

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: EHA, IEE, IFB-RA, IKA, IKA-RA, IOA-RA, JOA-RA

Responsible Office: Instruction and Program Development

Gifted and Talented Education

A. PURPOSE

To reaffirm gifted and talented education as a high priority for MCPS

To affirm that acceleration and enrichment of the entire academic program is appropriate

To provide direction to staff and community that places special emphasis on addressing the cognitive and affective needs of high-achieving and potentially high-achieving students

To extend each child's intellectual boundaries and help all students achieve their highest potential

To ensure that differentiated educational programs and/or services are systematically provided for gifted and talented students in all Grades K-12, including gifted students with learning disabilities or other special needs and to assure that gifted and talented students are offered an appropriate level and pace of instruction in each of our schools

B. ISSUE

Success for every student begins with establishment of clearly defined student outcomes, identification of each student who is not achieving those outcomes, intervention with appropriate strategies to improve each student's performance, and monitoring of results. Children with special abilities and talents are part of the human mosaic in our schools and communities. They typically learn at a pace and depth that set them apart from the majority of their same-age peers. Because they have the potential to perform at high levels of accomplishment and have unique affective and learning style needs when compared with others of their age, they require instructional and curricular adjustments that can create a better match between their identified needs and the educational services they typically receive. Special and critical emphasis needs to be placed upon addressing the needs of high-achieving and potentially high-achieving students exhibiting a broad spectrum of abilities and talents. The selection, training, development, and evaluation of staff who educate gifted

and talented students, whether in the regular classroom or in specialized programs, is a critical element in any attempt to provide for the special needs of these students.

C. POSITION

1. Definitions

a) *Gifted and Talented Students* are defined in this policy as follows:

- (1) Children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment (These talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.)
- (2) Children and youth who exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields (They require services or activities that may go beyond those ordinarily provided by the schools.)

b) *Acceleration of instruction* means that students are given a curriculum that is at a higher level than the regular curriculum; the information is more complex or more information is covered; the material is presented more rapidly than in typical instruction; and students are confronted by a greater challenge than is customary with on-grade level material. Acceleration may include, but is not limited to:

- (1) Advanced placement in a subject (without being assigned to a higher grade, the student is placed for part of the day with students at more advanced grade levels for one or more subjects)
- (2) Curriculum compacting (the student is given reduced amounts of introductory activities, drill, and review so that the time saved may be used to move more quickly through the curriculum)
- (3) Telescoping curriculum (the student spends less time than usual in a course of study; e.g., completes a one-year course in one semester)
- (4) Concurrent programming in elementary/middle school, middle/high school, high school/college

- c) *Enrichment* is defined as giving students the opportunity to learn in greater depth and breadth. Enrichment may include but is not limited to:
- (1) Complexity of content that allows students to pursue topics of interest and selection in depth with research and analysis
 - (2) Emphasis on thinking which requires comparisons and analogies and that encourages using the information gained in ways that apply and transform the knowledge
 - (3) Creative and original products resulting from in-depth knowledge and reflection (analysis)

2. Curriculum

- a) In Grades Pre-kindergarten-8, accelerated and enriched curricula will be provided to all students who have the capability or motivation to accept the challenge of such a program. This curriculum will be rigorous and challenging and matched to the abilities, achievement levels, and interests of high ability students.
- b) There will be opportunities and expectations for students to learn at an accelerated pace, to learn in depth, and to learn integrated themes and connections between disciplines in order for students to attain the highest level of academic instruction.
- (1) Preassessment to determine what students already know will be routinely used in all curricular areas and provision made for advanced instruction.
 - (2) There will be a balance between accelerating the pace and enriching the instruction by the use of facilitative instructional strategies which include inquiry, small group or individual consultation, problem solving, and higher level questioning. The curriculum will be flexible enough to be responsive to student strengths and interests.
 - (3) Montgomery County Public Schools will prepare a scope and sequence of objectives and activities as well as materials that accelerate and enrich the regular curriculum, in Pre-kindergarten-8, in mathematics, reading/language arts, science, and social studies which will allow gifted and talented students to progress with appropriate enrichment and at a pace matched to a child's achievement and readiness.

- (4) Teachers are expected to use appropriate instructional materials that are above grade level, including but not limited to core books.
- c) Curriculum standards will be set in initial format within six months of the adoption of the policy, with the expectation that these standards will be revised or refined over time. These standards will be designed to ensure curriculum and assessment practices that challenge gifted students. Assessment of student progress will include mastery of content and demonstration of higher-level thinking skills. Assessment measures will clearly indicate benchmarks for high achievers.
- d) A variety of organizational options for delivery of curriculum in Grades K-12 will be implemented in all schools.
 - (1) Schools will utilize flexible and varied grouping practices that enhance the opportunity to receive expanded, intensive, enriched, and accelerated curricula at all instructional levels, as warranted by students' needs and their mastery of subject matter.
 - (2) A balance needs to be achieved so that highly able students have the opportunity to work in homogeneous groups, heterogeneous groups, and individually depending on the content area and task involved.
- e) Schools will make classroom assignments that ensure that children who are achieving at the highest level are not isolated from each other.

3. Program

To respond to the range of needs and abilities among gifted and talented students, every school will have an appropriate, clearly defined and articulated program for gifted and talented students.

- a) Programming will be developed as needed in each K-8 school and in other settings. Planning for gifted and talented will include special provisions for:
 - (1) Challenging instruction, flexible grouping, and scheduling arrangements that allow time with intellectual peers for in-depth study in mathematics, reading/language arts, science, social studies, and foreign language
 - (2) Communication of the program to parents

- b) The Honors Program will be the vehicle for serving gifted and talented students in all Grade 9-12 schools.
- c) For students who require a markedly different programming, centers for highly gifted and other special programs including magnet programs will continue to be provided, and new programs will be developed as needed.

4. Identification

- a) MCPS will carry out a broad-based screening of all students in Grade 2 and a rescreening of all students in later elementary grades. Recognizing there is a range of abilities among gifted and talented students, this screening will identify gifted and talented students using multiple indicators of academic and leadership potential, including tests of academic achievement, aptitude, and creativity and use of testing strategies designed for students of other languages; samples of student work; and nominations obtained from teachers, counselors, peers, parents, subject area experts, community members, and the students themselves.
- b) To meet the needs of gifted and talented students during early childhood years:
 - (1) Schools will make every effort to recognize and foster early evidences of giftedness and adjust reading and other academic programs appropriately
 - (2) Pre-kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers will plan activities which will nurture curiosity, creativity, and the development of thinking skills
- c) In Grades 6-8, schools will recommend students for classes of gifted and talented or for gifted and talented cluster groupings on the basis of mastery of course prerequisites, willingness to complete challenging assignments, previous grades, teacher recommendations, or other appropriate measures.
- d) In Grades 9-12, students will be admitted to Honors and Advanced Placement classes on the basis of mastery of course prerequisites, willingness to complete challenging assignments, previous grades, student interest, teacher/counselor recommendations, or other appropriate measures.

5. Nurturing/Mentoring

Underachieving and traditionally under-represented students will be nurtured through a variety of efforts including:

- a) Informal identification of high achievers and potentially high achievers in primary grades
- b) Working with teachers, parents, and mentors on ways to nurture potential
- c) Distributing characteristics of gifted/learning disabled and/or under-represented groups and adaptive techniques that assist these students in mastering challenging instruction
- d) Planning programs for long-term nurturing

6. Teachers and principals are of central importance to successful education for gifted students. Comprehensive training in the nature and needs of gifted students including the importance of using appropriate instructional strategies and program practices as well as the characteristics, identification, and programming strategies and accommodations for gifted learning disabled students, is essential. Staff development activities ranging from awareness to advanced skill level training will be provided on a continuous basis.

7. Communication

There will be a system of communication that includes the following:

- a) Informing parents about the content and expectations of their gifted and talented programs, the selection procedures, and services available through support and advocacy groups
- b) Reporting to parents about the performance standards, authentic assessments that are appropriate for high-achievers and potential high-achievers, and progress of their child
- c) Resolving concerns about an individual student's program at a school through the regular consultative process by principal and teacher with the parent or guardian. Issues not resolved will be addressed in a timely manner by other administrative processes, including when appropriate the use of the Educational Management Team.

- d) Informing the broader community about gifted and talented programs, opportunities, and achievements, as appropriate.

8. Coordination

Central coordination for the management and implementation of programs for gifted and talented students will include but not be limited to the following:

- a) Planning and budget development
- b) Providing assistance and support to school staff in program development and parents in responding to student needs
- c) Developing, implementing, monitoring and revising, as necessary, the guidelines for identifying gifted and talented students
- d) Selecting and developing curriculum materials for gifted and talented students
- e) Designing and delivering training to a variety of audiences, including administrators, teachers, counselors, and central office personnel
- f) Selecting staff for Centers of Highly Gifted and special programs in collaboration with schools and the Office of Personnel Services
- g) Collecting data to monitor program participation

D. DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. An accelerated and enriched program in each subject area will be provided routinely in every school, K-12.
2. All students who are capable of doing so will be given the opportunity to work above grade level and in advanced and enriched materials in all content areas in every grade level in each school.
3. All schools will use a variety of flexible and varied grouping arrangements which will enhance the delivery of accelerated and enriched instruction.
4. The classroom, school organization, and instructional strategies will be designed to accommodate diversity in student backgrounds as well as their abilities and interests.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent shall direct implementation of this policy and specifically shall ensure that every school has a program that meets its requirements. Among the specific actions the superintendent will take are the following:

1. Implement consistently, evaluate periodically, and revise as necessary the MCPS identification procedures for intellectual/academic or visual and performance arts areas K-12, and develop, implement, and periodically review identification procedures for special and magnet programs
2. Develop challenging curricula for intellectual/academic and visual and performance arts and, where appropriate, improve high-end curricula and provide a continuum of objectives that fosters continuous progress
3. Include in all MCPS curriculum documents appropriate adaptations for accelerated and enriched learning and make available additional targeted curriculum documents and resource materials
4. Develop new curricula as the need arises, and identify, evaluate, and disseminate additional materials on a continuous basis
5. Develop instructional technologies through which students will be able to access an ever-expanding array of services that will enrich their learning experiences
6. Make available a variety of educational options, both inside and outside the classroom
7. Transfer successful curricula and teaching strategies in gifted and talented programs to the general education program, as appropriate
8. Prepare budget requests that provide adequate resources to implement the policy
9. Disseminate effective strategies for increasing diverse participation in gifted and talented programs, and for nurturing potential giftedness, especially during preschool and early childhood years

10. Implement academic benchmarks and authentic assessments that measure the outcomes sought in an academically appropriate curriculum for high-achievers, and report to parents how their child is performing in relation to these standards:
 - a) The assessment tools may include criterion-referenced tests, checklists, portfolios, exhibitions, demonstrations, work products, and journals
 - b) Where appropriate, these assessments will be designed to be an integral part of the teaching/learning process, and students will be taught to assess their own progress and products
 - c) Schools will use the Montgomery County Public Schools Student Profile in Mathematics, distributed biannually, for the purpose of reporting and informing parents of curriculum content, grade level expectations, and individual student progress as measured by the instructional system in mathematics (ISM) for monitoring elementary mathematics
 - d) MCPS will report by grade for each middle school the number and percentage of students who complete Algebra 1 each year
 - e) Schools will use ongoing assessment criteria for gifted and talented students, Grades Pre-kindergarten-8, that is consistent with the enriched and accelerated objectives in each discipline at each grade level. Montgomery County Public Schools Criterion Referenced Tests will be administered annually for school and student accountability using established standards and measures of distinguished performance for highly able students
 - f) For each high school, MCPS will report annually the number of students who scored 3 or above on Advanced Placement (AP) examinations by Advanced Placement subject
11. Encourage students to participate in academic competitions

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

1. An annual report will be made to the Board of Education on the progress of implementing this policy during its first three years and include recommendations for policy changes if necessary.

2. The *Timeline for the Implementation of the Gifted and Talented Policy* will be prepared and updated annually.
3. Based on student outcomes, evaluations of program effectiveness, and other relevant information, this policy will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 789-78, November 14, 1978; amended by Resolution 518-86, September 22, 1986; amended by Resolution No. 776-95, November 14, 1995.