

Gifted Program

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Characteristics of Gifted Learners

The mentally gifted student has outstanding intellectual and creative abilities; the development of which requires special services and programs not ordinarily provided in the regular education program. There are many types of gifted learners. These students can have the same problems, failures, and frustrations experienced by any child. A student can be academically able, highly motivated, and receiving excellent grades and not be mentally gifted. It is also important to realize that while students may demonstrate an overall intellectual ability, others show a specific aptitude. Some students may excel in all academic areas while others excel in a specific area.

Gifted Program Philosophy

Steel Valley School District provides for the educational needs of all its students through opportunities to fulfill the basic competencies of the Elementary and Secondary curriculum. In addition, the Steel Valley School District is committed to a differentiated educational program that recognized the unique values, needs, and abilities of the individual student. The gifted program is an integral part of this philosophy.

The gifted program is designed to challenge the student, through a multidimensional teaching approach involving special curricula, enrichment, and the acceleration of course content. The program is designed to develop within the student a desire for excellence and a sense of individual responsibility to the school, to the community, and to a changing society.

The guiding characteristic of the gifted program is to provide the gifted student with the extension for learning which affords her/him open circuits for exploring, experiencing, and expressing.

Enhancing the "self" as a learner and as a producer is the paramount concern of the gifted program. The program is designed to provide activities and opportunities that are thus structured to assist the student in assessing and capitalizing upon the unique abilities, talents, interests, and need which represents him as a "self."

The philosophy is reinforced by materials and tasks which are differentiated in content and intent. These are geared toward developing self-directness as it relates to independent study and self expression as it relates to fostering divergent thinking. The emphasis will direct the student toward a lifelong career of learning.

Parental and community involvement is essential for the Steel Valley School District program to succeed.

Referral Process

Any parent or teacher may request that the district initiate screening or evaluation of their child for the district's gifted education program. Parent request should be submitted to the building Principal. The child's parent should complete the Steel Valley School District's "Request for Multidisciplinary Evaluation." These forms are available through the Guidance Counselor's office in each building.

Each year your child's Terra Nova scores will be evaluated by his or her teachers as well as by the Guidance Counselor and Gifted Education Teacher. Often referrals are made by these professionals based on the test results. Parents will be notified if a referral has been suggested. The Guidance Counselor will contact the parents prior to beginning Level 2 of the screening process.

Screening Process

There is a three level matrix that each child moves through in order to be evaluated for gifted services.

Level 1 of screening process involves reviewing the student's Terra Nova and/or PSSA scores and grades. Students who qualify for further screening generally have an overall grade point average of 3.5 or higher and score in the 90th percentile or higher on the Reading and/or Math sections of the Terra Nova test.

Level 2 of the screening process involves the administration of the Kaufmann Brief Intelligence Test (K-Bit) and/or the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). Criteria for advancement in the screening process is a K-Bit or NNAT standard score of 118 or greater. In addition, the classroom teacher completed the "Analysis of Gifted Characteristic Checklist" which reviews the student's ability to acquire and retain knowledge, apply thinking strategies, create new information, and identify personal and interpersonal characteristics. During the Level 2 process the parents are also asked to complete the "Parent Rating Form. Students who obtain a standard score of 118 or higher on the K-Bit or the NNAT and earn 15 out of 20 of the "Analysis of gifted Characteristic Checklist" move to Level 3 where they are further assessed by a Certified School Psychologist who administers a comprehensive individual evaluation and reviews relevant data collected through the screening process.

A permission to evaluate form must be signed by the parent/guardian before this evaluation can occur. Following the evaluation by the School Psychologist, a recommendation for gifted programming is made contingent upon multiple criteria, not just a single test score. Point values of 1-5 are assigned on the Steel Valley Criteria for Gifted Programming Matrix for individual IQ score, individual achievement, group achievement, the "Analysis of Gifted Characteristics Checklist," and the "Parent Rating "Form .

A student meets criteria for Gifted Programming by obtaining a point value of 1-5 in each category with a minimum total score of 18 out of 25 on Level 3.

After all the information has been reviewed, a Gifted Written Report (GWR) is prepared and forwarded to the parent and team members. The GWR recommends whether the student is gifted and needs specially designed instruction. The GRW will include the reasons for the recommendations and list the names and positions of everyone who was involved in the multidisciplinary;y team process.

Parent and team members will be invited to a meeting to discuss the report and its recommendations. If a student does not meet the eligibility criteria for gifted programming, the team will discuss possible recommendations for the student's regular education program.

If the student is eligible for the Steel Valley School District's Gifted Program, a gifted individualized education program (GIEP) will be developed and the parent will be asked to sign the Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA) before programming can begin. The Notice of Parental Rights for Gifted Children describes the rights and procedures that safeguard the rights of parents.