

PARIS SCHOOL DISTRICT



Gifted and Talented Program Handbook



Table of Contents

Philosophy of the Gifted and Talented Program	3
Definition of Giftedness	4
Services of the Gifted and Talented Program	4
Bill of Rights for Gifted Students	5
Characteristics of the Gifted and Talented	6
Staff Development	8
Job Description.....	9
Referral and Identification.....	10
Data collection.....	10
Record of G/T Participation.....	12
Appeal Process	13
Goals of the Gifted and Talented Program.....	13
Program Options.....	14
Curriculum Description	15
Curriculum Development.....	16
Curriculum Objectives.....	16
Acceleration Procedure.....	17
Annual Review of Student Placement.....	17
Exit Procedure.....	17
Program Evaluation.....	18

Philosophy of the Gifted and Talented Program

The Gifted and Talented (GATE) program in the Paris School District is designed to challenge students to reach their maximum potential both in and out of the classroom setting. This is accomplished by providing a variety of lessons, experiences, resources, and extracurricular activities that will develop talents and abilities that will help students find success in their life endeavors. We recognize there are students who possess exceptional abilities that may require enriched, extended, or accelerated programming in order to excel. As a result, students who are identified as “gifted and talented” will be provided direct services through the use of trained and licensed school personnel who will develop programs that address the special needs of each individual.

We recognize students who possess exceptional abilities require a school program to challenge and provide opportunities to develop talents. Identified students require a differentiated curriculum which offers opportunities to those with varied learning styles, and settings based on student choice and interest. While these opportunities are important for all students, they are essential for students as “gifted and talented” in order to allow for personal growth and development as learners and leaders.

Educators, parents, and the community must recognize and understand the need of gifted and talented children. It is the responsibility of the school district to identify gifted and talented students and to provide appropriate opportunities, using both school and community resources to foster individual development of our learners.

A characteristic of the Paris Schools GATE program is assist gifted learners in not only developing academically, but also socially and emotionally. By recognizing the unique needs and characteristics of each student and this group as a whole, programming can be geared toward the development of the whole child, providing gifted and talented students with a multitude of skills that will serve them well throughout life.

Any Paris School District student who demonstrates a need for differentiated educational experiences may be considered for participation on the GATE program.

The Gifted and Talented Program will be evaluated annually to ensure that programming is appropriate and goals and objectives are being met. The program will operate under the guidance of the PSD Gifted and Talented Coordinator with the support of licensed and trained GATE personnel.

Definition of Giftedness

“Gifted and talented children are those who by virtue of outstanding abilities in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity in specific academic fields, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.”

-U.S. Department of Education

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) says “gifted and talented” children and youth are those of high potential or ability whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated education experiences and/or services.

Giftedness, intelligence, and talent are fluid concepts that may look different in different contexts and cultures. Even within schools there is a range of personal beliefs about the concept of “gifted”. Gifted learners are, by Arkansas standards, children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at substantially higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment.

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who, by virtue of outstanding aptitudes, are capable of high performance.

Services of the Gifted and Talented Program

In coordination with the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) and Arkansas Act 445 of the Quality Education Act, Paris Gifted and Talented Education provides a program for “gifted and talented students” that adheres to all state standards and frameworks. GATE also offers students enrichment opportunities, extracurricular activities, Advanced Placement courses, clubs, and organizations that address most Common Core State Standards. Below are the goals, responsibilities, rights, and specific services for all K-12 students in the gifted program.

Bill of Rights for Gifted Students

1. Gifted children have a right to know about their giftedness. Educators and parents are often reluctant to discuss giftedness, but children have a right to know why they are identified and what it means to be a gifted learner.
2. Gifted children have a right to learn something new every day. Research has shown that gifted students spend up to 80% of their time in a classroom doing exactly what everyone else is doing, regardless of their current knowledge or academic strengths. This results in tremendous loss of learning opportunity.
3. Gifted children have a right to be passionate about their talent areas.
4. Developing talent requires endless hours to reach expertise. Although a minimal level of knowledge about a variety of topics is useful in life, children who have strong interests should be encouraged and assisted in pursuing that interest.
5. Gifted children have a right to have an identity beyond their talent area.
6. Developing talent includes developing self. Gifted children should have the opportunity to learn about a variety of subjects and about themselves.
7. Gifted children have a right to make mistakes. Perfectionism can be a problem for any gifted child. It is important to learn to take healthy risks in pursuit of developing one's talents.
8. Gifted children have a right to receive guidance in the development of talents. Talent does not flourish in isolation. It needs to be guided, and nourished by those with advanced skills and experience. This may require the assistance of expertise outside traditional educational venues.
9. Gifted children have a right to seek out a variety of friends. Gifted children may have difficulty finding same-age peers who share similar interests and passions. By seeking a variety of peer groups, it is possible to share interests with friends close in age, but also others based on interest or intellectual development.
10. Gifted children have a right not to be gifted at everything. Many gifted children may excel in one area, but be average or even below average in another area. It is important to seek growth in all areas of education, but gifted children have a right to not be expected to excel at everything.

Characteristics of the Gifted and Talented

There are numerous lists of characteristics of gifted and talented children. Teachers and parents should review each list as exemplary rather than exclusive. Few gifted students will display all of the characteristics, but understanding characteristics of gifted students will assist in the identification of those students who may benefit from placement in the GATE program. The characteristics describe observable behaviors that can signal that a particular child may warrant further observation or assessments for placement in gifted programming.

Characteristics of “gifted and talented” youth may include, but are not limited to:

- Above average intelligence or intellectual ability
- High task commitment and/or motivation
- Unique and creative abilities
- Strong sense of leadership and drive
- Natural ability in visual or performing arts

All students possess some degree of gifts and talents, so it is important to identify those characteristics that may benefit from further development in appropriate academic settings. It will be the duty of the Paris Gifted and Talented Program to evaluate students who exhibit signs of giftedness as soon as possible in their academic years in the Paris School District.

Behavioral Characteristics of the Gifted

Gifted children may behave in ways that set them apart from their peers. These behaviors may include:

- Willingness to examine the unknown
- Learning to read at an early age or accelerated rate
- Read widely, quickly, and intensely and have large vocabularies
- Learn basic skills better, more quickly, with less practice
- Able to construct and handle abstractions
- Pick up and interpret nonverbal cues and make inferences
- Take less for granted, seeking the “hows” and “whys”
- Work independently early on and concentrate for longer periods
- Interests both widely eclectic and intensely focused
- Full of energy, which can be misdiagnosed as hyperactivity

- Respond and relate well to parents, teachers, and other adults
- Willing to examine the unusual and are highly inquisitive
- Tackles problems in well-organized, goal-directed & efficient manner
- Intrinsically motivated to learn, discover, and explore ● Very often persistent with an “I’d rather do it myself” attitude.

Learning Characteristics of the Gifted

Gifted children are natural learners often exhibiting the following:

- Keen powers of observation and eye for important details
- Reads a great deal on their own, preferring more mature literature
- Takes great pleasure in intellectual activity
- Possesses a well-developed power of concentration and synthesis
- Readily sees cause and effect relationships
- Displays a questioning attitude and seeks information
- Skeptical, critical, and evaluative; quick to spot inconsistencies
- Retains much information about a variety of topics; recalls easily
- Readily grasps underlying principles and can make valid generalizations about events, people, and objects
- Quick to perceive similarities, differences, and anomalies

Creative Characteristics of the Gifted

Gifted children’s creative abilities often set them apart from their age-mates. These characteristics may take the following forms:

- Fluent thinkers who can generate possibilities or related ideas
- Flexible thinkers able to use different alternatives and approaches
- Original thinkers who seek new, unusual, or unconventional associations and combinations of ideas
- Can see relationships among seemingly unrelated objects or ideas
- Elaborate thinkers who produce new steps, ideas, responses, or other embellishments to basic ideas
- Willing to entertain complexity and thrive on problem solving
- Good guessers who readily construct hypotheses or “what if” questions
- Aware of own impulsiveness and irrationality, but show emotional sensitivity in various ways
- Curious about objects, ideas, situations, or events
- Display intellectual playfulness and like to imagine or fantasize
- Often disagree spiritedly with others just for fun
- Sensitive to beauty and attracted to aesthetic values

- Act with spontaneity
- Takes psychological risks, but maintains an autonomy of ideas

Characteristics that can be Incompatible with GT Programs

Gifted students may also exhibit characteristics that may keep them from benefiting from reaching academic or social success:

- Bored with routine tasks, refuses to do repetitive homework
- Difficulty in moving to another topic of discussion or research
- Self-critical and impatient with failure or making mistakes
- Critical of others
- Often disagrees vocally with others, including adults
- Makes jokes and puns at inappropriate times
- Emotionally sensitive; overreacts; gets angry easily
- Not interested in details; hands in messy work
- Refuses to accept authority, nonconforming, or stubborn
- Poor attendance to school or designated GATE activities

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

It is the duty of the Paris School District GT coordinator to ensure all district personnel has knowledge of the GT program and to service all identified students appropriately. The GT coordinator/facilitator shall make certain staff members aware of professional development formal sessions, faculty meetings, departmental meetings, handouts, and professional literature. The facilitator/coordinator will also provide information about workshops and conferences that would be beneficial to classroom teachers. Training for the teacher of the gifted will be provided as needed.

The staff development program consists of the following components:

1. Specific in-service opportunities for the entire staff throughout the year as determined by an assessment of needs that may include:
 - characteristics and needs of the gifted
 - identification procedures
 - teaching strategies

- Creativity
- Affective needs of the gifted.

2. The GT coordinator/facilitator will attend workshops at the cooperative and state level on gifted education.

3. Informal and in-service sessions with classroom teachers. Teachers will also be encouraged to participate in cooperative workshops that would benefit gifted students.

4. Pre-AP teachers will attend training offered through College Board once every five years. AP teachers will attend training offered through College Board once every five years. GT Coordinator will attend educational cooperative meetings. GT Coordinator will guide curriculum documentation and provide feedback as needed.

Personnel

Personnel associated with the Paris Gifted and Talented (GATE) Program are required to have special qualifications in the area of training, experience, and personal qualities. Selection of personnel is critical to the quality of the program. Teachers of the gifted should demonstrate the following characteristics and abilities:

- Flexibility, creativity, and self confidence
- Formal study and practical understanding of the nature and needs of gifted learners.
- Enthusiasm for teaching
- Extensive knowledge of the subject or program being taught
- Teaching strategies that include management of lecture, discussion, inquiry, and group/independent projects
- Teaching abilities that engage children in higher order intellectual challenges
- Student centeredness
- Sense of humor
- Willingness to devote the time needed for working with gifted children

Teachers/facilitators/coordinators of the gifted must hold a current Arkansas license, pass appropriate state approved assessments, and meet performance standards as set by the State Board of Education through the Arkansas Department of Education for add-on endorsement in field of education.

Job Description

- Plans a program to meet the individual needs of gifted and talented students.

- Guides the learning process toward the achievement of established goals and objectives.
- Maintains a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and employs instructional strategies appropriate to the characteristics, needs, interests, and abilities of identified gifted students.
- Uses a variety of processes to evaluate the program and student progress with predetermined criteria.
- Establishes and maintains effective relationships with students, staff, parents, and community patrons.
- Attends professional meetings and in-service workshops.
- Uses a variety of teaching strategies that effectively incorporate higher conceptual levels in the areas of content, process development, product development, and affective skills.
- Encourages group discussion, independent thinking, and self-directed learning techniques.
- Provides opportunity and instruction in creative thinking development, e.g. fluent, flexible, original, and elaborate thinking; risk taking, curiosity, imagination, alternative approaches.
- Assists other classroom teachers by the sharing of ideas and materials, and sharing information on the nature and needs of the gifted. Stays well informed of current research and new developments related to the field of gifted education. Records in students folders date service begins and ends for the year.

Referral and Identification

Referrals

A student may be considered for placement at any time in grades K-12. The process for identifying students has several stages including referrals, data collection, and placement. Written referrals are turned in for consideration to the GATE facilitator. Written referrals have a specific form that may be obtained on the PSD website, through any school office, or by contacting the Paris Schools GATE teacher. Written referrals must come from individuals who have a specific knowledge of the student. They may be come from a variety of sources including:

- Parents
- Teachers
- Peers
- Community members
- Students themselves

Data collection

Once a student is referred for GT services, a permission to test and a letter explaining the testing process (including criteria for placement) is sent home to parents. The GT teacher/coordinator will collect data from as many objective and subjective sources as possible for each student whose name is submitted for referral. No one

item in the data will be used to admit to the program or exclude from the program. Data collected for consideration in the program may include, but is not limited to:

- Parent survey of student strengths and interests
- Creativity measure
- Standardized test scores
- Grade point average
- Student products or samples of work
- Teacher survey
- Cognitive abilities assessments

All students who transfer to the Paris School District from another district and who have participated in the gifted education program at that district will be placed in the GATE program on a temporary basis until all school data is made available. Prior participation does not guarantee placement in the Paris GATE program due to the possibility that criteria for identification and placement may not be the same from district to district.

Placement

Student placement into the GT program is decided by the district's placement committee. This committee is comprised of at least five professional educators, including an administrator, and chaired by the GT coordinator. Student placement decisions are based on multiple criteria and no single criterion or cut-off is used to include or exclude a student from services. Procedures used in the identification process are non-discriminatory with respect to race, cultural or economic background, religion, national origin, sex, or handicapping condition. The committee reviews all student data gathered by the GT coordinator and makes placement decisions based on a case study approach.

Placement decisions will be one of the following:

- Student will continue placement in regular classroom program with possible modifications suggested. Some students are marked to continue to observe/watch.
- Student will be placed in GT program at the appropriate grade level.
- More data is needed for a committee decision.

Parents and teachers are made aware of placement decisions via letter or email. Any instructionally useful information obtained through the data collection process is shared with necessary parties regardless of placement outcome. Parents must sign and return a permission slip allowing services to begin.

The files of all identified GT students are maintained until that student graduates.

Record of G/T Participation

The gifted and talented program at the Paris School District will note student participation in the program on the transcript of each participating student. All data is maintained as long as the student is a student on record at Paris schools.

Appeal Process

If a student is not recommended for placement in the Gifted and Talented Program, parents or students may wish to appeal the decision. In such cases the following steps must occur to properly appeal placement:

1. Parents/students receive notification of placement and disagree, in writing, about the placement decision.
2. A parent/student meeting will be held with the GT facilitator or GT coordinator/facilitator to review the referred student's profile.
3. If warranted, additional assessments may be scheduled to review student abilities and talents that may influence placement status.
4. The Placement Decision will revisit the student profile and again make recommendations for placement. The Committee's decision will stand for one year after re-evaluation before the student can be nominated again for the GATE program.

Goals of the Gifted and Talented Program

1. To expose students to areas of study beyond those of the regular classroom including higher order cognitive skills, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, research, and areas of personal interest.
2. To develop self-motivated and self-directed learners.
3. To provide learning environments that promote intellectual challenge.
4. To develop social and emotional skills for successful interaction with others.
5. To provide opportunities to interact with others with similar interests and abilities.
6. To provide opportunities to emulate professional activities through mentors.
7. To aid independent thinking and planning to promote future college and career success.
8. To provide for the affective and emotional needs of developing gifted students.

9. Educate parents and teachers about the unique academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Program Options

★Whole Class Enrichment (Grades K-2)

Students in Grades K-2 have a minimum of 30 minutes per week of enriched content and critical and creative thinking. This is provided by a certified GT teacher in a separate classroom specifically set up for enrichment and GATE classes.

★Pull-out Classes (Grades 3-4)

Identified gifted and talented students have a minimum of 150 minutes per week provided in a pull-out setting with a certified GT teacher. Students work on critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, research, and independent study projects. Classes are held in a classroom specifically set aside for gifted education.

★Secondary Content Classes (Grades 5-8)

Identified gifted and talented students have differentiated curriculum provided in all core classes including literacy, social studies, math, and science.

Differentiation is provided by teachers trained in secondary content differentiation and modifications are overseen by a certified GT instructor. Quarterly records are kept to verify appropriate modifications are being made for creative thinking, critical thinking, affective development, content differentiation, research/independent learning and communication.

★Pre-AP Classes (Grades 7-12)

Secondary teachers who have received specialized training in Pre-AP strategies and content provide academic classes that enrich and extend learning in core content. Students in Grades 7-12 have the option to take Pre-AP classes in literacy, mathematics, social studies, and science as well as Art at the high school level.

★AP Classes (Grades 10-12)

Students have the opportunity to pursue advanced and college-level studies while still in secondary school through high school preparatory courses in College Board Advanced Placement. Placement tests allow students

to earn college credit at the end of year-long studies. It is recommended that students prepare for AP classes by taking Pre-AP courses offered prior to AP enrollment.

★*Concurrent Credit Classes (Grades 10-12)*

High School student may enroll in college level courses offered by an institution of higher learning that, upon successful completion, would qualify for academic credit in both the institution of higher education and Paris High School.

Curriculum Description

An appropriate program for gifted and talented students requires a curriculum to be coordinated with, but qualitatively different from, the regular school program. To ensure a curriculum appropriate for gifted students, modifications or changes in regular classroom instruction can be made in:

1. Content-refers to the body of knowledge presented to the student. Differentiation may be made in level of complexity, pace of learning, or degree of abstractness.
2. Process-includes critical thinking, creative thinking, independent learning skills, research skills, problem-solving, and logic. Students in the gifted program should be expected to achieve a greater degree of proficiency in these skills when compared to regular programming.
3. Product- the end result that demonstrates learning. Gifted students should be encouraged to develop products that use new techniques, materials, and forms. They should be encouraged to select a specific area of interest and talent and pursue an intensive study rather than be assigned a prescribed problem. Results of such investigations should be communicated to an appropriate audience.

Gifted and talented curriculum “must be in place of rather than in addition to required classroom work. Students should not be penalized for being identified as gifted by being given extra work. Teachers should be Sensitive to student interests and talents in planning activities.”

(ADE Guidelines for Gifted Education 9.0)

Alternatives for additional instruction can be found in activities such as clubs, competitions, accelerated courses, Pre-AP/AP classes, Arkansas Governor’s School and grade acceleration.

Curriculum Development

The Gifted and Talented Program meets the curricular goals and objectives for academically gifted children. Documented curriculum reflects modifications and differentiation in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas of human development. Gifted education curriculum must be responsive to the needs of specific students and group interests.

The goal of the GATE program is to develop engaging and enriching units of study based on student choice. Evaluation of the curriculum includes an assessment of content, process, and product differentiation. Specific questions regarding current units of study should be addressed to the GT facilitator and/or teachers of record of gifted program options.

Curriculum Objectives

1. To provide experiences for individual development in the following areas:

- Cognitive thinking skills
- Creativity
- Personal growth
- Individual interests
- Affective needs

2. To utilize a variety of resources from the community in order to:

- Develop different activities than those in the regular classroom
- Utilize the expertise of community experts
- Familiarize students with the unique qualities of their community and the resources available to them to pursue personal interests
- Develop opportunities for independent study and mentorships
- To challenge individual students to learn from other resources and share their abilities with others
- To maintain effective communication between school, families, and the community.

Acceleration Procedure

Acceleration is one intervention that may be used for highly capable individuals and is a policy endorsed by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). Acceleration is a practice that moves students through an educational program at rates faster or at younger ages than a typical child. It involves matching the level of complexity and pace of curriculum to the readiness and motivation of the student. Any student in the Paris School District can be recommended for acceleration. Either parents or school personnel may initiate a referral conference to nominate a student for acceleration. Once referred, a conference will be held with parents, administrators, and knowledgeable school personnel to determine the appropriateness of acceleration in order to meet the unique academic needs of the student.

Annual Review of Student Placement

Students in the gifted and talented program are evaluated each spring. Based on the evaluation, the student may continue to receive services or be recommended for placement on an action plan for improvement. In reviewing these students, the following criteria are considered:

1. Student performance both in GT class
2. Student input
3. Parent input

If at any time through the school year a problem is encountered with student progress in the GT classroom, he/she will be placed on an action plan. This action plan will outline areas of improvement and a date will be selected for progress review. The placement committee will re-evaluate student performance at the check in date to determine if gifted services are still in the best interest of the student

Exit Procedure

Exiting the GATE program may only be permissible if there is a parent/student request or the Placement Committee recommends dismissal.

If the student wishes to exit the program, the following steps must be followed:

1. A written and signed request is given to the GATE facilitator.

2. The GT facilitator will conference with the student and/or parents to determine the reason for exiting the program.
3. Parents must give express permission for withdrawal, and students must also sign Exit forms.
4. Once completed, the Exit process will include formal withdrawal from the program and removal of the designation of GT from permanent records as of that date.

In the event a student is recommended for removal from GATE, the Placement Committee will review all student records and documentation for removal. Prior to a student being removed from the GATE program, there must have been a plan of action to address needs of the student. Parents must be notified of any potential problems prior to recommendation for removal so there is an opportunity to correct student actions or behaviors. The decision to remove a student from services should be based solely on determining the best placement for the child.

Program Evaluation

The Paris School District will evaluate the Gifted and Talented Program at least once a year. Evaluation of the program will be made with input from students, parents, teachers, members of the community, and school administrators. All components of the program will be included: identification, staff development, community involvement, curriculum, program options, personnel, and evaluation processes.

All data will be collected, reviewed, and reported to the GT coordinator/facilitator who will share it with the District Superintendent and Board of Education. It will also be reported as required in the Arkansas Department of Education Application for Program Approval for Gifted and Talented Education. Data will be collected in a variety of ways including surveys, assessment data, interviews, and other means as appropriate for the information being sought.

The GT facilitator shall create an Advisory Committee comprised of students, parents, teachers, and members of the community to evaluate and plan for continued growth and expansion of program opportunities and options. The annual evaluation will be distributed to the Advisory Committee for improving program options offered to gifted students in the Paris School District.

The Arkansas Department of Education will also monitor the GT program every three years to ensure compliance of all standards established by the state agency.