CLARKSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

HANDBOOK



REVISED FALL 2021

**An Overview**

Throughout the United States, there has been a call for America’s students to master more complex skills and to demonstrate understanding of more sophisticated content. In response, states throughout the country have increased their expectations for student performance. However, while basic competencies are being raised, often there is little done to enhance services for more advanced learners. National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent, published by the United States Department of Education in 1993, notes that, “Most American students are encouraged to finish high school and earn good grades. But students are not asked to work hard or master a body of challenging knowledge or skills. The message society often sent to students is to aim for academic adequacy, not academic excellence (p.1).”

In order to provide high level learning opportunities in the Clarksville School District, our gifted program strives to go beyond the minimum and meet the academic and social-emotional needs of gifted learners through a variety of service options.

**Clarksville School District**

**Philosophy of Gifted Education**

The Clarksville School District has a long history of commitment to excellence. Part of the commitment to excellence entails helping every student meet his/her potential. Providing for the needs of gifted and talented students is a consequence of that goal. The Clarksville School district recognizes and supports the concept of differentiated curricula for students placed in the gifted and talented program.

**HELPFUL DOCUMENTS**

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**Tips for Parents of Gifted Students**

Do you answer your child’s questions with patience and good humor?

Do you take advantage of your child’s questions and expressions of interest to guide her into further learning and explorations?

Do you help your child develop physical and social skills as carefully as you encourage mental growth?

Do you help your child learn how to get along with children of all levels of intelligence?

Do you avoid comparing him with brothers and sisters or companions?

Do you show love to your child for her own sake and not for intellectual achievement?

Do you set reasonable standards of behavior for your child and then see that they are met?

Do you provide early opportunities for decision-making by your child, with follow-up of learning to evaluate decisions after carrying out whatever action was taken?

Do you try to find something specific to praise when she shows you work? (A generalized compliment means little to gifted children)

Do you help him find worthwhile and challenging reading materials and television programs?

Do you provide hobby materials and books?

Do you find places where your child can study and work at his hobbies?

Do you provide a place for your child to display work?

Do you let your child learn about and share in some of your hobbies and interests?

Do you take your child on trips to points of interest?

Do you help your child take advantage of lessons and activities offered by private groups or community organizations?

Do you teach your child how to budget time, organize work, and improve study habits?

Do you help your child make her own plans and decisions?

Do you give your child increasing independence as ability to handle responsibility increases?

Do you give your child household responsibilities and other tasks suitable to his level?

Here are some websites that are specific to parents’ information about giftedness.

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/parents.htm

http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/gifted\_children/

http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Opportunities to increase knowledge of the education of gifted and talented students are provided for continuing and new school board members, district administrators, teachers, and support staff on a continuing and regular basis. Information will be shared with district personnel both formally and informally. Formal venues include professional development, faculty/departmental meetings, and reports to the public. Informal venues include emails, professional literature available in the district library, and the district GT webpage.

Topics of staff development will include:

* Characteristics and needs of the gifted
* Identification procedures
* Teaching strategies
* Creativity
* Affective needs of the gifted
* Program philosophy, goals, and objectives
* Description of local programming

The GT coordinator/teacher will provide information to teachers regarding workshops and conferences that may aid in serving gifted students.

The GT coordinator/teacher will attend workshops and conferences at the local cooperative and state level.

**PROCESS FOR SELECTION OF GT COORDINATOR/TEACHER**

The program coordinator and/or teacher must have at least 18 hours of approved college hours in Gifted and Talented Education in order to meet the certification standards set forth by the Arkansas Department of Education.

Selection of this personnel is made by the superintendent, principal and school board members.

The following criteria should be used in finding suitable personnel for this position:

* Enthusiasm for teaching
* Flexibility, creativity, and a sense of humor
* Formal study and practical understanding of the nature and needs of gifted students
* Teaching strategies that include discussion, inquiry, and group/independent project management
* Teaching abilities that engage children in higher orders of intellectual activity
* Self-confident and student centered
* Ability to create an atmosphere for risk-taking
* Capable of developing curriculum appropriate for the GT program
* Devotion to life-long learning

**GT TEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION**

* Plans with building principal and the program coordinator to meet the needs of gifted students.
* Guides the learning process towards 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 the identified gifted students.
* Uses a variety of processes to evaluate student progress with predetermined criteria.
* Establishes and maintains effective relationships with students, staff, parents, and the community.
* Attends professional meetings, in-service workshops, and local parent meetings.
* Assists other classroom teachers by sharing materials and ideas.
* Assists program coordinator in the identification process, evaluation process, and in the expansion and modifications of the total gifted program.
* Evaluation of the gifted teacher’s performance will be in accordance with the provisions of the policy of the Clarksville School Board.

**GT COORDINATOR JOB DESCRIPTION**

* Coordinate the development, implementation, and expansion of a program for gifted students.
* Coordinate the planning of in-service for district wide personnel and GT personnel.
* Organize and guide GT Advisory Committee meetings.
* Interpret the goals and objectives of GT program to school personnel, parents, and community.
* Maintain a permanent inventory of equipment and supplies purchased with GT money.
* Assist in establishing and implementing procedures to identify and place eligible students in gifted and talented program.
* Assist in notifying parents of identified gifted students about conferences and be available for the conferences.
* Provide handbooks and the Gifted and Talented Scope and Sequence to all teachers in Clarksville Public Schools, when requested.
* Evaluate the modifications made by the regular classroom teacher and maintain a record on the (weekly, quarterly) documentation, if required.
* Complete the Program Approval Plan which is required through the Arkansas Department of Education each October.
* Evaluation of the Gifted and Talented Program Coordinator’s performance will be in accordance with the provisions of the policy of the Clarksville School Board.

**IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

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. The identification procedures are based on our local definition of giftedness and have evolved from the philosophy, goals, and objectives established and updated by the placement committee and advisory committee. These procedures are compatible with the definition of giftedness and comply with the guidelines of the Arkansas Department of Education.

REFERRALS

Referrals are sought from a wide variety of sources to ensure that all potentially gifted and talented students have an opportunity to be considered. District personnel and community members are made aware of the referral process via the school webpage, local newspaper, and email. To refer a student, a referral form must be completed and submitted to the GT coordinator.

Anyone with knowledge of the student’s abilities may refer a student for gifted services including:

1. Teacher

2. Parent

3. Administrative

4. Community

5. Peer/Self

6. GT teacher (based on whole group enrichment observation)

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.

Gifted and talented program screening involves gathering data from several sources concerning student ability. The GT teacher/coordinator will collect data from at least two objective and subjective sources, including a measure that assesses creativity, 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 collection will come from standardized tests given in group settings in classrooms, from individual tests given by the GT teacher, sample work collected during whole group enrichment, and by information, forms, and interviews conducted during the identification process.

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. A special effort, through the use of multi-identification methods, will be made to identify students with characteristics that make them difficult to identify such as minority groups, underachievers, culturally different or economically disadvantaged, highly creative thinkers, and the highly intellectually gifted. 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:

1. Student will continue placement in regular classroom program with possible modifications suggested. Some students are marked to continue to observe/watch.

2. Student will be placed in GT program at the appropriate grade level.

3. 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 provided by the gifted and talented program to begin.

**RECORD OF G/T PARTICIPATION**

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

The gifted and talented program at the Clarksville 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 Clarksville schools.

**APPEALING PLACEMENT COMMITTEE DECISIONS**

A decision of non-placement may be appealed. To appeal a decision made by the committee, concerned parties must contact the GT coordinator along with any new data not collected during the original data collection process. The GT coordinator will call a meeting with the placement committee to review the appeal and review any new data. The placement committee is comprised of at least five professional educators, including an administrator, and chaired by the GT coordinator. Placement decisions made by the committee are final.

**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.

**EXITING THE GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM**

An exit from the program may be parent, student or gifted teacher initiated. However, a student initiated exit must be supported by the parent.

Parent/Student Initiated: parent need only sign an exit form for the student's permanent file.

GT Coordinator/Teacher Initiated: if information obtained through a student’s annual review of placement reveals that participation in the gifted program is no longer in the best interest of the student, exit procedures will be followed by the district. District exit procedures include a conference with the student and parent. Information obtained during the student’s evaluation is presented and an action plan for improvement is created. This action plan includes a deadline, at which the student's progress in the action plan will be re-evaluated by the placement committee. No changes in student services will be made without review and approval by the placement committee. Parents are made aware of placement committee decisions via letter or conference if requested.

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**Overall Program Goals**

1.To expose students to areas of study beyond those prescribed in the regular classroom, especially in the areas of higher cognitive skills, decision making, critical and creative thinking skills, and in-depth research and inquiry into areas of personal interest.

2. To develop spontaneous, self-motivated, and self-directed learning where each child will accept and maximize unique gifts and talents.

3. To provide a learning environment which promotes intellectual challenges at a rate appropriate to each individual child and to whatever depth and extent of desire for each individual.

4. To encourage the student to develop a positive self-concept.

5. To encourage the development of an individual while insuring responsibility for self and society by cultivating skills of leadership.

6. To provide the students with the opportunity to interact with other gifted and talented students.

7. To provide opportunities to practice effective communication skills.

8. To provide hands-on experimental learning activities.

9. To provide a variety of cultural events that develops aesthetic value and an appreciation of the Arts.

10.To provide opportunities to practice self-evaluation and authentic assessment.

**Overall Program Objectives**

1. To identify all gifted and talented students K-12 by utilizing procedures and criteria

established by our district which meet or exceed Arkansas Department of Education Guidelines.

2. To insure that the identification process and procedures provide for the nomination and selection of students from traditionally underserved populations.

3. Utilize differentiated educational experiences for all gifted and talented students by incorporating

Diverse intellectual stimulation and challenge.

4. Provide a wide variety of program options and instructional alternatives in content, process skills,

product development and affective skills which are based on student strengths, learning styles and

interests.

5. Provide unique opportunities for the students to interact with community members serving as mentors or resource persons.

6. Provide pre-service and in-service education for teachers/administrators and provide opportunity for

participation in state, regional, and national conferences specifically related to gifted education.

7. Provide reference material related to gifted education to teachers/administrators.

8. To articulate and coordinate the gifted program so that it is a functioning part of the total school

instructional program by integrating the special program with the regular classroom, developing

cooperation between classroom teachers and gifted education personnel.

9. To involve the community in programs for gifted and talented by inclusion on a District Advisory

Council, through surveys, in-service, news media, and informational meetings.

10. Utilize written instruments, both subjective and objective for annual evaluation of the gifted program. Use all evaluation data to review and improve the gifted program so that it is more responsive to the needs of students.

**GT PROGRAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**District Superintendent**

 Oversees overall operations of programs within the district

Approval of purchases for GT program

Makes decisions on classes offered within the district

**Elementary Principal**

Initial approval of purchases and travel

Serves on placement committee and advisory committee

Advocates for program to district personnel

Approves and schedules professional development presented to staff

**Middle School Principal**

 Approval for purchases and travel

 Approves and schedules professional development presented to staff

 Advocates for program to district personnel

 Supports collection of differentiation documentation

 Makes decisions on classes offered within the district

**High School Principal**

 Approval for purchases and travel

 Approves and schedules professional development presented to staff

 Advocates for program to district personnel

 Supports collection of differentiation documentation

 Makes decisions on classes offered within the district

**GT PROGRAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES continued…**

**Elementary Counselor**

 Adds students to eschool

Serves on placement and advisory committee

Reports on student data

**Middle School Counselor**

Adds students to eschool

 Serves on placement and advisory committee

Reports on student data

Building class schedules

**GT Coordinator**

 Oversees general responsibilities of the program

 Collects differentiation documentation from teachers

 Pull-out and enrichment schedules at elementary

 Placement Testing

 Referrals

 Maintains teacher training documentation

 Budget

 Program Approval Application

 Assists with AP testing

 Duke TIP referrals and paperwork

**AP Coordinator**

Maintain all duties related to AP

**Core Content Teachers/Pre-AP Teachers**

 Maintain certification in designated GT related teaching assignment

Submit quarterly differentiation documentation to GT coordinator

**AP Teachers**

 Maintain certification in designated GT related teaching assignment

 Submit syllabus to College Board

**CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION**

The Clarksville School District recognizes that GT students need a differentiated curriculum. Curriculum for the gifted should extend or replace the regular curriculum. An appropriate curriculum should be based on their unique needs and interests. It must be diverse, advanced, and complex enough to reflect the abilities of the gifted and talented student. The content of the curriculum should provide interest, challenge, and extend/replace the regular curriculum. It is not “more of the same”.

Curriculum opportunities are planned with the abilities, accomplishments, and interests of the GT students in mind. Differentiation occurs through adaptations in content, process, or product.

Content may include differentiation via:

* Level of complexity
* Pace of learning
* Degree of abstractness
* Topics not ordinarily part of the regular curriculum (or at that level)
* Organized by themes and ideas
* Multidisciplinary
* Student as teacher and/or self-directed

Process may include differentiation via:

* Critical thinking
* Creative thinking
* Independent study
* Problem-solving
* Logic
* Investigative or research

Products may include differentiation via:

* In-depth studies with appropriate product outcome
* Using new and/or different techniques, material, and forms
* Creative, artistic, and/or theatrical
* Self-chosen specific areas of interest or talent development
* Different types of communication and/or audiences

**PROGRAM OPTIONS**

The Clarksville School District serves identified gifted students through a pull-out program, challenging options offered in the regular classroom, Pre-Advanced Placement course, AP courses, and college concurrent credit. In addition, the LIGHTS enrichment program is made available to all non-identified students in kindergarten through sixth grade. An overview of each program option is provided in the following pages.

 **LIGHTS Enrichment Program (Non-Identified Students in K-6)**

LIGHTS is an enrichment program for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The purpose of the general enrichment program is to teach all elementary students to learn independently and to help them acquire higher thinking skills as an extension of the regular classroom.

The course content, which compliments elementary frameworks, state standard (CCSS) and benchmarks, includes math, science, social studies, and communication skills. In addition, STEM has been infused into our curriculum. Affective skills are developed throughout the program to support the social/emotional well-being of the students.

The Kindergarten enrichment program has a main focus on creativity skills. Through various spoken and written exercises, the students are taught the terminology and practice of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Utilization of “Word of the Month” activities reinforce and develop good character traits.

First graders are introduced to thinking skills. They are taught divergent and convergent thinking and introduced to problem solving. Creativity exercises reinforce the knowledge and skills in creativity learned in Kindergarten.

Second graders concentrate on thinking skills. Through several resources, students practice the types of thinking and reinforce creativity skills.

Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth graders concentrate on learning decision-making and problem solving skills. Students learn and practice the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy and are taught to analyze problems, define specific problems, determine causes, consider possible solutions, evaluate the solutions and make a decision and then take action on a decision and evaluate the results of the decision. Several resources are used to accomplish these skills. Extensions in regular classroom content areas are also used to support and reinforce the subject matter by collaborating with classroom teachers.

\*Third through Sixth grade Enrichment is dependent on staff and scheduling. K-2 Enrichment is required by law.

**PULL-OUT PROGRAM (3rd-6th Grades Identified Students)**

Students are pulled out of the regular classroom for 150 minutes each week where they study topics not normally taught at their grade level. These topics encourage abstract thinking and are introduced at a faster pace and more complex level. Process skills and creativity are a large part of the curriculum as well. Products are the result of learning investigations and are shared with other classes and parents. Curriculum selections are guided by the district’s scope and sequence as well as integration of the Common Core State Standards. Emphasis is placed on higher order thinking skills, creative and critical thinking skills, research, and special projects. In addition to curriculum selected by the GT teacher, students are provided opportunities to conduct individual research projects and group projects.

**CORE CONTENT CLASSES (7th-12th Grades Identified Students)**

Identified gifted students in grades 7-12 are provided services through secondary content differentiation, Pre-Advanced Placement, Advanced Placement, and/or college concurrent credit.

In addition to coursework, monthly meetings are held with the GT coordinator to address affective needs.

**Program Evaluation Plan**

The purpose of the evaluation plan at Clarksville School District is to insure that the GT program is flexible and changes to meet the needs of its population. For this reason, stakeholders are provided the opportunity to evaluate all components of the program yearly (identification, staff development, program options, program goals and objectives, curriculum, and community involvement). The district’s evaluations are based on program objectives set by the district.

Results from the evaluations are used in planning for the next school year or making changes in long term goals. They are shared via the GT webpage.

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