

2020-21

Academically Independent Parent Handbook



Prepared by parents, teachers and
administrators in the Bridgewater-
Raritan Regional School District

Academically Independent Program

Welcome

I would like to extend my warmest wishes to all current and incoming students and their parents and guardians. Our program offers an excellent educational opportunity for acceleration and enrichment in language arts literacy and mathematics. The goal of the program is to provide each eligible child with a challenging educational environment while simultaneously keeping the students with their grade-level peers.

The development of this handbook represents our commitment to greater communication between the parents, students, teachers, and the supervisor of the Academically Independent Program.

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Supervisor of Special Programs

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Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide pertinent and relevant information to the parents and students of the Bridgewater-Raritan Academically Independent Program. It also provides a general background or guide to gifted education from the perspective of the parent group. We believe this information will help foster a positive relationship between the students, parents and the school.

Philosophy

According to New Jersey administrative code (N.J.A.C. 6:8-4.5(a) 4i), “The district shall make provisions for identifying students with gifted and talented abilities and for providing them with an educational program and services.” As described in BRRSD BOE Policy 6290.1R, the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School district defines “gifted and talented” students as those students who are capable of high academic performance and who require differentiated programs and/or instruction beyond those typically provided in order to fully develop their gifts and talents, lead satisfying lives, and enhance the quality of life in their communities.

The BRRSD offers a range of programs to meet the needs of these students including the Academically Independent (AI) program in grades two through five, accelerated math in grade four, the Enrichment (E) program in grades five through eight, and the Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors program in grades nine through twelve.

Program History

In accordance with the New Jersey Department of Education mandate, the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District initiated a formal Academically Independent Program in 1974 at two elementary schools. Fifty students were selected on the basis of outstanding academic achievement and potential throughout the district. The student population in the district ranged from 8,200 to 10,000 during the years of 1974-1978. The objective for these classes was to challenge the intellectually advanced student through a multidimensional approach in all disciplines. Students chosen to participate in the AI classes pursued activities “at an accelerated pace” which enabled them to master the skills more quickly and concepts prescribed in the curriculum at greater depth.

After the introduction of the program, annual evaluations were conducted by the principal and teachers of the AI classes. Similar to other programs, revisions to AI took place on a regular basis as a result of teacher and parent input. Throughout the years, stakeholder meetings were held on an annual basis. During the early years of AI, a parent support group, the *Association of Parents for Educational eXcellence* (APEX), was formed to provide feedback and assistance with resources.

Some of the recommendations that were shared at these meetings include:

1. Re-organize the AI classes into four single-level self-contained classes at grades 2, 3, 4, and 5.
2. Refine the selection and exiting process.
3. Provide for more interaction between AI students and non-AI students.

Some of the observations and opinions that were shared at these meetings include:

1. "We have established a well-conceived program which has been supported by the parents."
2. "Bridgewater-Raritan and Manalapan-Englishtown are two of the few districts, who utilize the self-contained model, the program is outstanding."
3. "Bridgewater-Raritan had the best program in the county."

The administration of the district completed a thorough Program Evaluation in 2009.

Program Overview

The AI classroom gathers together students who have indicated an interest in this program and have demonstrated the potential to perform work at a higher grade level than their age-level peers as evidenced by the assessments that are given in the selection process. The teachers in the AI classes strive to create an environment of motivated, curious learners. They plan for instruction at high levels of critical thinking and engagement. Typically, the children in the program learn quickly, and this allows the teachers to plan for acceleration. The program takes a child centered approach, integrating subject areas and demanding critical thinking processes. Lessons seek to provide academically gifted students with continued challenge and multiple outlets for their expression.

The Academically Independent Program groups students in a self-contained classroom using multiple criteria. It was designed to meet the needs of approximately three to five percent of a grade-level population, whose ability, performance, and potential are beyond their peers, and require a differentiated educational program. Academically gifted children are those who possess high intellectual ability, proven academic performance, higher level thinking skills, a commitment to tasks, and self-motivation to consistently produce quality work.

The goal of the program is to provide an academic learning environment which is particularly suited to the needs of identified children, while at the same time fostering their social growth. The full time self-contained classroom places the student in an atmosphere where his/her advanced, unconventional, and divergent thinking is both acceptable and respected. According to gifted experts Karen Rogers and James Kulik, "Full time ability grouping produces substantial academic gains and that gifted and talented students should spend the majority of their day with others of similar abilities and interests."

Definition and Characteristics of the Gifted Child

What is Giftedness?

Over the years many definitions about giftedness have emerged. Most agree that gifted individuals possess enhanced intellectual capacity and/or potential and require modifications and adaptations to their educational experiences. The current federal definition of gifted is taken from former U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sidney P. Marland's August 1971 report to Congress, "Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society." The current definition, which can be found in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is: "Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities."

According to the Columbus Group (1991), "Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that is qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with the higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally."

Asynchrony can also involve uneven development and feeling out-of-step with societal norms. All of these factors contribute to the vulnerability of the self. The more one veers in either direction from the norm, the greater the asynchrony, both internally (in terms of the unevenness of their development) and the externally (in terms of their ability to fit in with age-mates). Cognitive and emotional complexity, also vary as a function of the degree of difference from the norm in either direction. The educational needs at the extremes stem directly from their developmental differences and psychological needs. Gifted children have better social adjustment in classes with children like themselves. (Silverman, 2011)

Before one can identify and make provisions to accommodate the gifted child, it is important to understand the nature of giftedness. According to Carol Bainbridge, *Your Guide to Gifted*

Children, spotting a gifted child can be fairly easy to the trained eye. Even to the untrained eye of a parent, their child may appear different than other children. Obviously no child is outstanding in all characteristics, but shows a strong leaning to most. Below is a list of traits/characteristics of young gifted children.

Cognitive Traits

- Very observant
- Extremely curious
- Intense interests
- Excellent memory
- Long attention span
- Excellent reasoning skills
- Well-developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis
- Quickly and easily sees relationships in ideas, objects, or facts
- Fluent and flexible thinking
- Elaborate and original thinking
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Learns quickly and with less practice and repetition
- Unusual and /or vivid imagination

Social and Emotional Traits

- Interested in philosophical and social issues
- Very sensitive, emotionally and even physically
- Concerned about fairness and injustice
- Morally sensitive
- Perfectionistic
- Energetic
- Well-developed sense of humor
- Usually intrinsically motivated
- Relates well to parents, teachers, and other adults

Language Traits

- Extensive vocabulary
- May read early
- Reads rapidly and widely
- Reads avidly and absorbs books well beyond his/her years
- Asks "what if" questions

Additional Traits

- Enjoys learning new things
- Enjoys intellectual activity
- Displays intellectual playfulness
- Prefers books and magazines meant for older children
- Skeptical, critical, evaluative
- Discusses in detail, elaborates
- Is mentally and physically involved
- Sustains concentration for lengthy periods and shows outstanding responsibility and independence in classroom work

- Constructs abstractions
- Draws inferences
- Imitates projects
- Creates a new design
- Manipulates information
- Invents
- Thrives on complexity
- Sets realistically high standards for self; is highly self-critical in evaluating and correcting his/her own efforts

Behavior and Social Skills

Like all classrooms, the AI classroom is a dynamic, exciting environment. Students should feel motivated, challenged and stimulated by the lessons and activities which take place at each grade level. Because of its nature, students often work independently or in small groups, with the teacher acting as facilitator rather than a leader. This requires that students manage their behavior so as to maximize their learning as well as their relationships with peers. As in the general classroom, students should demonstrate cooperation when working with others. While students are encouraged to share and execute their own ideas, respect should be shown to the teacher who is ultimately responsible for the achievement of student learning. Students need to be able to accept constructive criticism, stay “on task” and participate in class discussions which recognize the contributions of other peers.

Social skills are important for all students. "Research indicates that children capable of establishing and maintaining positive relationships, expressing and controlling their feelings and interacting with others do better academically - school success requires social skills as well as academic skills" (Huntington). Promoting social interaction at home by teaching your child to verbalize his or her emotions rather than act out, coaching your child on effective problem-solving skills, and taking ownership for one's behavior/actions, promotes responsibility and respect for others. Building social skills takes practice but doing so will help your child be a happier student and person.

This list of manners from 365 Manners Every Kid Should Know by Sheryl Eberly, Three Rivers Press, Pittsburgh, 2001 is a helpful reference for parents. Please consider teaching your child to:

1. Say “Please”
2. Say “Thank you”
3. Say “I'm Sorry”

4. Say "Hello" and "Goodbye" to people when you meet or leave them
5. Know when to say "Excuse Me"
6. Know Proper the way to ask permission
7. Know how to interrupt politely
8. Understand that only one person can speak at a time
9. When to hold the door open
10. How to make proper introductions
11. Know when whispering is and is not acceptable
12. Know how to correct someone if he or she made a mistake
13. How to be a good listener as the first step to a good conversation
14. How to use positive words when talking
15. How to behave in a classroom or public meeting
16. Thank a parent who has done you a favor
17. How to use humor in a proper and respectful way and not at the expense of others
18. Know how to give a real apology and take responsibility for word or actions
19. Respect the feelings of others
20. Give a sincere compliment
21. Respect the personal space, items, and bodies of others
22. Open doors
23. How to borrow respectfully
24. What to do when you break or damage someone else's belongings
25. What to do when you don't know what to do
26. How to treat books
27. How to give people the proper attention at home and school and focusing on what people are saying and doing
28. How to take care of one's home or school
29. How to be a good friend
30. Know what bullying is and how to avoid being one or how to deal with one
31. How to welcome a new friend at school or in the neighborhood
32. How to behave on the playground
33. How to properly answer the phone and how to take messages
34. Good cell phone etiquette
35. How to behave/sit in the cafeteria or in a restaurant
36. How to show good sportsmanship
37. How to deal with coughs, sneezes, burping, etc.

Classroom Assignments and Organizational Skills

The AI classroom provides a very unique learning environment for its participants. Teachers create instructional plans to achieve the objectives of the differentiated curriculum in math, reading, language arts, science, and social studies in order to attain levels of skills and concepts in the content areas. Students' natural curiosity is encouraged and nurtured through hands on learning activities and technological applications. The classroom often moves at a fairly rapid pace. As a result, there are several expectations for the students that are members of the Academically Independent community.

Classroom Assignments

The lessons, activities, and projects that are implemented within the AI classroom support the Bridgewater-Raritan curriculum for each subject. The lessons and activities are often cross-curricular, provide extensions to existing units of study, and encourage the development of life skills that the students will take with them as they progress through the grade levels.

Among the skills that students will acquire through their participation in the AI program are: problem solving and critical thinking skills, research techniques, small group/large group social development through projects, and real life applications of mathematical concepts.

Students should take pride in their work and make every effort to produce neat work given the level of fine motor development. Additionally, work will often require a detailed explanation to support student responses. Examples can include showing math calculations, using text support in reading/writing activities, and providing thoughtful extensions of subject matter both orally and in written form.

Assignments done in class will also provide the AI student with an opportunity to develop and refine social interactions with peers in order to complete a task. When working independently, the AI student is expected to develop his or her self-motivation and independence.

Organizational Skills

Organization is an essential skill for success in school. Tools and techniques will be provided within the classroom to support the students as they develop the ability to take responsibility for keeping themselves organized. It is recommended that parents encourage and coach their child to

take responsibility for his/her own papers and resources required for class. Establishing routines at home for students to organize their own belongings will ensure that they are successful in school. Each student will have an agenda to record his/her assignments. Parents/students should check the student agenda daily.

AI Expectations

The typical AI student exhibits these traits in developmentally appropriate ways:

- Keeps up with the rapid pace and accelerated curriculum of their grade level.
- Takes pride in work and produces consistent, quality assignments.
- Simultaneously works on various short/long-term projects, breaking them into digestible parts.
- Has an individualized organizational plan that allows him/her to meet homework and project deadlines.
- Has a natural curiosity supported by intrinsic motivation to excel in the subject matter presented.
- Is able to produce novel/ unique concepts with or without teacher prompted examples.
- Is focused on concept mastery rather than fixation on the final product grade.
- Is able to work quickly and efficiently both independently as well as in group settings.
- Is cooperative and respectful of teachers, peers, and other members of the school community.
- Is able to accept challenges readily all the while exhibiting a positive attitude and learning from constructive criticism.
- Exhibits non-disruptive behavior.
- Is a well-rounded individual who has a range of interests.

Homework

Homework is an important part of the educational process. It is an assignment to be prepared or completed at a time other than during regular class time. Parents/guardians and teachers are partners in the education of students. Their joint effort in assessing and monitoring homework provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen the home-school partnership. Homework is an essential assessment tool in our program. Parents are asked to allow students to complete their assignments with minimal support throughout the grade levels. It is appropriate for students who are having difficulty to circle the problem or write a note at the top of the homework explaining the difficulty. If students are having difficulty, it is important for the teacher to have this knowledge in order to adjust lessons and provide additional support in the classroom. This type of structure and support at home will enable the child to become more independent in his/her educational experience. When students complete their homework independently, follow - up in the classroom best meets the needs of the children.

Repeated studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between effective study habits and completion of assignments and the student's success in school. It is important that students work toward assuming responsibility for homework assignments.

Homework is developmental in nature and increases in scope with the maturity and capabilities of the students. It should promote, complement, and reinforce the concepts and knowledge presented in school. Homework, properly planned and purposeful in nature, should help the student to achieve the following objectives:

1. Learn to work independently and become self-reliant.
2. Reinforce learning by thinking, planning, organizing and applying.
3. Extend proficiency in effective habits and skills.
4. Increase knowledge and its application.
5. Develop insight and stimulate creativity.

AI follows the same District Policy 2330 guidelines for homework; however the times may vary according to the nature of the assignment and the individual's work habits.

Homework assignments are expected to be completed neatly and accurately as possible. Homework should provide feedback to teachers about student understanding, enabling teachers to adjust instruction, and re-teach concepts when necessary.

Each AI teacher has his/ her own homework organizational procedure clearly defined for students and parents. This includes expectations for homework completion along with procedure for non-completion of homework in accordance with district policy. Parents should communicate to the teacher as soon as possible any extenuating circumstances such as family emergencies that affect their child's ability to complete homework assignments. According to BRRSD policy, students, teachers and parents all play a role in the successful completion of homework:

The Student's Role

A. Students are expected to follow the class organizational procedure for homework:

1. Write down complete, detailed instructions given by the teacher.
2. Clarify any questions pertaining to the instructions before leaving class
3. Take home instructions, books, and any materials needed to complete the assignment

B. Students are expected to follow the home organizational procedure for homework:

1. Set aside a special time in which to do the assignment
2. Have a special place to work free from excessive noise and other distractions.
3. Establish a plan of organization for completing the homework, including long-term assignments
4. Follow the homework plan.
5. Check the completed assignment carefully
6. Submit completed homework to the teacher by the date requested
7. Complete summer work prior to the start of school

The Teacher's Role

Considerate, discerning teachers are as conscientious and thoughtful about making appropriate homework assignments and properly preparing children for them as they are in shaping any other part of the day's plan.

Teachers' homework practices, based on district policy, should be discussed with students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year and should be reviewed as needed throughout the year.

1. Teachers should introduce skills and concepts and provide guided practice before making homework assignments. They should make sure that homework is not assigned unless the concept has been explicitly taught or the purpose of the assignment is to prepare for an upcoming class topic. Homework is not to be a substitute for what should have been learned in class.
2. Teachers making a homework assignment should clearly communicate the assignment to the students, clarify all questions pertaining to completing the assignment and check for student understanding, and inform students about the manner in which the assignment will be evaluated.
3. Teachers must post homework electronically.
4. Teachers should develop a clearly understood procedure for monitoring and evaluating homework assignments and communicate this procedure to students and parents/guardians.
5. Teachers should ensure that the resources required for assignments are reasonably available to students.
6. Teachers shall directly notify parents/guardians through email, phone contact, or personal communication if a student regularly fails to do homework assignments.
7. Teachers should remind students of opportunities for before and after school extra help sessions.
8. Teachers should consider extenuating circumstances such as family emergencies in scheduling homework assignments for students absent from school due to illness.
9. Teachers should provide students with a schedule of weekly and long term assignments whenever possible.
10. Teachers may assign weekend homework whenever necessary for the continuity of instruction. The amount of homework given on a weekend or over a holiday break should not exceed the time expectations for one school day. At the primary level (K-4), however, weekend homework shall generally not be assigned.
11. Teachers should evaluate homework on the knowledge and skills that are specific to the content area (i.e. artistic ability and/or effort should not affect the grade in core subjects).
12. Teachers should clearly communicate summer assignments including the rubric that will be used for evaluation and the ways in which the assignment will be linked to future learning.

The Parent's/Guardian's Role

Completing homework assignments should be primarily the responsibility of the student; the parents/guardians, however, should assume a major role in reinforcing and encouraging the students to do their best. The positive attitudes of parents/guardians will increase the probability of their child's success in school. Several ways for parents/guardians to enhance the value of their child's study periods are listed below:

- A. Providing a place to study
 1. Arrange for a specific study area with emphasis on privacy, convenience, and consistency of location.

2. Select an area which is comfortable and quiet and has the necessary materials for completing the homework assignment.
3. Limit distractions such as radio (or iPods), computers, television and the telephone during study period.

B. Monitoring the students' activities

1. Help the child in scheduling out-of-school time so that a block of time is set aside for study each day.
2. Students' homework assignments are their own responsibility. Parents/guardians can be of help in selecting topics for themes, gathering materials for experiments or projects, and checking for neatness. However, the actual work should be completed by the student.
3. It is helpful if parents/guardians can spend a short time each day with their child and his/her homework. Although the time of day is relatively unimportant, devoting the time in an unhurried, comfortable manner is important.
4. Criticism of the child's work should be objective and constructive.
5. Positive reinforcement can be given through regular encouragement and the showing of genuine interest.
6. Encourage the child to contact his/her teacher for extra help before and after school, if he/she is experiencing difficulty with any subject.
7. Notify the teacher if the homework took an excessive amount of time or required knowledge or skill that the student had not yet acquired.
8. Monitor the completion of summer assignments.

Parent Involvement

Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District encourages parental involvement in support of the classroom environment. The extent of participation will vary from classroom to classroom. Please attend Back to School Night and the PTO meeting held in the beginning of the year to learn about volunteer opportunities.

In accordance with the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District policies for parental responsibilities (Policy 5700), a cooperative relationship between home and school is essential to each student's successful development and achievement. To achieve this wholesome relationship, parents/guardians are urged to accept the following responsibilities:

1. To exemplify an enthusiastic and supportive attitude toward school and education.
2. To build a good working relationship among themselves, their children, the teachers, and school staff.
3. To teach their children self-respect, respect for the law, respect for others, and respect for public property.

4. To insist on prompt and regular attendance.
5. To listen to the views and observations of all parties concerned before reaching a decision.
6. To recognize that school staff deserves the same consideration and respect.
7. To encourage their children to take pride in their appearance.
8. To insist that their children promptly bring home all communications from school.
9. To cooperate with the school in jointly resolving any school-related problems through the chain of command.
10. To set realistic standards of behavior for their children and be firm, fair, and consistent in applying them.
11. To help their children learn to deal effectively with negative peer pressure.
12. To provide a place conducive to study and insure the completion of homework assignments.

Here are some additional guidelines for parents of gifted children suggested by teachers and parents:

1. Provide a noncompetitive, individualized setting where children are able to advance at their own rate of learning.
2. Provide an environment where it is safe to learn by trial and error. This allows for the opportunity to learn from mistakes.
3. Finding resources to enhance subjects of study can provide enrichment for children. For example, museums, historical sites, etc.
4. Look at each child on an individual basis.
5. Provide opportunity for your child to interact and share with others like himself (outside of school)
6. Expect your child to do his/her best.
7. Look for the joy and uniqueness in each child.

Talking About School with Your Child

Language Arts

Throughout the day several items are read. Questions that parents should ask their child each day may change as the year progresses. Here are some questions you may ask:

Language Arts:

1. What genre are you currently reading in class?
2. What is the plot?
3. What book are you reading and what vocabulary/word choice that the author uses has allowed you to visualize portions of the story?
4. What problem exists in your story and how is the main character(s) beginning to solve the problem?
5. What character traits are being exemplified in your story?

Reading Comprehension for Fiction:

1. What connections can you make to the text?
2. How does the story make you feel?
3. Have you had a similar experience?
4. Do the characters remind you of someone in your life?
5. What does the story make you think/wonder about?

Setting:

1. Where and when does the story take place?
2. Could the story take place elsewhere?
3. What words did the author use to describe the place?
4. Does the season/time affect the characters or the plot of the story?

Characters:

1. Who is the most interesting (fairest, bravest, etc...) character?
2. Which character taught you the most?
3. Which characters change and which don't? Explain.
4. Did you learn anything from the characters?

Math

Parents are encouraged to have conversations about the homework, but not help with the homework. Some questions you might ask your child are:

1. What was today's lesson about? (A student should be able to recap the main idea of the lesson covered.)
2. Could you show me how to solve one of the problems on your homework?
3. How can you use what you've learned in math today in real life?

Glossary

Acceleration

A strategy which is used when a student demonstrates competencies, knowledge, abilities, and/or skills which exceed that which is outlined in the planned course or text for his/her chronological or grade placement level. This can be determined by advanced work demonstrated in the classroom and pre or diagnostic tests in the skill areas. It should be emphasized that it is the student who has accelerated him/herself through a combination of incidental or intended learning. The district's role is to identify the level of acceleration and make the appropriate educational adjustment in placement and pace.

Allowing students to move to a higher level of schoolwork than their age would ordinarily dictate, be it in the form of early entry to school, placement in a self-contained gifted classroom, earning credit by examination, skipping grades, completing two grades in a single year, or concurrent enrollment in both high school and college.

Achievement Tests

Instruments that measure what your child knows academically and what he/she can do academically. Examples: California Achievement Test, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Test (ACT). These tests reveal strengths and weaknesses in your child's academic abilities. They should also help educators improve instruction, aid in forming goals and objectives for the curriculum, and determine content and skills.

Asynchronous Development

Also referred to as uneven integration, this is development in which intellectual growth is ahead of physical and social and/or emotional development.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Hundreds of gifted programs in this country use Bloom's Taxonomy as a model for developing curriculum for gifted children. Benjamin S. Bloom and others developed the taxonomy for educational objectives in 1956. They divided learning into three parts or domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Each domain was then divided again. For example, the cognitive domain was further broken down into activities involving: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The last three (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are considered high-level thinking domains.

Classification of thinking into six levels of increasing complexity: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Cluster Grouping /Within class regrouping

Assigning several identified gifted students in the same classroom. Clustering gifted students in the regular classroom allows the teacher to differentiate learning activities for a group of identified

students rather than one or two students. Students are grouped together within a class for one or more subject areas (usually math and language arts) based on achievement or mastery of the content.

Content Acceleration

The presentation of the curriculum at a faster pace than that which is found in the typical grade-level classroom.

Creativity/Creative Thinking

Artistic or intellectual intuitiveness that allows students to conceive and create innovative concepts or products. A complex mental process that is very difficult to define or measure. Creativity is more than the ability to draw well as many people believe. It involves putting together new, different, and unique ideas. It is found in all children to a certain degree. Creative thinking can be used in all content areas, not just art. Some of the experts in the field include J.W. Getzels, P. Jackson, J.P. Guilford, E. Paul Torrance, and Frank Williams.

Critical Thinking

Cultivated analytical skills allowing students to logically comprehend and solve complex concepts or problems.

Curriculum Compacting

Sometimes called telescoping, this adaptation eliminates (or shortens) work that students have already mastered at a pace faster than their classmates. Compacting allows students time and opportunity for enrichment or acceleration options during the day.

Curriculum Based Assessment

A system for identifying the instructional needs of the student based upon the student's ongoing performance within existing course content, and for delivering instruction as effectively and efficiently as possible to match those needs. (See separate definitions for effectively and efficiently)

Differentiated Curriculum

A set of activities, a program, or a plan of instruction that is designed to meet the unique needs of special children. Gifted children may not deserve more than other children in our public schools, but they do deserve different. Different for gifted children means curriculum that allows for acceleration, stimulation of high level thinking, divergent thinking, and convergent thinking.

Differentiation

Adapting the pace, level, or kind of instructional curriculum to meet each student's individual learning needs, styles, or interests.

Differentiated education or services means that process of instruction which is capable of being integrated into the school program, and is adaptable to varying levels of individual learning response in the education of the gifted and talented, and includes but is not limited to:

- A differentiated curriculum embodying a high level of cognitive and affective concepts and processes beyond those normally provided in the regular curriculum of the local educational agency.
- Instructional strategies which accommodate the unique learning styles of the gifted and talented; and

- Flexible administrative arrangements for instruction both in and out of school, such as special classes, seminars, resource rooms, independent study, student internships, mentorships, research field trips, library media research centers and other appropriate arrangements. (1976 U.S. Office of Education in Academically Gifted Programs)

Divergent Thinking

Another element of J. P. Guilford's research model for the structure of intelligence. Your gifted child is doing divergent thinking when he/she comes up with new and unique ideas about things. The ideas may not always be practical. In many ways, divergent thinking is the opposite of convergent thinking.

Effectively

Maintaining instructional level at the 90% mastery level or above (see Curriculum Based Assessment).

Efficiently

Minimal time and supervision required for effective instruction necessary for the student to achieve at the instructional level (see Curriculum Based Assessment).

Enrichment Programs

Learning activities that goes beyond the regular curricular activities. John Gowan and George Demos (The Education and Guidance of the Ablest, Springfield, IL, Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1964) suggested that enrichment programs will be successful if the student: (1) is encouraged to search for new information; (2) is provided with leadership opportunities; (3) is able to pursue personal interests; (4) is able to engage in creative assignments; (5) can develop his/her own initiative; and (6) engages in in-depth activities that are, in fact, broadening. Enrichment programs usually take the form of special classes or special schools for the gifted. They might also involve itinerant teachers who provide regular classroom teachers with help for their gifted students. These special teachers might also "pull out" the gifted students from the regular classroom in order to involve them in special activities. A general term for a wide range of challenging student learning opportunities outside of the regular classroom.

Evaluation

To make judgments about the value or worth of something. Just about anything can be evaluated: a person, an object, a happening, an organization, a program, etc. Usually a set of criteria in the form of a checklist is used to evaluate a gifted program. Quite often this checklist is given to parents as well as educators and students. Evaluations of gifted students themselves might take the form of tests, group discussions, or self-evaluation.

Evaluation, Educational

An evaluation of a child's educational functioning in relation to his/her current educational program. The results of this evaluation are expressed in terms of both the child's academic strengths and weaknesses.

Evaluation, Psychological

Those diagnostic procedures utilized by a psychologist which include evaluation of intellectual functioning and may include the evaluation of education performance, social and personal behavior, and psychomotor development.

Grouping

Assigning students to a class or teacher within a school.

Heterogeneous Grouping

Grouping students with differing abilities, achievements, interests, perspectives, and backgrounds. Also referred to as mixed-ability grouping.

Homogeneous Grouping

Grouping students of similar abilities, achievements, interests, perspectives, and backgrounds. Also referred to as like-ability grouping.

Higher Level Thinking

Emphasizes tasks and activities that involve (1) analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, (2) viewing situations from various perspectives, (3) finding several "layers of meaning" by using metaphors, analogies, paradoxes, and (4) generating different possible solutions by showing fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration of thought.

Identification

Methods used to determine which students are best suited for gifted services.

Inclusion

Practice where students of differing abilities and conditions are grouped together in the regular classroom.

Intelligence Test

A test that measures children's potential for achievement in intellectual pursuits.

IQ (Intelligence Quotient)

Measure of child's cognitive ability that compares a child's mental age and actual age.

Mission Statement

A concise statement of purpose that clearly describes the reasons for programming. A mission statement for a gifted education program should reflect or align with the general educational mission statement of the school or district and with the gifted education philosophy statement. Mission and philosophy statements are often combined. Together, they provide a compass for setting program goals.

Mastery Learning

A model of learning in which all but a very few students are expected to achieve over time the mastery of predetermined subject matter and skills (Taylor, 1990).

Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation (MDE)

The information compiled by the multidisciplinary team (MDT), which describes a student's academic functioning, adapted behavior, social behavior, learning problems, learning strengths, and educational needs.

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT)

A group of persons including at least one teacher or other specialist with knowledge in the area of suspected exceptionality. MDT staffing would be composed of the child's teacher, school psychologist, and IU supervisor. Records of the child's academic performance are evaluated by this

team and appropriate recommendations made. MDT process is used in initial placement as well as reevaluations.

Outcome Based Education (OBE)

A way of focusing and organizing all of the school's programs and instructional efforts around the clearly defined outcomes we want all students to demonstrate when they leave school. The mission of OBE is to equip All students with the knowledge, competencies, and orientations needed for future success and to implement programs and conditions that maximize learning success for ALL students. In OBE, the philosophy is success for all students and staff. OBE includes clearly defined exit outcomes that directly reflect the knowledge, competencies, and orientations needed by positive, contributing adults in an increasingly complex, changing world, and that all students successfully demonstrate before they leave school. It includes a system of instructional placement, grouping, and eligibility that enables students to advance through the curriculum whenever they can successfully demonstrate essential performance prerequisites for new units or courses. OBE encourages students and staff to attain high performance levels. (Spady, 1991)

Overexcitability (OE)

Intense and deep response often found in gifted students that allows for greater feeling, imagination, energy, sensuality, and cognitive abilities.

Philosophy Statement

A concise focus statement helpful in identifying and describing a program approach based on specific needs the program seeks to address. A philosophy statement for a gifted education program should reflect or align with the general educational philosophy of the school or district and with the gifted mission statement. Philosophy and mission statements are often combined. Together, they provide a compass for setting program goals.

Portfolio Assessment

A collection of student products used to demonstrate and measure achievement, abilities, and talents, often toward the purpose of placing the student in a gifted program or evaluating work done in a gifted program.

Problem-based Learning

An instructional method that compels students to think critically, analytically, and cooperatively, individually, or in groups, toward finding solutions to real-world problems or imaginary scenarios (based in truth) using appropriate learning resources.

Program Evaluation

A systematic appraisal of the impact and value of the services a program provides.

Risk Taker

Not afraid of failure, willing to take chances in order to learn new things. Many gifted children are perfectionists and do not like to get involved in new activities unless they know or believe they can do it easily and correctly. Unfortunately, some gifted children learn to be average in school because they have never learned to be risk takers. An important goal of many gifted programs is to provide opportunities for risk taking. (Leadership activities, creative problem-solving programs, simulation games, etc.)

Self-contained Program

An arrangement where students are grouped on a full-time basis with intellectual peers, often for consecutive years, to promote high achievement and reduce the social and emotional problems that can come with giftedness.

Slosson Test

There are two versions of the Slosson test. The Slosson Intelligence Test (SIT) is to serve as a “quick estimate of general verbal cognitive ability” or “index of intelligence”. The Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) is designed to assess a subject’s “level of oral word recognition, word calling or reading level.” It is a quick screening test to determine a student’s reading level.

Standardized Testing

Testing of students under identical conditions that allows for results to be statistically compared to a standard.

Summative Evaluation

Assessing the quality of programming and measuring success in light of program goals.

Twice Exceptional

Quality of being both gifted and having a physical, an emotional, or a learning disability.

Resources

PAGE (Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education) A Parents’ Glossary of Terms for Gifted Education

<http://www.penngifted.org/glossary>

The Survival Guide for Teachers of Gifted Kids by James Delisle, PHD., & Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2003)

Who’s Who in Gifted Education

Gifted education started in ancient Greece. China valued and nurtured high ability during the Tang Dynasty. With this in mind the following is a list of teachers, psychologists, researchers, and gifted advocates, who influence gifted education today.

Benjamin Bloom

Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist and researcher, outlined six levels of thinking based upon one another in terms of complexity. This became known as Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.

The taxonomy was Bloom’s effort to expand teacher’s views on all children which led to improving curriculum emphasizing higher levels of learning. This is an important component of gifted theory today.

Nicholas Colangelo

Nicholas Colangelo is a leading researcher and writer on counseling gifted children, with an emphasis on their social and emotional needs. He is the director of the Connie Belin National Center for Gifted Education at the University of Iowa.

James Gallagher

Gallagher's *Teaching the Gifted Child* is one of the best-recognized texts in gifted education and has appeared in five separate editions over a thirty years span. James Gallagher has been most influential in gifted education especially in the areas of political advocacy and curriculum development.

A. Harry Passow

A researcher at Columbia University, Passow worked toward differentiating curriculum long before the current focus on its importance.

Sally Reis/Joseph Renzulli

Renzulli is the Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut. He and Sally Reis (his wife) have worked together to promote excellence in schools, with the Schoolwide Enrichment Model. A major component of Renzulli's model is curriculum compacting, which provides opportunity for teachers to assess mastery of required curriculum.

Karen Rogers

Among the most renowned researchers in gifted education today, Karen Rogers has done work encompassing many important areas, including the benefits of ability grouping and acceleration for academically gifted students.

Linda Silverman

Linda Silverman is a clinical psychologist who focuses on the needs of highly gifted children. She has championed the continued use of individual IQ testing as an accurate barometer of intellectual ability.

Joyce Van Tassel-Baska

Past President of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), Van Tassel-Baska's work centers on the academic needs of gifted children along with making curriculum more challenging and rigorous. She has produced volumes of books and articles on these subject areas.

The Survival Guide for Teachers of Gifted Kids by James Delisle, PHD., & Barbara A. Lewis (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2003)

National, State and Regional Organizations Offering Advocacy Services

[NJ Association for Gifted Children \(NJAGC\)](#)

P.O. Box 667

Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

Phone: (856) 273-7530

Email: njagc@njagc.org

The local affiliate of the National Association for Gifted Children. NJAGC is an all volunteer non-profit organization to further the cause of gifted children and education in the state. It offers an annual state conference, professional development,

[Gifted Child Society, Inc.](#)

190 Rock Road

Glen Rock, NJ 07452-1736

Phone: (201) 444-6530

Email: admin@gifted.org

A non-profit organization in New Jersey to further the cause of gifted children. Offers parent seminars, children's programs, and teacher training conferences, and online forum.

[Gifted Development Center](#)

8120 Sheridan Boulevard

Suite C-111

Westminster, CO 80003

303.837.8378

Toll-free 1.888.443.8331

Email: www.gifteddevelopment.com

A service of the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development. Offers Testing/Counseling by Dr. Linda Silverman and much information on gifted.

[National Association for Gifted Children](#)

Suite 550 1707 L Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: (202) 785-4268

www.nagc.org

Email: nagc@nagc.org

From their web site: NAGC is a non-profit organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.

[NEAG CENTER FOR GIFTED EDUCATION AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT](#)

University of Connecticut 2131 Hillside Rd. Unit 3007

Storrs, CT 06269-3007

Phone: 860-486-4676

www.gifted.uconn.edu

Email: siamak.vahidi@uconn.edu

A collaborative research center on gifted and talented education. Activities include research and information on gifted, summer Confratute for educators, graduate study, publications, and information-sharing. Please note: if you email, you must provide them with your full name and city, state (country if outside United States) of your residence otherwise they would be unable to respond to your question.

[SENG: Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted](http://www.SENGifted.org)
www.SENGifted.org

SENG is dedicated to fostering environments in which gifted adults and children, in all their diversity, understand and accept themselves and are understood, valued, nurtured, and supported by their families, schools, workplaces and communities. They offer continuing education programs, grants, and a conference with programs for children and adults.

[Hoagies' Gifted Education Page](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)

Carolyn Kottmeyer, founder and director

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page

256 Eagleview Blvd., PMB 123

Exton, PA 19341

Email: www.hoagiesgifted.org

[The Council for Exceptional Children](http://www.cec.sped.org)

1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22201

Phone: (703) 620-3660

www.cec.sped.org

Email: service@cec.sped.org

From their web site: The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted.

[HEROES \(For Exceptional Scholars\)](http://www.HEROESgifted.com)

Phone: (732) 690-7991

Email: www.HEROESgifted.com

Rita Ostrager, Founder and President

[Rutgers University](http://www.rutgers.edu/gifted)

[Young Scholars](http://www.rutgers.edu/gifted)

Courses for the gifted

(732) 392-4748

Elizabeth Hough Beasley

[Montclair State University](http://www.montclair.edu/gifted)

[Academically Gifted /Talented Youth Program](http://www.montclair.edu/gifted)

(973) 655-4104

Nicole DeCapua
Email: decapuan@mail.montclair.edu,
www.montclair.edu/gifted

[Summer Institute for the Gifted \(SIG\)](#)
(203) 399-5021
Barbara Swicord, President
Email: bswicord@giftedstudy.com
www.giftedstudy.com

[Johns Hopkins University](#)
[Center for Talented Youth \(CTY\)](#)
David Sanders
Email: www.cty.jhu.edu

[The Davidson Institute](#)
Email: www.ditd.org
The Davidson Institute is a non-profit, national foundation that offers resources to profoundly gifted young people from the ages 4-18 and their parents.
Genius Denied: How to stop wasting our brightest young minds - a book and website resource area by Jan & Bob Davidson.

NJ Parents Interactive Network for Gifted
www.njping.net (on Facebook)

POGO (Parents of Gifted Offspring)
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nnpjogo>

The Association for the Gifted (TAG) organized in 1958 by The Council for Exceptional Children, helps professionals and parents work with gifted children.
www.cectag.org

The Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students (AEGUS) provides a forum for ideas and interventions aimed at helping twice-exceptional students reach their full potential.
www.aegus1.org

Gifted-Children.com: Identification, Encouragement, and Development (GCC) is an on-line parents' newsletter with networking and information dedicated to making a difference in

the education of children with special talents and abilities.

www.gifted-children.com

Great Resources for Discovering and Encouraging Interests:

EduHound: Everything for Education K12: www.eduhound.com

Provides valuable ed tech resources to incorporate into your curriculum. Educational topics, templates, technology tutorials, and practical tips are featured.

Filamentality "Learning Web": www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil

Filamentality combines the "filaments of the web" with your "mentality" allowing you to create a variety of [formats](#) that meet your personal or learner needs.

Does Filamentality align to standards?

Yes, Planning and Designing Learning Environments; and using technology to locate, evaluate, and collect information are just two standards from the National Educational Technology Standards ([NETS](#)) Project that Filamentality supports. As you create your own activities, you may find more that align to other subject standards.

The Academy of Achievement: www.achievement.org

Brings students face-to-face with the extraordinary leaders, the visionaries, and the pioneers who have helped shape our world.

Children's websites:

Nasa's Space Place

www.spaceplace.nasa.gov

Math Links:

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/math.html>

www.figurethis.org

<http://mathforum.org/students/>

New at the Liberty Science Center

<http://lsc.org>

Explore math in the Math Midway, a fun-filled exhibition from the Museum of Mathematics. This traveling exhibition provides an interactive, hands-on tour of the mathematical concepts that shape our world, all in a colorful, carnival style! Guests of all ages will delight in:

- Riding on a square-wheeled tricycle to discover why the ride is so smooth
- Using the Ring of Fire's laser beam to find hidden shapes within shapes
- Creating a giant pattern or "tessellation" of monkeys in a puzzle-like pattern
- Getting into the swing of harmonics with the Mysterious "Harmonograph," which
- Creating beautiful swirling patterns on paper.

Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers University) Programs: open to students through high school for more information on these performing and visual arts classes go to www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension

Association of Parents for Educational eXcellence (APEX)

APEX is a support and resource group for parents whose children attend the Gifted and Talented programs in the district, including the Academically Independent (AI) program. Sanctioned by the Board of Education and formed in 1993, we serve as advocates for the program's students. APEX acts as liaison to the teachers, offering support and resources including sending teachers to gifted conferences, arranging guest speakers, and coordinating parent volunteers. Since we are not a fund-raising group we rely solely on the contributions of our members.

Membership in APEX is particularly beneficial to parents new to the district's gifted programs. We provide support and resources by staying informed and involved with educational issues in the Bridgewater-Raritan School District, particularly those affecting the AI program, and sharing current information on local, state, and national issues affecting Gifted and Talented education. We maintain alliances with the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC) and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). In joining these two organizations, you will become an informed consumer about your gifted child and his/her social-emotional and educational needs. NJAGC and its annual conference provide insight into gifted children's educational needs, behaviors, and idiosyncrasies. It is with this knowledge that parents become inspired and empowered to actively advocate for their child's needs.

Our members participate in Board of Education (BOE) meetings, and several district committees including; the Budget Development Committee (Budget Task Force), the District Committee for Curriculum and Instruction (DCCI) - a standing committee appointed to hear all Program Evaluations, proposals for curriculum innovation, and to advise the Assistant Superintendent and curriculum supervisors on such evaluations, proposals, and recommendations; Council of School Associations (CSA), and PTO.

We encourage you to take an active role in your child's education. Joining APEX is a tremendous step in that direction and supporting your child's gifted growth.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. If Hamilton is not our “home” school, how can I best help my child transition to a new school?

Change can be hard, for children and adults. Since your child's AI experience will be new; strive to keep other things the same. Schedule play dates with classmates from your neighborhood school that you may not see as often, encourage play with the kids in the neighborhood, continue any extracurricular activities, i.e. dance, softball, soccer, not affiliated through school. It is likely

your child will quickly transition and enjoy the experience of making new friends, as well as meeting new academic challenges.

Q. What if I need to contact my child's teacher?

If it is an emergency, call the school office and request the teacher. If not an emergency, at Back-to-School night, ask your child's teacher their preferred contact method: e-mail, telephone or a note in your child's backpack. Most teachers will respond to parental inquiries within a day or two. It is important to remember that the teachers are busy teaching during the school day and may have limited ability to respond to parents during that time. Also, check the teacher's OnCourse site.

Q. Will my child have more homework?

The quantity of your child's homework will not increase appreciably, but the nature of the work will likely require that your child spend more time than their previous class work. This is not only because the AI program moves at an accelerated pace, but also that the students are working at one grade level higher than their age peers in both math and language arts.

Q. If my child doesn't get straight A's in class, does that mean he/she is not performing well academically?

No. The AI classroom setting is designed to challenge your child in all subject areas, hopefully in a way that has not been done before. The principle concern should be whether your child is learning and working to the best of his/her ability, not their class rank.

Q. Will it upset my child to no longer be the star of the class or to have academic challenges he/she hasn't experienced before?

Every child responds differently to new challenges. You know your child best, so be extra attentive to them during this time. Help them prioritize schoolwork and make reasonable choices for out-of-school activities. Remind them that there is joy in learning, regardless of one's position in the classroom and that they've been identified specifically because of their ability to meet this challenge.

Q. What do I do if my child has a problem in the class, either academic or behavioral?

Your first step is to go to your child's teacher. Be open and positive. Clearly state the problem your child is having. Ideally, the two of you can work together to implement a plan to address your child's issue. If this communication fails, you can address the school principal and/or the Director of Special Programs.

Q. Where can I access my child's homework assignments and other important deadlines?

Your child's agenda should house all upcoming assignments/projects. In order to stress personal responsibility and consistency, homework needs to be copied from the board and placed in your child's agenda daily. Agendas should be maintained each day and used as a means of tracking short/long-term assignments. The OnCourse website offers an additional means of following up, however this site should not be used as a primary means of obtaining

homework for students. This site is a follow-up measure and may not include everything discussed in class.

Q. What if, despite all of our best efforts, my child cannot make a successful transition to the AI classroom?

If your child is simply not making a successful transition into the program, they can be placed back in their home school and regular classroom curriculum. Discussion with your child's teacher and AI Program Supervisor would be the first step in facilitating this process.

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On-Line Resources

New Jersey Association for gifted Children www.njagc.org

National Association for Gifted Children www.nagc.org

The Davidson Institute www.ditd.org

The Gifted Development Center www.gifteddevelopment.com

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page www.hoagiesgifted.com

National Research Center for Gifted and Talented www.gifted.uconn.edu

The Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District Website www.brrsd.k12.nj.us/boe/policies

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