

Manzanita Public Charter School (MPCS)

Summit Education and Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) School Plan

"What it takes to teach gifted learners well is actually a little common sense. It begins with the premise that each child should come to school to stretch and grow daily. It includes the expectation that the measure of progress and growth is competition with oneself rather than competition against others. It resides in the notion that educators understand key concepts, principles, and skills of subject domains; and present those in ways that cause highly able students to wonder and grasp, and extend their reach. And it envisions schooling as an escalator on which students continually progress, rather than a series of stairs, with landings on which advanced learners consistently wait."
Carol Ann Tomlinson

The following GATE plan meets the recommendations of the California State Department of Education (CDE) and the National Gifted and Talented Organization. Manzanita Summit Education is a combination of scholars who have met the rigorous criteria for the Gifted and Talented Program and scholars who have shown ability and need for academic challenges beyond the required curriculum. All Summit Education students have participated in the GATE identification process.

Mission and Vision

MPCS recognizes that all students have unique qualities and talents. It is evident that children exhibit natural giftedness and require educational opportunities that challenge the standard based curriculum. The Summit Education program is dedicated to formally identified Gifted and Talented scholars and scholars who require academic challenges beyond the offered curriculum.

Program Goals

Summer/Fall 2011: Conduct a Summit Education information meeting, invite current and prospective Summit parents by written invitation (all parents would be welcome). Create a Summit parent advisory committee.

Summer/Fall 2011: Develop criteria for Summit Education Program Assessment, Research and write Social and Emotional Implementation Goals for staff and students.

Program Design

The GATE program will offer classes and programs for gifted and talented students that meet or exceed the California State content standards in Grades K-6. Specific offerings will be determined each year based on parent and student input and specific areas of giftedness. The program may include differentiated instruction within the regular classroom, Summit Education clusters or class, or pull-out programs for students to receive expert instruction in special areas of interest (i.e. music, visual and performing arts, multi-media). Summit Education will include student leadership training. GATE opportunities may occur during and/or before or after the school day. Partnership activities with universities and other organizations may be offered.

- Qualified staff members will teach Summit classes and programs. Special program instructors may be experts, parents, or community members, who are qualified in a given field.
- The Summit Advisory Team may include students, teachers, staff, community members, and administrators. The Governance Council will approve all plans for the GATE program, as well as receive updates throughout the year.

- Final GATE placement will be the responsibility of the Response to Instruction (RTI) team which includes the director/principal and the GATE coordinator.
- The GATE plan will be available in English and Spanish on the school Web site and in written form upon request.
- The GATE coordinator is appointed by the director/principal.

Identification

A variety of methods will be used to identify gifted and talented students. All Manzanita students are eligible for consideration for the GATE program. Nomination for GATE may come through referrals from classroom teachers, parents, and from transcripts for students new to MPCS. Manzanita will place a transfer student identified as GATE in a Summit class. Students are formally identified as Gifted and Talented only once in their school career. They do not need to re-qualify each year. Students who do not meet the criteria for formal GATE identification may still be placed in Manzanita Summit Education.

Characteristics and needs of gifted learners will be available for staff and parents. (See appendix).

- All students are eligible for GATE regardless of socioeconomic status, disabilities, cultural, or linguistic background. MPCS students may be nominated for the GATE program more than once and these nominations will be maintained on file for use in future nominations. All MPCS staff members will receive training in the nomination and identification process and will be informed of the availability of nomination forms.
- Final eligibility for formal GATE identification will be determined by a RTI committee that includes the GATE site coordinator, teachers, and site administrators.
- A variety of identifiers will be used to make a final determination and placement, including, but not limited to a combination of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), standardized test scores, a teacher evaluation survey, and the student's portfolio.
- The NNAT uses progressive matrices to allow for a fair evaluation of students' nonverbal reasoning and general problem-solving ability, regardless of what language they speak, or their educational or cultural background. The NNAT was developed to be non-culture specific, so that students with different languages and cultural backgrounds have an equal opportunity to answer questions correctly.
- The committee will meet at the end of each school year to review nominations for the upcoming school year and at other times during the year as the need arises.
- Files will be established for each MPCS student who is nominated and these files will be kept throughout the student's enrollment at the school.
- Information will be made available to other districts as appropriate upon parental request, should a student leave MPCS.
- Students and parents will be informed of the GATE program and the nomination and identification process. Selection for the GATE program will be based on the established criteria and not on the advice of one person.
- Signed parental permission for participation must be on file for GATE students.
- Once a student is identified as GATE, the student shall remain identified as such, although services may vary from year to year. Before any student is considered for withdrawal from the program, interventions will be implemented and there will be a meeting with the school administration, parent, and student.

Manzanita Summit Education Identification

The process toward qualification typically begins in April with the teacher nomination process and concludes with formal identification in October. Keep in mind that any student may be involved in school-day activities designed for GATE students. Not being identified as GATE *will not* preclude a student from being engaged in appropriate enrichment activities or Summit Education placement.

Years prior to formal identification (beginning at end of Kindergarten year through Grade 3):

- **Spring:** Teacher completes the Teacher Recommendation Survey to recommend for Summit Education.
- **Spring:** Students are evaluated using teacher recommendation, local benchmarks, and daily student work. The best placement is made for the following year by the RTI team. Parents are notified by letter.

Year of identification (beginning at fourth grade):

Spring: The RTI team evaluates the Teacher Recommendation Survey, state standardized test scores, Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test results, local benchmarks, and the student portfolio in order to place the student appropriately for the following school year.

Early Fall: RTI teams meet and re-evaluate for formal GATE identification after the California State Test scores have arrived. Classroom placement will not change.

Curriculum and Instruction

Differentiation is not the *only* answer to providing the best services and programming for gifted students in the classroom, but it is *an essential part* of ensuring that high-ability learners are adequately challenged and make continuous progress. MPCS will employ a differentiated curriculum, instructional models, and strategies that are aligned with and exceed the state academic content standards and curriculum frameworks and current GATE Research (i.e. Dr. Sandra Kaplan). The differentiated curriculum will be related to theories, models, and practices from the recognized literature in the field of GATE research. The curriculum will be responsive to the needs, interests and abilities of the gifted students and will assist the students in meeting or exceeding state core curriculum and standards.

- The differentiated curriculum will provide for the balanced development of critical, creative, problem solving and research skills, advanced content, computer science, and authentic and appropriate products.
- GATE instruction will focus primarily on depth and complexity of content, advanced or accelerated pacing of content and unique and original expression of student understanding. It facilitates development of ethical standards, positive self-concepts, sensitivity and responsibility to others, and contributions to society.
- The core curriculum will be presented to the Summit scholars in such a way that it will be appropriate to their needs, interests, and abilities and will not be redundant. Instructional strategies will be used to promote inquiry, self-directed learning, discussion, and debate.
- Learning theories will be included that reinforce the needs, interests and abilities of the gifted student. These will include abstract thinking. The gifted program will articulate the significant learning in content, skills, and products within and among grade levels kindergarten through sixth grade.
- The differentiated content curriculum is a part of the regular school day. Content will be taught using the appropriate instructional models (i.e. inquiry learning, projects), and supported by appropriate materials and technology. The structure will allow for continuity in courses of study

and will use a variety of teaching strategies. Instruction will be offered through large and small groups, in homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping, through teacher and student directed learning. There will be opportunities for independent study. A wide variety of materials and resources will be available to the students to supplement independent study projects. The differentiated curriculum will be structured for groups of students as well as for individual students.

- Acceleration of content or instruction will be considered for Summit students as an instructional choice.

Social and Emotional Development

MPCS will establish and implement a plan to support the social and emotional development of gifted learners. Actions to meet the needs of the gifted students will be ongoing. At-risk gifted students will be monitored and provided the appropriate support through the RTI process.

- All staff and parents will be provided with information and training regarding the characteristics of the gifted learners (See appendix).
- Teachers will be trained in the social and emotional development of gifted students and how to incorporate techniques to support these students in the classroom, school, at home, or in the community.
- The at-risk students will receive appropriate support and will not be dropped from the gifted program because of their at risk behavior/problems. Information and support will be made available to the student's parents as well.

Professional Development

MPCS will provide professional development opportunities, on a regular basis, related to gifted education to administrators, teachers, and staff to support and improve educational opportunities for the gifted learner.

- The GATE coordinator and GATE teachers will be provided role specific training. The training will be based on needs identified in the annual assessment of the GATE program. This training will be used to make improvements in the program. GATE teachers will have education and/or experience in teaching gifted students and will have opportunities to continue or gain such knowledge. The coordinator will receive training in gifted education and will have opportunities to update knowledge in the field. Follow-up classroom support for application of the information gained during in-service will be planned.
- The professional development trainers will be experts in the field of gifted education.
- MPCS will develop a process to qualify teachers to teach gifted students and there will be a professional development plan to accommodate different levels of teacher competency.
- MPCS will contract with experts to conduct in-service training in gifted education and it will also promote the concept of teacher-to-teacher professional development and utilization of the teacher/trainer model.
- All teachers assigned to teach in the gifted program will be certified through a certification program.
- MPCS will identify support personnel with expertise in meeting the needs of gifted learners both within and outside MPCS.

Parent and Community Involvement

MPCS will provide procedures to ensure consistent participation of parents and community members in the planning and evaluation of programs for gifted students. There will be open communication with parents and the community and an active GATE advisory committee with parent involvement, supported by MPCS.

- Parents will be informed of the criteria and procedures for identifying gifted students; they will be given information on the program options and learning opportunities available. Translation will be provided as appropriate.
- Summit Education parents will be part of the ongoing planning and evaluation of the program. MPCS will provide parents of identified gifted students with an orientation and with regular updates on the program. Products and achievements of the students will be shared with parents in a variety of ways, as appropriate.
- Parents will be involved in the application and evaluation process of the Summit Education. Parents and community members will be invited to supplement the core and differentiated curriculum based on individual talents. Partnerships may be established with businesses and organizations with the Summit coordinator and advisory committee soliciting support.
- All Summit Parents may participate on the site advisory committee, which will meet a minimum of two times a year. The Summit Education coordinator will work with the committee to plan education opportunities in gifted education. Efforts will be made to assure that the demographic makeup of the advisory committees reflect the demographic makeup of the Summit program.
- Members of the committee will be regularly informed of current research and literature in gifted education. Spanish translation will be provided.

Program Assessment

Each November, MPCS will complete an effectiveness report of the GATE program that will include formal and informal evaluation methods based on the State GATE standards. The report will be presented to the Governance Council during the November meeting and made available to all stakeholders. Results of data collected will be used to study the value and impact of the services provided and to improve gifted programs and gifted student performance. Program assessment will be ongoing and consistent with the program's philosophy, goals, and standards. The director/principal, the Summit Coordinator, and the Summit Advisory Board will conduct the yearly review. The district will use multiple strategies to measure student performance:

- CST scores including achievement test data
- Teacher, student and parent surveys
- Performance-based measures (portfolios)
- Performance/participation in school sponsored activities (Battle of the Books, Young Author's Faire, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, contests, etc.)

This assessment will be conducted through the use of rubrics following a clear description of performance expectations at each grade level. The evaluation program will include strengths and weaknesses of the program and a plan for improvement. MCPS will allocate time, financial support, and personnel to conduct the assessment.

Budget

MCPS receives GATE funds from the charter school block categorical grant. Therefore, the amount budgeted to the Manzanita GATE program will be allocated by the Manzanita Governance Council. The

Summit Education coordinator and principal/director will submit budget recommendations to the Governance Council. These recommendations will be the results of the School Summit Education goals, the current number of students and their needs, and recommendations of the GATE Advisory and RTI Team. GATE funds, and other funding sources as appropriate, will be used for professional development, student services, district coordination, and student identification. The school manager, principal/director and the GATE coordinator will collaborate with other categorical programs and available grants to make it possible for gifted students to benefit from more than one source of funding.

APPENDIX

Best Research Instructional Practices

Considerations for MPCs Summit Education Plan

Rather than any single gifted program, a continuum of programming services must exist for gifted learners. Gifted students are not all alike. They vary in respect to general ability, domain-specific aptitude, interests and predispositions, motivation and personality. One program or service is insufficient to respond to diverse needs. Therefore, an individual action plan for each identified gifted student that contains their demonstrations of giftedness, needs, and what the school will do to meet those needs will be developed. Each student's services are individualized and depend greatly on the nature of the individual's giftedness.

Gifted students benefit from interaction with peers. Intellectual peerage contributes to important growth patterns in all subject areas (Kulik & Kulik, 1992). For example, cooperative learning, carried out in heterogeneous classroom settings, produces no growth (Rogers, 2001).

Gifted students need various forms of acceleration throughout their school years, ranging from content acceleration to Advanced Placement or dual enrollment to mentorships (Shiever & Maker, 2003; Renzulli & Reis, 2003; Clasen & Clasen, 2003).

Gifted students are capable of producing high level products in specific areas of learning at the level of a competent adult (NAGC, 1990). For example, fourth graders can draft a policy for pollution that would rival that of an adult community committee.

Gifted students need to be challenged and stimulated by an advanced and enriched curriculum that is above their current level of functioning in each area of learning (VanTassel-Baska, 2003).

Gifted students need to be instructed by personnel trained in the education of gifted students to ensure that they are sufficiently challenged, exposed to appropriate level work, and motivated to excel (Croft, 2003).

Gifted students at elementary level require differentiated staffing and flexible scheduling to accommodate their needs; (Feldhusen, 2003).

Gifted students have counseling needs that require psychosocial, academic, and career preparation on an annual basis (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2003; Jackson & Snow, 2004; Silverman, 1993). At the secondary level, assigning one counselor to the gifted may be the best staffing model to employ.

Gifted students have affective characteristics that render them vulnerable in school settings such as perfectionism, sensitivity, and intensity (Lovecky, 1992; Robinson, 2002).

Gifted students in general have healthy social relationships and adjust well to new situations (Robinson, 2002). Concerns for social development more than cognitive growth are rarely warranted.

The Young Gifted Child

- **“The young gifted child may appear to be many ages at once.** He may be eight (his chronological age) when riding a bicycle, twelve when playing chess, fifteen when studying algebra, ten when collecting fossils and two when asked to share his chocolate chip cookie with his sister. This variability in behavior and perception is difficult for parents and schools to handle and difficult for the child as well. It is hard to 'fit in' consistently when so much of the child's environment is structured by chronological age, an age which may be for the gifted child the least relevant aspect of his development.
- Many parents and teachers would like the gifted child to be perfectly "normal" in every way except the ability to perform academic tasks. Life would be so much easier that way. Over and over we see in media reports on gifted and highly gifted kids the assurance that (except for taking college courses in calculus while in the eighth grade) this child is just like everybody else. Even those who work in gifted education often spend a great deal of time and energy assuring people that gifted children are children first and gifted only secondarily, that they're 'just kids' who need a little extra challenge in school."
- If a child is happy in school, but there are concerns about the lack of challenge, help him or her find and pursue areas of interest. Taking time to learn about a subject in depth can be a rewarding outlet with many benefits. When absorbed in the mastery of an interesting topic, a child has opportunities to discover the value of persistence and effort.” (M. Cardoza, Citadel Press, 2003).
- Experts agree that differentiation strategies will help to support continued growth:
 - Interest centers that offer materials at varying levels of sophistication (including above grade level)
 - Anchoring activities to provide meaningful learning experiences for students working at different speeds
 - Flexible grouping of students by strength areas and/or interests
- “Learning opportunities at home and school should be like a trampoline that is stretched tight enough so a child can bounce as high as he can safely bounce. Don’t think of learning as a swing that must be pushed, nor a rigid, confining playpen that doesn’t allow movement and exploration.

Resources for Parents:

California Association of the Gifted: www.cagifted.org

National Association for Gifted Children: www.nagc.org

Enrichment for Reading: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/SEMR/>

Prufrock Press, Inc.: www.prufrock.com

Great Potential Press, Inc.: www.giftedbooks.com

Gifted and Talented World On-Line Support Community: www.gtworld.org

Gifted Student Qualities

Bright Child	Gifted Learner
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Has good ideas	Has creative “outside the box” ideas
Works Hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail, elaborates
Top group	Beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings & opinions
Learns with ease	Already Knows
6-8 Repetitions to learn	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good at memorizing	Good guesser
Likes straight-forward	Thrives on complexity
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical

Characteristics and Needs of Gifted Students

CHARACTERISTICS	NEEDS
Extraordinary fund of information	Exposure to new information
Unusual understanding of ideas & concepts	Access to stimulating environment & relationships; intellectual peers
Curiosity and unusually varied interests	Opportunity to pursue interests and ideas
Accelerated pace of thought processes	Exposure to information and ideas at an appropriate pace
High level of language development	Opportunity to encounter uses for increasingly difficult vocabulary & concepts
Ability to generate original ideas & concepts	To be allowed to solve problems, construct products, and develop ideas in diverse ways; guidance in evaluating appropriate uses of creative effort; encouragement for continued development of creative abilities
Strong critical thinking skills & self-criticism	Guidance in monitoring criticism & becoming tolerant of different ideas, values, & abilities
Sensitivity to the feelings & expectation of others	Guidance in asserting own needs & in valuing human beings as individuals of equal worth with differing abilities
Feelings of being different, especially in school	Company of friends & classmates with whom he/she feels comfortable – usually peers of equal or comparable ability levels

GLOSSARY OF TERMS	
TERM	DEFINITION
Acceleration	Allowing students to advance by grade or by subject
Cluster Grouping	Identifying and placing the top students (5-8) in the same classroom to allow them to work together occasionally and to be with a teacher who likes gifted kids and has received special training in meeting their needs.
Concurrent Enrollment	Allowing students to attend classes in another grade
Curriculum Compacting	Pretesting students to find out what they already know and then allowing them to “buy time” to do more appropriate work.
Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)	A DEP is written for a student when his or her needs cannot be met in the regular classroom. Part of Manzanita’s RTI – Tier 2
Differentiating Instruction	Strategies used by teachers to adapt the content, process, or product based on student readiness, learning profile, and interest. Examples include tiered assignments and curriculum compacting.
Early Entrance	A form of acceleration which allows students to enter kindergarten or any other level earlier than their age peers.
Enrichment	Activities that provide “horizontal” breadth and depth as opposed to vertically advancing a child.
Extension Menus	Activity choices for students who finish their work or have compacted out of a lesson.
Flexible Skills Grouping	Varying the composition of groups based on student readiness, interest, and learning profile.
Higher Order Thinking Skills	Questioning in discussion or other activities based on processes of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, or other critical thinking skills.
Independent Study	Structure projects agreed upon by the teacher and student to allow the student to individually investigate an area of great interest to her or him.
Interest Development Centers	Display set up around a theme to enable students to learn and do activities that can lead to greater in-depth learning based on their interest.
Learning Contracts	Student and teacher jointly develop a contract for time “bought” through compacting. The contract usually includes the desired learning outcomes, proposed product, and working conditions.
Learning Centers	Areas in the room set up with learning activities around a theme, subject, or by preferred learning style. Typically designed to provide additional skills practice.
Like-Ability Cooperative Learning	Organizing learning groups by like ability.
Mentoring	A one-to-one relationship between a student and an adult with whom the student shares a passionate interest. The purpose may be career exploration, acquisition of knowledge, or the development of social skills.
Multi-Age Classrooms	Combining two or three grade levels in one classroom and placing the brightest children as the youngest in the class.
Open-ended Assignment	Providing students with tasks and work that do not have just one right answer or outcome in order to encourage divergent thinking.
Personal Goal Setting	Teaching student to set personal goals and how to prioritize time and activities in order to reach those goals.

Subject Acceleration	Allowing students to advance in one or more subjects.
Telescoping	Allowing students to move through the material in less time such as compressing two years of math into one year.
Thematic Units	Uniting two or more disciplines (math, language arts, social studies . . .) under a conceptual theme such as change.
Tiered Assignments	A differentiation strategy in which teachers identify the key concepts and skills students must acquire but then plan activities at varying levels of difficulty to appropriately challenge students of varying readiness.