

TAKOMA PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRIMARY MAGNET PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SCHOOL?

The staff at Takoma Park Elementary School believes that:

- All students need instructional programs that are based on their needs as assessed by teacher observations, diagnostic tests, and academic assessments.
- Identified magnet students need supplementary programs that both enrich and accelerate their social and academic experience.
- Classroom instructional programs should challenge each student to maximize their potential by building on their academic strengths.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE PROGRAM?

The magnet program is for children in grades 1 and 2, and students may only enter the program in 1st grade. Thus, current kindergarten students are eligible to apply to the program for entry the following school year.

HOW ARE MAGNET STUDENTS SELECTED?

Kindergarten students are selected for the magnet program using MCPS testing procedures. Information about each student is gathered from many sources, including formal and informal assessments, diagnostic tests, reading and math levels, teacher observations, and parent surveys

The selection process begins at Takoma Park Elementary School. Each spring, current TPES kindergarten students are tested for the magnet program.

Parents of kindergarten children who reside in Montgomery County but who do not attend Takoma Park Elementary School may apply for magnet testing during the spring of their child's kindergarten year. Information sessions are held each winter to help parents understand the application process.

WHAT CURRICULUM IS APPROPRIATE FOR MAGNET STUDENTS?

Curriculum and resource development for magnet students focuses on qualitatively differentiated education. The program of studies states that for students who have an early recognition of potential "such a curriculum should extend, supplement, replace and/or accelerate the regular program; provide opportunities to practice higher order thinking cognitive skills...provide experiences...to think convergently and divergently... (and) to stress higher affective goals for each major learning outcome." The MCPS

Gifted and Talented policy adopted by the Board of Education in November 1995 states that the “accelerated and enriched curricula...provided...will be rigorous and challenging and matched to the abilities, achievement levels, and interests of high ability students.

WHICH CURRICULUM AREAS DOES THE MAGNET PROGRAM ADDRESS?

All areas of the curriculum are addressed throughout the students’ day. Opportunities for enriched and accelerated instruction are available in each content area, including reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, for students demonstrating high ability.

The emphasis for the magnet program is on the development of cognitive concepts and processes, including divergent and evaluative thinking. At an earlier time than their chronological peers, students will be provided opportunities to:

- Conduct in-depth research
- Generalize and apply information and ideas
- Develop new and original ideas
- Initiate their own activities, projects, and products
- Use a variety of resources and technologies
- Participate in investigations

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF THE DAILY SCHEDULE?

Every student will have at least:

- 90 minutes of reading/language arts
- 70 minutes of math
- 50 minutes of writing
- 50 minutes of social studies/science

In addition to this daily schedule, students rotate through weekly instruction in music, art, physical education and media center. Students also participate in weekly enrichment clusters.

HOW IS THE PROGRAM ORGANIZED FOR INSTRUCTION?

Many of our students are above grade level readers, authors, scientists, and mathematicians. Our teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of every student, in every subject, every day.

Reading, Writing, & Language Arts

Students are grouped within their homerooms for reading, writing, and language arts. All students have a peer group of similarly able readers in the homeroom. All first and second grade students participate in the Junior Great Books shared inquiry program. In

this program, students conquer complex ideas and rigorous texts, and develop their reading and thinking skills by asking questions, formulating and sharing their opinions, and supporting their ideas with evidence from the selections. The William and Mary reading program for highly able learners is available to all second grade students. In this program, students respond to advanced texts (poems, short stories, speeches, and essays) and think critically about them by analyzing ideas, vocabulary, and structure.

The reading, writing, and language arts program focuses on higher order thinking skills, and children are encouraged to view themselves as authors as well as to experience the natural connection between reading and writing.

Mathematics

Mathematical instruction for all students follows the MCPS curriculum and incorporates a variety of strategies and programs. All students are regrouped for math, which allows for a narrow range of students in a classroom and maximizes student potential. We meet the needs of our highly able math students through accelerated and compacted teaching models, appropriate for their ability. In past years, we have been able to accelerate our math instruction up to 2 years above grade level. The mathematics program emphasizes hands-on problem solving techniques and provides a rich mathematical environment for all students.

Science & Social Studies

Students are grouped within the homeroom for social studies and science instruction. The MCPS curriculum in social studies and science is differentiated in content, process, and product to meet the needs of our students. Science instruction emphasizes hands-on experimentation, inquiry, research, discussion, and the use of scientific methodology. All students have an opportunity to work in the science lab, where numerous opportunities exist for extending the MCPS curriculum. Social studies instruction encourages students to examine, research, and analyze different themes and content areas, and actively explore the societal implications through discussion and research projects.

Enrichment Clusters

Students participate weekly in semester-long enrichment clusters. These clusters are project-based or performance task-oriented. Students will be able choose from among a variety of topics and will have the opportunity to change clusters each semester. While all TPES students participate in the enrichment clusters, instruction is differentiated for magnet students and it is at this time that magnet students are homogeneously grouped.

Teachers of art, music, physical education, and media provide high quality programs that support the curriculum.

HOW LONG DO STUDENTS REMAIN IN THE PROGRAM?

Students that meet the criteria for the magnet remain in the program as long as it meets their needs. Students may be counseled out of the program for the following reasons:

- Parent and/or student request
- Student's inability to do the class work or homework projects

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROGRAM?

The principal is ultimately responsible for all instructional programming. However, the magnet committee (consisting of the magnet co-coordinators, grade level teachers, the counselor, assistant principal, and principal) is responsible for decision making regarding student participation in the magnet program

HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE PRESENTLY IN THE MAGNET PROGRAM?

There are 159 first and second grade students in the program. Of these students, about 25% are out-of-boundary.

HOW IS TRANSPORTATION COORDINATED?

Transportation is provided for all out-of-boundary magnet students from central locations throughout the county. Parents are responsible for transporting students to the central locations, which can be several miles away from home. In addition, commutes to and from some of the farthest points can be more than 1 hour. Though subject to change based upon the location of enrolled students, you may contact MCPS transportation to get information about current magnet routes to TPES for your area.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER 2ND GRADE?

Though programs will vary, enriched and accelerated instruction should be available to all identified students at local schools throughout the county beginning in 3rd grade. Parents are encouraged to contact their local schools to understand what accommodations and programs are available. Upon completion of our program, out-of-boundary students may either continue with the magnet program at Piney Branch Elementary School or return to their home school for grades 3 through 5. Additional opportunities for highly able students are available through the county's highly gifted centers (4th and 5th grades), as well as through the middle and high school magnets.