

## **ASPECTS OF GT PROGRAM IN US PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM APPLICABLE TO OTHER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS**

**Dr. Volkan Cicek**  
Faculty of Education  
Ishik University, Iraq  
volkancicek@gmail.com

**Abstract:** GT (Gifted and Talented) program is one of the three major educational programs, implemented in each and every US Kindergarten thru 12 public schools, that is subject to extra funding along with other two programs of SPED (Special education) and ESL (English as a Second Language). In this review, technical details of Gifted and Talented Program currently implemented in Kindergarten thru 12 US Public School System that may be applicable to educational systems of other regions and countries are discussed within the context of goal and benefits of the program, terminology, identification of GT students via nomination, assessment, testing, selection, and notification; other related issues such as appeals, re-evaluations, transferring from other schools, grade acceleration, GT program implementation, and pull-outs.

**Key Words:** Gifted and Talented, Nomination, Assessment, Selection, Notification, Modifications, Regular and Specific Class Settings, Pull-outs, Furlough, Re-evaluation

### **Introduction Basis**

US Law, Education Code, Chapter 29, Subchapter D §29.121 defines a Gifted and Talented student as a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- (3) excels in a specific academic field.

Renzulli states that it is important to point out that no single characteristic "makes giftedness." Rather, it is the interaction among three clusters of characteristics that research has shown to be the necessary ingredient for creative-productive accomplishment in his study dated 1978. These clusters consist of above average (though not necessarily superior) ability, task commitment, and creativity.

Differences between bright children with gifted learners are established well in the literature. Major differences stated by Janice Szabos are;

- A bright child knows the answers, while a gifted learner asks questions
- A bright child is interested, while a gifted learner is highly curious
- A bright child is attentive, while a gifted learner is mentally and physically involved
- A bright child has good ideas, while a gifted learner has wild, silly ideas
- A bright child works hard, while a gifted learner plays around yet tests well
- A bright child answers the questions, while a gifted learner discusses in detail, elaborates
- A bright child is in the top group, while a gifted learner is beyond the group
- A bright child listens with interest, while a gifted learner shows strong feelings and opinions
- A bright child learns with ease, while a gifted learner already knows
- A bright child needs 6 to 8 repetitions for mastery of a subject, while a gifted learner needs 1 to 2 repetitions
- A bright child understands ideas, while a gifted learner constructs abstractions
- A bright child enjoys peers, while a gifted learner prefers adults
- A bright child grasps the meaning, while a gifted learner draws inferences
- A bright child completes assignments, while a gifted learner initiates projects
- A bright child is receptive, while a gifted learner is intense
- A bright child copies accurately, while a gifted learner creates a new design
- A bright child enjoys school, while a gifted learner enjoys learning
- A bright child is a technician, while a gifted learner is an inventor
- A bright child is a good memorizer, while a gifted learner is a good guesser
- A bright child enjoys straightforward sequential presentation, while a gifted learner thrives on complexity
- A bright child is alert, while a gifted learner is keenly observant

*1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics  
May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*

A bright child is pleased with own learning, a gifted learner is highly self-critical

### **Goal**

As a result of implementation of Gifted and Talented Program in schools, the gifted student is expected to

- Develop a realistic concept of self and work cooperatively with peers and adults,
- Develop the higher level and critical thinking skills of knowledge comprehension, synthesis, application, analysis, and evaluation in order to solve problems logically,
- Create original projects that reflect critical thinking skills as supplemental learning to the regular classroom curriculum,
- Develop research skills and use information gathered to implement a group research project,
- Demonstrate the ability to use creative problem solving strategies,
- Recognize how change in and around their world affects their relationships.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Identification Process**

The identification process usually consists of three steps;

1. Nomination
2. Assessment/Testing
3. Selection

### **Nomination**

Students may be nominated by;

- Parent(s),
- Teacher(s),
- Peers,
- Other Professional Personnel,
- and/or themselves

Nomination forms must be completed by the individual who nominates the child; however parents must give consent that the student be tested and evaluated.

Parent Nomination Forms and Teacher/Professional Nomination Forms shall be available at an accessible location such as the front office.

Forms that are out by parents, teachers, peers, etc. and submitted to Gifted and Talented Identification committee.

Nominations can be made at any time during the school year, however, testing and identification will be completed periodically during the academic year. Minimum periodicity should be twice a year, in the beginning of each academic year when there are new enrollees to the school.

Written parental permission is required before screening/testing begins. No student may be denied access to Gifted and Talented Programs on the basis of race, creed, or handicapping conditions.

### **Transfer Procedures**

Students newly enrolled to the school who were active GT students in their previous schools may be directly placed in the GT program provided necessary official documentation.

Without appropriate documentation, and/or upon recommendations from the receiving teacher or counselor, the incoming student may be screened for the GT Program off-schedule using the standard procedures and measurements.

### **Assessment and Testing**

Students seeking admission to GT Program are usually assessed via two kinds of tests:

- Ability Tests which consist of two parts:  
Part I: To measure cognitive abilities through verbal and quantitative skills  
Part II: To measure non-verbal abilities in reasoning and problem solving using spatial symbols
- Achievement Tests are used to determine student academic level in the academic core areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Testing may take place during the school hours, after-school, and/or weekend.

### **Selection**

Selection is based on the following:

- The student's ability and achievement test scores

*1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics  
May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*

- Nomination forms
- Report card grades
- AR and STAR reports
- Teacher observations
- Previous GT enrolment

The GT Committee convenes and uses both Quantitative and Qualitative data when making selection decisions

### **Notification**

Parents are notified in writing of the GT Committee's decision. This is done usually using two forms that are parent notification of assessment results and parental permission to enroll, in which the parents are informed officially of the assessment results and are asked for legal permission. The parents may have the right to approve or reject this request given that the parents are legal guardians and the student is under 18 years of age.

### **Appeals**

Appeals to the decisions of GT Committee shall be made within 7 days of the notification of placement or non-placement in the GT program.

Appeals must be made in writing by presenting additional information to the committee not previously seen by the committee.

### **Furlough**

At times a student may seek a furlough or have such a "time-out" recommended for many reasons: emotional trauma, family considerations, health issues etc.

The GT Committee, the parent(s), and the student may agree to grant the student a furlough, by executing a Furlough Contract, for a period not to exceed one year.

During the period of the contracted furlough, the GT Facilitator or designee shall monitor the student's academic status and periodically report to the GT Committee.

At the end of the time period stated in the Contract, the student may be considered for readmission to the GT Program conditional upon the decision of the GT Committee.

The exited student may apply for admission to the GT Program again at any time in the future, at which time the application will be processed following standard screening and placement procedures.

### **Re-evaluation**

All students who are identified as gifted and talented should be re-tested for no longer than two years. During the current school year, if the program appears to no longer meet the needs of the student, a re-evaluation may be requested.

### **Exiting the Program**

Occasionally, there may be students who are identified for the GT Program who do not perform at expected standards in the program.

Before a student is exited from the program, the student's teacher(s), and/or school administrator will talk with the student's parent and explain the procedural safeguards to request a review of the decision to exit the student.

The following guidelines specify when a student may be exited from the GT program:

- Repeated failure to complete work assigned.
- Substantial difficulty in understanding work that other students do independently (without parental or tutorial assistance).
- Consistent pattern of low grades (C's, D's or F's) over 6 weeks.
- Behavioral concerns, distractions, etc.

If a teacher or parent requests a student be exited, the student may not re-enter the GT program during that school year. The student may not return to the program the following school year without re-testing.

### **Grade Acceleration**

If a teacher or parent recommends grade acceleration for a child who outperforms his/her peers in class, then the GT coordinator and parent meet to discuss the student's case.

The GT coordinator collects data from the student's teachers and if there is agreement that the student will socially and academically succeed, then the student is scheduled for a state-accredited grade acceleration test (Exam for Acceleration).

Tests are ordered in four core areas: Math, English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, which the student is expected to score 90 and above.

### **Implementation of GT Program**

*1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics  
May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*

The GT program is available for students from Kindergarten thru twelfth grade.

Identified students are provided with options of taking Honors courses, GT courses, and Advanced Placement courses, where they have the opportunity to work with other GT students, non-identified students, and to work independently.

Differentiated GT curriculum shall be taught in the academic core areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies to begin with and may be broadened based on resources and demand.

The gifted curriculum will offer enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for the gifted learner.

The curriculum will be differentiated in terms of content, process, and products.

Students will be involved in inquiry based lessons, group problem-solving settings, independent investigations, and group discussions.

*Pull-Outs*

The Pull-Out Program design allows students to be grouped homogeneously with other gifted and talented students and participate in enriched academic experiences.

Students meet for one or two periods every week to work on activities, labs, and projects outside the scope of the standard curriculum.

Enrichment and extension of advanced concepts are explored through a project-based application.

Students in the Pull-Out Program are required to complete all regular class activities and assignments that are due or were assigned on the day/period that they leave these classes to attend the Pull-Out Program.

Exemplary enrichment activities in the regular classroom settings for the purpose of GT program implementation are;

*for Kindergarten thru 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade*

Math Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)

Language Arts/Reading Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)

Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program

Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students while optional for regulars

Studying more advanced and challenging curriculum

Opportunity to participate in Elementary-level academic competitions such as science fairs, project competitions, Olympiads, etc

*for 4<sup>th</sup> thru 8<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Accelerated Math after school sessions (2 hours per week)

Accelerated Language Arts/Reading after school sessions (2 hours per week)

Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program

Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students while optional for regulars

Studying more advanced and challenging curriculum

Opportunity to participate in Middle school level academic competitions

Opportunity to work on advanced science fair projects

Enrichment activities in the classroom

Participation in Advanced Writing Programs

Eligible to take Pre-AP and/or Honor courses

Participation in G/T camps

*for 9<sup>th</sup> thru 12<sup>th</sup> Grade*

Graduation under Distinguished High School Plan

Eligible to take Pre-AP, AP, and/or Honor courses

Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program

Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students while optional for regulars

Opportunity to participate in High school level academic competitions

Opportunity to work on advanced science fair projects

Enrichment activities in the classroom

Participation in Advanced Writing Programs

Participation in G/T camps

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

US Kindergarten thru 12 Public School System is among the largest public school systems in the world with the most number of foreign students incorporated into the system each year. US public school system is a very dynamic system that is updated regularly with the latest findings in research done in many Colleges of Education throughout the country. Postgraduate research done in Educational Sciences in US is amongst the

*1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics  
May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*

leaders of the world in terms of quality and quantity. Thus, it would be very reasonable to evaluate and try to adapt parts of this system as needed. Unlike systems of other sciences, which would need the appropriate infrastructure to adapt, educational systems are relatively easier to adapt due to little physical infrastructure involved. However, one cannot underestimate the human factor that is the readiness of the society, thus it would be a safe bet to say that adapting portions of such a system would be easier for smaller school systems.

**References**

- Renzulli, J.S. (1978), What Makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 60(3), pp. 180-184
- Janice Szabos (1989), Note the Difference, Challenge Magazine, Tennessee Association for the Gifted, Issue 34
- Adaptations for Special Populations 19 TAC Chapter 29, Subchapter D§29.121 (2007), US Division of Policy Coordination
- Gifted and Talented Handbook (2009), Harmony Science Academy, Fort Worth, US, pp. 4-17
- National Excellence (1993), A Case for Developing America's Talent, United States Department of Education, pp.1