

Gifted & Talented Program Description

The purpose of Cedar Unified School District's gifted and talented program is to nurture academic excellence and improve student achievement among all students. To this end, the Legislature of the State of Arizona has established this mandate for students who are gifted and talented.

The Cedar Unified School District is committed to special education for gifted and talented students to help them develop their extraordinary abilities and recognizes that gifted and talented students in this district have unique values, needs, and talents. The program for gifted and talented students is designed to aid in the optimum development of their intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and to honor the diversity among the identified gifted and talented students through the provision of varied placement options and differentiated and more challenging curriculum.

The Arizona Academic Standards 2000 form the foundation of curriculum for all district programs. Modifications made in the curriculum for gifted and talented students will ensure that students have mastered the standards and will provide extensions for students to meet or exceed the standards at the highest level.

Appropriate curriculum for gifted and talented students must be **qualitatively different** from the regular school program. As the governing board and staff of Cedar Unified School District are committed to the encouragement of excellence and optimal talent development among gifted students, the district has developed a comprehensive program of educational interventions to meet the needs of our gifted and talented students.

- Appropriate modifications must be made in the following four areas: (1) learning environments, (2) complexity and organization of content to be mastered, (3) learning and thinking processes to be emphasized, and the (4) quality and variety of the products that students will create to demonstrate mastery.
- Evaluation and assessment of student products must be tied to: criteria established through rubrics, standards of excellence, and program goals. Products will be evaluated by the teacher (or mentor), and the student. Products may also be evaluated by student peers or by experts in a field.
- A continuum of services must be provided to enhance the unique potentials of each gifted student.
- Articulation of services must be provided to connect program options sequentially from one grade to the next.

Definition of Giftedness

Students with exceptional abilities and talents are found in all cultural and linguistic groups, economic levels, geographic areas of the state, domains of intelligence and in groups of individuals who also have disabilities. The official definition of "gifted child" is found in Arizona Revised Statute § 15-761.71.

"Gifted child" means a child who is of lawful school age, who due to superior intellect or advanced learning ability, or both, is not afforded an opportunity for otherwise attainable progress and development in regular classroom instruction and who needs special instruction, or special ancillary services, or both, to achieve at levels commensurate with his intellect and ability." (A.R.S. 15-761.7)

Although each gifted student is unique, gifted students do have some characteristics in common. They usually are swift and efficient learners, may make intuitive leaps, quickly sense patterns in information, ask themselves questions about perceived patterns in order to understand them, and form connections among stored concepts and related bits of new information to modify their existing knowledge base. In their area of interest, they are able to construct clear mental maps that organize concepts efficiently; they are able to think flexibly about new possibilities, and they thrive on questions and problems that have a wide range of possible answers instead of those that have one correct answer.

Gifted students develop asynchronously. This means that they are intellectually advanced in one or more areas; yet may have difficulties or be very average in other areas. Their motor skills may or may not match those of other same age children. The same is true for social skills. In addition, social skills may be advanced. Young gifted children progress through developmental milestones more rapidly, and sometimes prefer to associate with older children or adults who are more likely to understand their vocabulary and the complexity of their ideas.

One important point is that gifted students of the same age are not alike. There are differences between moderately gifted, highly gifted, and profoundly gifted students that may require as much curriculum differentiation within the group as is necessary between moderately gifted students and their non-gifted peers. Program modifications for gifted students must be sufficiently varied and flexible that these students can be provided challenging learning experiences and appropriate resources.

In Cedar Unified School District, 2.5% of students have been identified as gifted. Students from previously under-served populations were identified through multifaceted procedures, including assessment with an appropriate state-approved test.

Identification Process Including Special Populations

Routine screening for gifted and talented education services is available for all Cedar Unified School District students in all grades served by the district from elementary school age to high school age. Testing is provided on an annual basis. Students have at least three opportunities to participate in testing each school year.

Any student who scores at or above the 97th percentile in any one of three areas: verbal, non-verbal, or quantitative reasoning, on any test from the State Board approved list will be considered eligible to receive services. Students with scores below the 97th percentile on state approved tests for gifted education will be considered for services on a rank order basis, pending space available within each school site. Appropriate accommodations are made for special population students such as those not fluent in English and students with disabilities. Special population students such as those not fluent in English and students with disabilities are ensured equal access in the identification and placement process.

Testing Procedures

Before administering tests to students who are suspected of being gifted, students will be given routine vision and hearing screening exams. Cedar Unified School District will administer one or more state-approved tests periodically and at no less than three regular intervals throughout the year. Notice of testing dates shall be placed on the school district calendar. Notices/reminders also will be placed in school newsletters, on the district web site, and in the calendar section of the local newspaper so that advance notice of the week children are to be tested is given.

As a part of the nomination/referral form, parents will be given an opportunity to **grant or withhold** permission for testing. Nomination/referral forms and information letters to parents will be published in English; translation services or translated print materials will be made available for parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English.

Services Available from the Cedar Unified School District

The Cedar Unified School District recognizes the importance of providing special curricula for gifted and talented students who are enrolled in our schools. The goal of Cedar Unified School District Gifted Services is to meet the unique curriculum needs of the intellectually gifted and talented students enrolled in Cedar Unified School District.

The parameters of the gifted program offered at Cedar Unified School District are as follows:

For all grade levels, clustering (placing identified gifted students in the same classroom in groups of 3-5) with professional assistance by the gifted coordinator. The gifted coordinator is responsible for helping the classroom teacher prepare differentiated instruction for each individual gifted student.

Services for the quantitatively gifted will be provided within the regular education classroom by replacing the student's grade level math curriculum with a curriculum that is commensurate with their ability level. The students will be required to research and develop projects and products related to topics that interest them. The students will use their talent to do research, develop solutions, share ideas, and problem solve while working with their classmates.

Services for the verbally gifted will be provided offering enrichment programs that add depth and breadth to grade level competencies. Enrichment may be accomplished through extension of the grade level curriculum and development of the following skills:

- Logic thinking
- Reasoning skills
- Critical and creative thinking
- Problem solving

Written Criteria of Cedar Unified School District for Referral, Screening, Selection, and Placement

Copies of referral and nomination forms will be available at all district schools and district offices. These forms will be provided to all parents or guardians upon request for gifted students. The process of referral, screening, selection and placement is described in this scope and sequence.

Forms and letters will be available in English; translation services or translated print materials will be made available for parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English.

Notification of Testing Results

Cedar Unified School District will send letters to parents or guardians of tested students, at their address of record, within 30 days after the scheduled test date, to report test results and placement decisions. Letters will be written in the home language of record for those individuals who do not speak English.

If a parent or legal guardian requests an explanation of test results Cedar Unified School District will set up an appointment for the parent or legal guardian with a professional staff member qualified to explain test results.

Notification of Placement

A letter, in the home language of record, will be sent to parents or legal guardians of all tested students to notify them of the placement decision made by the Cedar Unified School District committee. A description of the services recommended for the student will be provided. Parents or guardians will be given the opportunity to **grant** or **withhold** permission for placement in the recommended program. At the request of parent or legal guardian, an appointment will be set up with a member of the professional staff who is able to provide further information.

Program Curriculum Goals and Objectives

The Cedar Unified School District offers a Curriculum Enrichment program for gifted and talented students to further develop and enhance their learning potential. The curriculum focuses on interdisciplinary units selected from the academic fields of social studies, language arts, science and mathematics. The District offers a variety of additional programs for interested students including advanced classes, spelling bees, science fairs and participation in Odyssey of the Mind.

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- A continuum of services must be provided to enhance the unique potentials of each gifted student.
- Articulation of services must be provided to connect program options sequentially from one grade to the next.
- The curriculum for gifted students will encompass a high level of cognitive and affective concepts and processes beyond those provided in the regular school program
- Broad themes, appropriate to several disciplines, will be used to provide the stimulus to help students build cohesive understanding of the inter-relationships among various disciplines. These generative topics will promote deeper understanding. These topics will also encourage students to make connections, enable students to create powerful mental images, and contribute to in-depth development of students' intellectual potentials.
- The diversity of individuals and cultures will be honored and integrated into substantive curricular content.
- Provisions will be made for gifted students with special needs to facilitate successful interaction with gifted peers and achievement of individual goals.
- Learning environments will incorporate activities to help students develop the following traits and skills: independence, openness to new ideas, innovation, exploration, self monitoring, creativity, planning and decision-making and other executive thinking processes.
- Learning environments will be sufficiently flexible that instruction, such as research field trips, seminars, conferences, internships, and work with mentors, can take place both in and out of school.
- Meeting the affective needs of gifted students will be an integral part of the program.

Time Allocations for Services

Gifted and Talented students and their classroom teachers are offered support services throughout the school day. The student may also participate in an after school enrichment program, under the direction of a certified teacher of the gifted and talented. Students also participate in an after school enrichment program for 2 hours daily, four times per week. Students may also participate in ancillary services such as counseling, guidance, independent study; or in Odyssey of the Mind activities

Transfer Students

Cedar Unified School District shall place transfer students as soon as they have verified eligibility.

Cedar Unified School District shall accept, as valid for placement, scores at or above the 97th percentile on any State Board approved test submitted by other PEAs or by qualified professionals.

PROGRAM GOALS

Expected outcomes for gifted and talented students are listed below.

The student will develop:

- Understanding and skill in using the methods unique to each discipline as well as those common to several disciplines
- An understanding of broad-based issues, these, or problems within interdisciplinary and multicultural contexts.
- The independence, self-direction and skills in group processes that lead to creative and productive thinking.
- Critical and higher level thinking skills in both cognitive and affective areas.
- Affective behaviors involved in the creative process, including risk-taking, curiosity, imagination, and enjoyment of complex challenges.
- The convergent and divergent cognitive abilities necessary for creative productivity and an understanding of the roles and characteristics of creative and productive individuals in the evolution of significant change.
- Products that refine or challenge existing ideas incorporate concepts and use techniques, material, forms and knowledge in innovative ways.
- Acceptance and valuing of human differences; respect for the needs, cultures and rights of others; and recognition of the contributions of others.