiate for students with gifts and talents and that respond to diversity.	X				
	3.3.2. Educators use school and community resources that support differentiation.	X				
	3.3.3. Educators provide opportunities for students with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest and/or talent.	X				
3.4. <i>Instructional Strategies.</i> Students with gifts and talents become independent investigators.	3.4.1. Educators use critical-thinking strategies to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.	X				
	3.4.2. Educators use creative-thinking strategies to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.	X				
	3.4.3. Educators use problem-solving model strategies to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.	X				
	3.4.4. Educators use inquiry models to meet the needs of students with gifts and talents.	X				
3.5. <i>Culturally Relevant Curriculum.</i> Students with gifts and talents develop knowledge and skills for living and being productive in a multicultural, diverse, and global society.	3.5.1. Educators develop and use challenging, culturally responsive curriculum to engage all students with gifts and talents.		X			
	3.5.2. Educators integrate career exploration experiences into learning opportunities for students with gifts and talents, e.g. biography study or speakers.	X				
	3.5.3. Educators use curriculum for deep explorations of cultures, languages, and social issues related to diversity.		X			
3.6. <i>Resources.</i> Students with gifts and talents benefit from gifted education programming that provides a variety of high quality resources and materials.	3.6.1. Teachers and administrators demonstrate familiarity with sources for high quality resources and materials that are appropriate for learners with gifts and talents.		X			

*Strategies and differentiated materials used by PEP teachers with gifted students in the pullout program. Some evidence of use of selected strategies by regular classroom teachers.

2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Evaluation Checklist

Gifted Education Programming Standard 4: Learning Environments

Introduction

Effective educators of students with gifts and talents create safe learning environments that foster emotional well-being, positive social interaction, leadership for social change, and cultural understanding for success in a diverse society. Knowledge of the impact of giftedness and diversity on social-emotional development enables educators of students with gifts and talents to design environments that encourage independence, motivation, and self-efficacy of individuals from all backgrounds. They understand the role of language and communication in talent development and the ways in which culture affects communication and behavior. They use relevant strategies and technologies to enhance oral, written, and artistic communication of learners whose needs vary based on exceptional ability, language proficiency, and cultural and linguistic differences. They recognize the value of multilingualism in today's global community.

Standard 4: Learning Environments		Indicators				
Description: Learning environments foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership in the 21 st century to ensure specific student outcomes.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 4		14	2			1
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
4.1. <i>Personal Competence.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate growth in personal competence and dispositions for exceptional academic and creative productivity. These include self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, resilience, independence, curiosity, and risk taking.	4.1.1. Educators maintain high expectations for all students with gifts and talents as evidenced in meaningful and challenging activities.		X			
	4.1.2. Educators provide opportunities for self-exploration, development and pursuit of interests, and development of identities supportive of achievement, e.g., through mentors and role models.	X				
	4.1.3. Educators create environments that support trust among diverse learners.	X				
	4.1.4. Educators provide feedback that focuses on effort, on evidence of potential to meet high standards, and on mistakes as learning opportunities.	X				
	4.1.5. Educators provide examples of positive coping skills and opportunities to apply them.	X				
4.2. <i>Social Competence.</i> Students with gifts and talents develop social competence manifested in positive peer relationships and social interactions.	4.2.1. Educators understand the needs of students with gifts and talents for both solitude and social interaction.					X
	4.2.2. Educators provide opportunities for interaction with intellectual and artistic/creative peers as well as with chronological-age peers.	X				
	4.2.3. Educators assess and provide instruction on social skills needed for school, community, and the world of work.	X				
4.3. <i>Leadership.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate personal and social responsibility and leadership skills.	4.3.1 Educators establish a safe and welcoming climate for addressing social issues and developing personal responsibility.	X				
	4.3.2. Educators provide environments for developing many forms of leadership and leadership skills.		X			
	4.3.3. Educators promote opportunities for leadership in community settings to effect positive change.	X				

4.1.1 Challenge level was uneven across both regular and PEP classrooms. 4.2.1 This indicator was not observed nor could it be inferred from the approaches seen in regular classrooms or PEP settings. The focus was very strong on social interaction in both settings for purposes of learning. 4.3.2 While leadership in community settings might be seen in contest and competition opportunities (4.3.3), the emphasis on leadership development of the gifted was not seen to be a goal of the PEP program per se nor a feature of Grade levels 3-6.

Standard 4: Learning Environments		Indicators				
Description: Learning environments foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership in the 21 st century to ensure specific student outcomes.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
4.4. <i>Cultural Competence</i> . Students with gifts and talents value their own and others' language, heritage, and circumstance. They possess skills in communicating, teaming, and collaborating with diverse individuals and across diverse groups. ¹ They use positive strategies to address social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping.	4.4.1. Educators model appreciation for and sensitivity to students' diverse backgrounds and languages.	X				
	4.4.2. Educators censure discriminatory language and behavior and model appropriate strategies.	X				
	4.4.3. Educators provide structured opportunities to collaborate with diverse peers on a common goal.	X				
4.5. <i>Communication Competence</i> . Students with gifts and talents develop competence in interpersonal and technical communication skills. They demonstrate advanced oral and written skills, balanced biliteracy or multiliteracy, and creative expression. They display fluency with technologies that support effective communication	4.5.1. Educators provide opportunities for advanced development and maintenance of first and second language(s).	X				
	4.5.2. Educators provide resources to enhance oral, written, and artistic forms of communication, recognizing students' cultural context.	X				
	4.5.3. Educators ensure access to advanced communication tools, including assistive technologies, and use of these tools for expressing higher-level thinking and creative productivity.	X				

¹ Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area.

2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Evaluation Checklist

Gifted Education Programming Standard 5: Programming

Introduction

The term programming refers to a continuum of services that address students with gifts and talents' needs in all settings. Educators develop policies and procedures to guide and sustain all components of comprehensive and aligned programming and services for PreK-12 students with gifts and talents. Educators use a variety of programming options such as acceleration and enrichment in varied grouping arrangements (cluster grouping, resource rooms, special classes, special schools) and within individualized learning options (independent study, mentorships, online courses, internships) to enhance students' performance in cognitive and affective areas and to assist them in identifying future career goals. They augment and integrate current technologies within these learning opportunities to increase access to high level programming such as distance learning courses and to increase connections to resources outside of the school walls. In implementing services, educators in gifted, general, special education programs, and related professional services collaborate with one another and parents/guardians and community members to ensure that students' diverse learning needs are met. Administrators demonstrate their support of these programming options by allocating sufficient resources so that all students within gifts and talents receive appropriate educational services

Standard 5: Programming		Indicators				
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.		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 5		4	2	5	1	1
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
5.1. <i>Variety of Programming.</i> Students with gifts and talents participate in a variety of evidence-based programming options that enhance performance in cognitive and affective areas.	5.1.1. Educators regularly use multiple alternative approaches to accelerate learning.			X		
	5.1.2. Educators regularly use enrichment options to extend and deepen learning opportunities within and outside of the school setting.	X				
	5.1.3. Educators regularly use multiple forms of grouping, including clusters, resource rooms, special classes, or special schools.	X				
	5.1.4. Educators regularly use individualized learning options such as mentorships, internships, online courses, and independent study.			X		
	5.1.5. Educators regularly use current technologies, including online learning options and assistive technologies to enhance access to high-level programming.	X				
	5.1.6. Administrators demonstrate support for gifted programs through equitable allocation of resources and demonstrated willingness to ensure that learners with gifts and talents receive appropriate educational services.			X		
5.2. <i>Coordinated Services.</i> Students with gifts and talents demonstrate progress as a result of the shared commitment and coordinated services of gifted education, general education, special education, and related professional services, such as school counselors, school psychologists, and social workers.	5.2.1. Educators in gifted, general, and special education programs, as well as those in specialized areas, collaboratively plan, develop, and implement services for learners with gifts and talents.				X	

5.1.6 Resource allocations for gifted are not at parity with other specialized programs such as special education and ELL.. 5.2.1 Collaboration across programs is encouraged.

Standard 5: Programming		Indicators				
		Y	U	N	D	N/O
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.						
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
5.3. <i>Collaboration.</i> Students with gifts and talents' learning is enhanced by regular collaboration among families, community, and the school.	5.3.1. Educators regularly engage families and community members for planning, programming, evaluating, and advocating.			X		
5.4. <i>Resources.</i> Students with gifts and talents participate in gifted education programming that is adequately funded to meet student needs and program goals..	5.4.1. Administrators track expenditures at the school level to verify appropriate and sufficient funding for gifted programming and services.	X				
5.5. <i>Comprehensiveness.</i> Students with gifts and talents develop their potential through comprehensive, aligned programming and services.	5.5.1. Educators develop thoughtful, multi-year program plans in relevant student talent areas, PK-12.			X		
5.6. <i>Policies and Procedures.</i> Students with gifts and talents participate in regular and gifted education programs that are guided by clear policies and procedures that provide for their advanced learning needs (e.g., early entrance, acceleration, credit in lieu of enrollment).	5.6.1. Educators create policies and procedures to guide and sustain all components of the program, including assessment, identification, acceleration practices, and grouping practices, that is built on an evidence-based foundation in gifted education.		X			
5.7. <i>Career Pathways.</i> Students with gifts and talents identify future career goals and the talent development pathways to reach those goals	5.7.1. Educators provide professional guidance and counseling for individual student strengths, interests, and values.		X			
	5.7.2. Educators facilitate mentorships, internships, and vocational programming experiences that match student interests and aptitudes.					X

Funds not specific to gifted at the building level; supplemented by funds from Central Office for field trips and other needs such as conference attendance. Guidance not specific for gifted students except through PEP teachers.

2010 Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards Evaluation Checklist

Gifted Education Programming Standard 6: Professional Development

Introduction

Professional development is essential for all educators involved in the development and implementation of gifted programs and services. Professional development is the intentional development of professional expertise as outlined by the NAGC-CEC teacher preparation standards and is an ongoing part of gifted educators' professional and ethical practice. Professional development may take many forms ranging from district-sponsored workshops and courses, university courses, professional conferences, independent studies, and presentations by external consultants and should be based on systematic needs assessments and professional reflection. Students participating in gifted education programs and services are taught by teachers with developed expertise in gifted education. Gifted education program services are developed and supported by administrators, coordinators, curriculum specialists, general education, special education, and gifted education teachers who have developed expertise in gifted education. Since students with gifts and talents spend much of their time within general education classrooms, general education teachers need to receive professional development in gifted education that enables them to recognize the characteristics of giftedness in diverse populations, understand the school or district referral and identification process, and possess an array of high quality, research-based differentiation strategies that challenge students. Services for students with gifts and talents are enhanced by guidance and counseling professionals with expertise in gifted education.

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, funding for continuing education, and substitute support. These practices are judged through the assessment of relevant student outcomes.		Indicators				
		Y	U	N	D	N/O
Total Indicators for Standard 6		5	2	5		
Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
6.1. <i>Talent Development.</i> Students develop their talents and gifts as a result of interacting with educators who meet the national teacher preparation standards in gifted education.	6.1.1. Educators systematically participate in ongoing, research-supported professional development that addresses the foundations of gifted education, characteristics of students with gifts and talents, assessment, curriculum planning and instruction, learning environments, and programming.			X		
	6.1.2. The school district provides professional development for teachers that models how to develop environments and instructional activities that encourage students to express diverse characteristics and behaviors that are associated with giftedness.	X				
	6.1.3. Educators participate in ongoing professional development addressing key issues such as anti-intellectualism and trends in gifted education such as equity and access.			X		
	6.1.4. Administrators provide human and material resources needed for professional development in gifted education (e.g. release time, funding for continuing education, substitute support, webinars, or mentors).	X				
	6.1.5. Educators use their awareness of organizations and publications relevant to gifted education to promote learning for students with gifts and talents.	X				

Standard 6: Professional Development		Indicators				
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Student Outcomes	Evidence-Based Practices					
6.2. <i>Socio-emotional Development.</i> Students with gifts and talents develop socially and emotionally as a result of educators who have participated in professional development aligned with national standards in gifted education and National Staff Development Standards.	6.2.1. Educators participate in ongoing professional development to support the social and emotional needs of students with gifts and talents.		X			
6.3. <i>Lifelong Learners.</i> Students develop their gifts and talents as a result of educators who are life-long learners, participating in ongoing professional development and continuing education opportunities	6.3.1. Educators assess their instructional practices and continue their education in school district staff development, professional organizations, and higher education settings based on these assessments.			X		
	6.3.2. Educators participate in professional development that is sustained over time, that includes regular follow-up, and that seeks evidence of impact on teacher practice and on student learning.			X		
	6.3.3. Educators use multiple modes of professional development delivery including online courses, online and electronic communities, face-to-face workshops, professional learning communities, and book talks.	X				
	6.3.4. Educators identify and address areas for personal growth for teaching students with gifts and talents in their professional development plans.			X		
6.4. <i>Ethics.</i> Students develop their gifts and talents as a result of educators who are ethical in their practices.	6.4.1. Educators respond to cultural and personal frames of reference when teaching students with gifts and talents.		X			
	6.4.2. Educators comply with rules, policies, and standards of ethical practice.	X				

Teachers do not design individual plans for professional development; rather, it is a district-level model with input and needs assessment surveys that are conducted annually.

Appendix D: Elaboration of Recommendations for program improvement

1. Specific identification recommendations:

The weakest link in the identification system is the teacher checklist as it serves as a gatekeeper for entry to the testing for the program. I would recommend two things to improve that situation. One is to revise the teacher checklist used in the following ways:

- Employ specific domain indicators in collaboration with middle and high school academic departments in science, social science, math, and English. They may agree with the items you have selected, but use it as a way to educate them as well to the process of identification used at third grade.
- Separate the indicators for science from social science to include for science: “interest in taking things apart and reassembling”, “fascination with puzzles and games”, and “enjoys working with physical materials, toys, etc. to see how they work”. Keep “curiosity” and “observant behaviors” in the science category.
- Add indicators for other areas as well. For math, “interest in numbers and patterns”, “quickness in problem-solving”. For language arts, “enjoys playing roles, pretending from books”, “is a fluent reader, and enjoys reading more difficult books”, “enjoys language, playing with words, etc.” and “enjoys writing in journals, etc.”.
- Be sure there are 5 indicators for each subscale used.
- Delete the “leadership” subscale. This is a desirable set of characteristics to be developed in school, not used to keep cognitively advanced children out of programs. Often young gifted children have not developed these non-cognitive behaviors to the extent that is atypical nor may they ever. Many young gifted children and adults do not like to work in groups. It does not mean they do not need services for their advanced abilities in school-based material.
- Change the scale to not award a point for not observed (ie. make it zero), and eliminate the category “always” as it hardly applicable to any classroom behavior. The descriptor of “consistent” then should accompany the “often” category. This would yield a 3-point scale. A total high score would be 18 points on six subscales (math, science, social studies, ELA, cognitive, and creativity).
- Continue to conduct annual professional development sessions with all teachers who nominate students on the PEP Student Evaluation Scale to ensure they understand the categories and the indicators for each.
- Change the qualifying score for teacher evaluation. Be sure that students have a minimum score in two categories of the scale, one generic and one specific. In this way, students who

have one strong academic strength may be included for further assessment as long as they also demonstrate strong cognitive or creative ability.

--Use the scale to find students in second grade or earlier. Some aspects of a program should be available from the time students enter school.

2. The second change recommended is to use the Naglieri as a second screening instrument at second grade or earlier. So for students to be tested on the WISC-IV, they must meet one of two criteria: a Naglieri score in the top 5% OR a teacher nomination form that exceeds x number of points (based on commentary for the revisions to the form). In this way, you have two pieces of evidence that the students are exhibiting advanced abilities, not just teacher judgment. Either criterion, not both, would allow further testing.
3. Study the results of using a revised system. How many more low income and minority students are identified by 3rd grade, assuming the process would start formally at 2nd grade? On what criteria are they excelling? If you ranked the top students in each minority group, where would they fall in respect to selection criteria? What about low income students? What is the crossover to also being minority? Track these students annually to determine patterns of growth. You will also want to study the results from the revised teacher checklist and training. How many teachers can assess accurately the categories and indicators? What is your evidence of this?

In sum, I am recommending *six* changes in respect to the identification process:

--Change the teacher checklist to reflect the importance of science and the lack of importance of leadership qualities at this stage of development.

--Conduct the assessment no later than second grade, preferably earlier.

--Conduct a K-2 analysis of the top 10% of low income and minority children for talent development indicators and follow-up classroom-based interventions.

--Consider the peak performance in one area of the WISC -IV for inclusion rather than both verbal and perceptual reasoning.

--Use two indicators as the basis for individual testing, one of them the teacher checklist and the other the Naglieri. Require high performance on only one for further assessment.

--Study the results and compare to earlier years in regard to the yield of low income and minority students and the overall yield of students identified.

2. Elementary program recommendations

Gifted students are as different from the norm as developmentally delayed students, functioning two standard deviations below the norm, who routinely receive appropriate services. If a student's ability is two standard deviations beyond the norm or more (the identified core group capacities), readiness for learning is such that they could handle two years of schooling in one, especially in strength and interest areas, make connections among areas of learning with insight, and produce work that is exemplary for their age level in various contests and competitions, then they have a fundamental right to receive services commensurate with such advanced ability at all grade levels in the context of a school system. "Difference from the norm" is the basis on which special services for both gifted and special education students have always been determined. Thus the district is charged with providing these students an appropriate education, just as it does all students. In tight budget circumstances, other models of delivery, however, should be considered rather than reducing allocations to a program that serves approximately 13% of the school age population, based on 2015 numbers identified in Grades 4-6.

Therefore, I propose you consider one or a combination of the following service delivery options for the identified core group of gifted learners:

- a. Provide ***cross grade grouped classes***, beginning as early as kindergarten (K-1, 2-3, 4-5) that contain all students on the watch list of underserved groups and core identified students as early as Grade 2 in each school. Trained teachers in gifted education would work with these classes in all academic areas, employing differentiated materials and stations to accommodate differences. The top minority and low income students would be included from kindergarten on in relevant advanced activities in these classrooms. Based on school distributions, these classes would be run at the average class size for that school, typically 22 students. A looping model for teachers would be employed where two teachers in each building would work with these classes across Grades K-5. Special education services for twice-exceptional students and other impairments would be appropriately designated for these classrooms.

Advantages: Gifted learners have a range of peers in respect to age and level; the same teacher may be employed to work with multiple grades, potentially saving staff dollars; within class differentiation would be routine; younger students ready to move forward by a year may easily do so.

OR

- b. Create core group ***academic pullout*** opportunities during reading and math periods daily within each school. These pullout programs would provide differentiated instruction in the two core areas of the curriculum in which gifted students typically need support for advanced work at the elementary level—reading and math. Differentiated materials (ie. advanced reading materials, off-level math texts, and research-based gifted materials) would be employed as the curriculum base. Trained teachers of the gifted would work with

these students daily and be responsible for their grades in these two subjects. Different teachers would work with the two subject areas to accommodate differentiated staffing needs for subject matter expertise. To ensure sufficient class size, it is recommended that some cross grade groupings be employed. Class sizes should be comparable to others in the district. Special education services for twice-exceptional students and other impairments would be appropriately designated for these classrooms.

Students from low income and minority backgrounds at each school site would be included in each subject area grouping if they are in the top 10% of their group on relevant instrumentation. Achievement data on readiness to perform at advanced levels in one of the core subjects is sufficient for inclusion in the advanced academic model.

Advantages: Gifted learners have an integrated reading and math program yet still have a base classroom with all learners; gifted learners have a peer group in core learning areas; teachers with subject matter specialties may be deployed to work with these learners in collaboration with PEP staff, strengthening the possibility of appropriate advanced work.

OR

- c. Create ***cluster-grouped classes*** at each school site whereby identified core group students are clustered in one teacher's classroom at each grade level. These cluster groups then should receive differentiated instruction daily in at least two academic areas. Teachers of cluster classes would need to receive training in gifted education, requisite to the 12 hours recommended by the national standards and the state of New York. They would be supported by trained teachers of the gifted with differentiation in the classroom. Cluster groups may range from 2-8. It is recommended that other students assigned to a cluster classroom be above average in their performance and include students who were at the next level down in district testing at relevant grade levels.

Class sizes should be comparable to others in the district. Special education services for twice-exceptional students and other impairments would be appropriately designated for these classrooms. Students from low income and minority backgrounds at each school site would be included in cluster groupings in relevant subject areas if they are in the top 10% on relevant instrumentation. Achievement data on readiness to perform at advanced levels in one of the core subjects is sufficient for inclusion in the cluster group.

Advantages: Gifted learners have a naturally occurring grade level peer group, flexibility in providing differentiation in core areas is great; a cadre of regular classroom teachers would receive training in working with gifted learners; PEP teachers may be used flexibly to push-in or pull-out as needed in classrooms.

OR

- d. Use a **mastery learning model** that would employ pre-assessment data, including identification data, as a basis for advanced instruction. Place identified students in classrooms at the appropriate level, based on their performance in reading and math, and provide differentiated instruction through various approaches. A model of scheduling that placed math and reading at the same time each day in each school would facilitate the successful implementation of this model. Assess annually for student readiness for further advanced work. Practically, this would mean that some students would be advanced by one or two years in either reading or math or both from kindergarten on. Accelerated students should be placed together and with older students in classrooms as well. Careful monitoring of ongoing advanced learning should be well-documented. Online opportunities in math as well as reading should be provided along with discussion groups ala Socratic Seminars and Math Olympiad. Within classroom groupings of accelerated students should be routinely employed for relevant project work in the subject area. Since all teachers hypothetically, would receive these advanced learners for instruction, the entire staff should be trained in the use of differentiated tactics, materials and approaches to assessment.

Currently trained teachers of the gifted would monitor student progress in each assigned building and work with regular classroom teachers to ensure that students are progressing appropriately. An individual Developmental Education Plan (DEP) may be employed to document student data and progress. On this model, gifted learners might finish elementary school at different rates, the majority one to two years early. Underrepresented groups would need to meet the standard for doing advanced work in relevant areas; however, they may be accelerated in their area of strength more readily than without the focus on mastery learning.

Advantages: Gifted learners receive advanced work in core areas based on evidence of mastery at their rate of learning; accelerated students would have at least one peer in any classroom to which they are assigned; early graduation from elementary school could be expected.

AND/OR

- e. Upgrade the **current pull-out model**. If the decision was to upgrade the current program, considerations for investment in the development of materials and the purchase of gifted materials would need to be made. Differentiated professional development would be needed for PEP teachers annually. Moreover, regular classroom teachers would need training in order to deliver differentiation in the classroom the rest of the time that students are not in PEP.

Additionally, I would recommend reinstating a 1.0 FTE PEP teacher in each elementary building in order to provide both direct services to students and consultative services to regular classroom teachers. Moreover, the need for services to the K-3 population,

especially underrepresented groups, would need attention in each building, a task to be assigned to PEP teachers.

It is also critical that the program develop a written framework for operation that aligns with regular classroom work and relevant curriculum content standards. This is especially critical as STEM opportunities look very similar to the types of activities used in PEP currently. Materials are also needed that flesh out major project options for students beyond current one paragraph descriptions. There is a need then to have the PEP program collaboratively developed with regular classroom teachers to ensure connections and lack of overlap, especially in project work.

Advantages: Easier to implement the recommended changes to the program as they align with evaluation findings; peer group opportunities provided; potential for a strong integrated program of study for the core group; expanded professional development emphasis provides more trained teachers capable of working with this population effectively.

By selecting one or more of these alternative options, the district would be serving gifted students in an appropriate way, based on research evidence that supports the use of pullout, special classes, and/or cluster grouping measures to serve the gifted when it is coupled with differentiated instruction (see Kulik, 1993, Rogers, 2002; Malek, et al., 2016). Lack of grouping of these students produces limited or no growth (Rogers, 2002; Malek, 2016). It also can affect participation rates and performance in advanced opportunities in high school such as AP.

Moreover, these options are 1) cost-effective and 2) school-based. It would require reallocating existing staff to provide services, however, based on training and interest (grandfather in teachers who are in the process of taking courses toward endorsement in gifted education). Differentiated staffing would be important to ensure that teachers who have strong subject matter expertise in each building are assigned to work with the gifted. Cost factors are primarily nested in the two areas of materials purchases for supplementary materials designed for use with gifted learners, and professional development of teachers (in-district, online, or Hunter College or Rutgers University classes).

3. Middle school recommendations for gifted program options/extensions

The middle school program should continue from the nature of what will be provided at the elementary level in regard to advanced options for students in all subjects at all three grade levels. This would practically mean that gifted learners had an advanced option available each of the three middle school years in the core academic subjects (all four) and art and world languages. Each advanced option should have a scope and sequence, comparable to what has been devised in math and art. The adding of these academic course extensions should replace the current PEP model at sixth grade.

These middle school “extension” classes would be selective and based on department criteria established. In the subject areas already developed and operational, (eg. art, math, and science), the criteria used appear to be reasonable and could be applied to each grade level at middle school. In the subject areas where no extensions currently exist, the current models in the subject areas of math, art, and science might be exemplars. For example, a portfolio of work for entry into the writing and language program would be appropriate along with a formal test of grammatical competency and prior year grades in the subject. In social studies, a set of three essays on particular issues or topics might be appropriate along with requisite grades to be selected for the social studies options. Current world language options may be elective until the end of seventh grade when a proficiency test may be applied to ensure readiness for the second year of the language being studied.

The development of the middle school options should be done in collaboration with high school AP teachers in the requisite subject areas to ensure articulation of higher level skills and content that is not duplicative. The vertical planning model should also be employed to ensure articulation of the progressive development of advanced skills in each domain.

Preparation of teachers for these advanced course options would include 12-hours of gifted education in addition to appropriate subject specialization and certification. Annual professional development options should be provided that address relevant skills and content for working with advanced students.

In sum, I am recommending *seven* changes in respect to the elementary and middle school program:

--Select a new *or* upgraded elementary program model that serves gifted students from kindergarten on, providing options at each grade level in areas of advanced achievement/aptitude. This model may be a cross grade model, a cluster grouped model, an academic pullout model, or a mastery learning model that employs extensive use of pre-assessments to gauge the degree of content acceleration required. An upgraded version of the existing program model is also recommended as a viable alternative.

--Provide services in a deliberate manner to low income and minority students through selecting the top 10%, and assessing peak performance in one area and programming for them in that area.

--Provide professional training and development to more teachers in gifted education and target those who would be working directly with the core group.

--Organize the program across the grades in each subject area to create talent trajectories for students advanced in each of the core and selected non-core areas.

--Articulate the elementary program with the middle and high school programs respectively. Provide both advanced and enriched options at each level of instruction.

--Provide an articulated program of advanced study options at all grade levels and subject areas in the middle school. Selection criteria and courses of study would need to be developed and linked to current areas of advanced learning in art, math, and science, currently offered at discrete levels.

--Develop a district-level acceleration policy, consistent with current research (see Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska & Shoplik, 2014).

4. The following recommendations explore program needs further in the curriculum dimension:

--Develop curriculum for the program that develops the goals that have been articulated. Regardless of the final form of the program, differentiated curriculum constitutes the core of it so such design work needs to be undertaken. (1996). No curriculum has been forthcoming that demonstrates the training reportedly received by teachers at that time in the enrichment model of instruction that they employ in the program.

-- A list of research-based differentiated curriculum materials may be sent by the evaluator upon request. ***

--Develop a bank of strategies that are appropriate for use with gifted learners, linked to advanced curriculum opportunities. While inquiry is appropriate for everyone, the level and type of applications may vary for gifted learners. While problem-based learning can be used with all learners, there are differences in the processes employed to facilitate such learning for the gifted.

--Develop and employ differentiated assessment approaches in classes and courses designed for the gifted. The use of performance-based and portfolio approaches as augmentation to traditional assessment is needed to demonstrate the real potential that these students possess.

--Make contests and competitions optional opportunities for all learners, not seen as parts of the gifted program per se. A program like Math Olympiad, for example, may be incorporated into an advanced math program as the most important aspect of it is the progressive development of challenging problems. By the same token, it could be used in regular classroom advanced math groups as well.

--Provide after school clubs and lunchtime opportunities, open to all, with offerings designed to respond to student interests and needs. Such opportunities represent a basic level of enrichment. Such opportunities should not be construed to be designed or offered only to gifted learners. If the schedule of operation for these offerings (eg. after school) is not cost-effective, then offer a Quest period once a week where all students select an option of interest, and each teacher provides a designed set of activities for students.

Appendix E: Advanced Placement Course Distribution for 2015

Social sciences (8 AP courses offered)

US History (183)*
Psychology (112)*
Macro-Economics (107)*
Micro-Economics (107)
European History (97)
US Government (58)*
Comparative government (21)
Human geography (1) +

Science (7 courses offered)

Physics B (54)
Physics I (52)—one year's data only
Environmental Science (51)
Biology (27)
Chemistry (13)
Physics-Mechanics (24)
Physics-Electro Mag (24)

English (2 courses offered)

English Literature (51)
English Language (45)

Math (4 courses offered)

Calculus AB (45)
Calculus BC (45)
Statistics (40)
Computer Science (37)

The Arts (3 courses offered)

Studio Art (38)
Studio Drawing (28)
Music theory (5)

World Languages (9 courses offered)

Italian (25)

Latin Literature (23)+

Latin Vergil (17)

French Language (17)

French Literature (13)+

Spanish Language (21)

Spanish Literature (14)

German (1)

Japanese (1)

*Upward trend in course-taking across the 7 years

+ last 2-3 years of data only