

Middle School Gifted Services

Overview of Curricular Domains & Goal Areas

Purpose

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education has defined the purpose of its regulations governing special education for gifted students (22 PA Code Chapter 16) as follows:

- a) This chapter specifies how the Commonwealth will meet its obligations to suspected and identified gifted students who require gifted education to reach their potential. It is the intent of the Board that gifted students are provided with quality gifted education services and programs.
- b) The Commonwealth, through the Dept. of Education, will provide general supervision of services and programs provided under this chapter.
- c) The Department will disseminate information about and promote the use of promising practices and innovative programs to meet the needs of gifted students.
- d) To provide services and programs efficiently, the Commonwealth will delegate operational responsibility to its school districts. Each school district shall, by directed service or through arrangement with other agencies, provide the following:
 - a. Services and programs planned, developed and operated for the identification and evaluation of each gifted student.
 - b. Gifted education for each gifted student which is based on the unique needs of the student, not solely on the student's classification.
 - c. Gifted education for gifted students which enables them to participate in acceleration or enrichment, or both, as appropriate, and to receive services according to their intellectual and academic abilities and needs.

Introduction to Middle School Gifted Services

WSSD Middle School Education programs follow guidelines in meeting the requirements of the State Board's regulations set forth at 22 Pa. Code Chapter 16 - Special Education for Gifted Students. The district recognizes that gifted students are considered to be "children with exceptionalities" under the Public School Code of 1949 and in need of specially designed instruction.

This overview reflects Wallingford- Swarthmore's continuing commitment to providing educational services appropriate for mentally gifted students that are consistent with their individual needs, outstanding abilities and potential for performing at high levels of accomplishment. Services for gifted students fit into the array of well-established special learning programs and opportunities available for *all* students attending district schools. Gifted services reflect a strategic combination of these special programs, as well as individually created opportunities for learning that are designed specifically to meet the needs of gifted students through the GIEP process.

Goal

The goal of WSSD's Gifted Education Services is to provide enriched learning experiences for gifted students that reflect individual differences, equal educational opportunity and desire for the optimal development of each child.

Gifted Education Services

Embedded in the Core Curriculum

The organizational structure of Strath Haven Middle School is designed to create learning communities, or interdisciplinary teams. Teams are made up of teachers who can collaborate to integrate curricula and share information about students in order to foster meaningful relationships in support of the ideal learning environment for each student. Additionally, students gather for a Connections, or advisory period, designed to better support and engage students in working toward success. This structure creates an ideal learning environment for gifted and talent students, as well as typical students, who are entering a period of rapid social and emotional growth during adolescence. Middle School years are also a period of great cognitive growth for students, and the WSSD is committed to ensuring a middle school education program that follows rigorous academic standards of excellence, and offers interdisciplinary and integrated connections. WSSD is committed to supporting the development of adolescent learners through opportunities for challenge, choice, and authentic learning and assessment.

Students experience differentiated instruction in a variety of ways in middle school. In math, classes are leveled, and advanced students will experience increased depth and complexity. Some students may participate in content acceleration, moving at a more rapid rate than peers and having greater opportunity for enrichment, extension, and problem-solving within the regular classroom. Other students may participate in grade level acceleration, covering advanced topics, leading to completion of algebra at the end of 8th grade. In humanities, students are grouped heterogeneously, and teachers may differentiate instruction with flexible grouping, tiered assignments and assessments, learning contracts, extension menus, and individual and group projects. Language Arts is leveled in seventh and eighth grade, allowing student enrichment needs to be met through greater opportunity for depth and complexity. Appropriate differentiation may occur across placement levels. The Gifted Education Coordinator works with the GIEP team to design the appropriate program for each gifted student. The Gifted Education Coordinator works with the classroom teacher to monitor the appropriate implementation of these strategies within the general education classroom for students with GIEPS.

Curriculum Extensions

Curriculum extensions allow students to go beyond concepts taught in the general education curriculum and challenge students to look at key concepts from a variety of perspectives. Strath Haven Middle School uses a Schoolwide Enrichment Model for curricular extensions, combined with a pull-out resource/advisory period, during which students meet with the Coordinator for Gifted Service to receive gifted services. This resource period may provide opportunities for students to engage in Problem-Based Learning, Socratic Seminars, or study in areas of group or individual interest, related to maximizing both challenge and choice for students. Extensions might include more advanced mathematics problems, science and technology applications, higher level vocabulary instruction or analysis of literature from a historical perspective or from the perspective of a specific subgroup of people. These extensions may be part of classroom differentiation or part of additional learning experiences organized or directed by the Coordinator of Gifted Education.

Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reid)

Type I: Students are exposed to new topics, ideas and interests through introductory exploratory activities during teacher-directed whole-class presentations.	Type I typically occurs in the general education program.
Type II: Small group enrichment for deeper instruction and involvement with a topic. Students develop higher level thinking skills and research skills.	Type II and Type III activities are either provided or supported by the Coordinator for Gifted Education, who either partners with the general education teachers regarding regular education curricular modification techniques or works with student in a pull-out setting.
Type III Individual students become “experts,” extending their independent research into real-world applications, problem-based learning, and creative projects and products that can be shared with authentic audiences.	

Pull-Out Gifted Resource/Advisory Program

Students are pulled out biweekly from an elective. This opportunity is designed to support the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of the gifted adolescent. A pull-out program poses unique challenges related to academic programming and students' social-emotional development. In the era of No Child Left Behind, teachers and students feel especially accountable for material covered in class; to avoid the potential for high-achieving students to feel pressure to make up missed work, the elective cycle has been selected for the pull-out opportunity. This still poses challenges for students who may be missing a portion of a class, or who have interests and talents in the arts or other elective areas, or who may feel reluctant to participate in pull-out programs. If families decide to opt out of the pull-out advisory cycle, parents should not feel that gifted services may be compromised. The delivery of services can still be integrated in to the regular education program through collaboration with the Coordinator for Gifted Services. This decision can be made during the GIEP meeting and can be adjusted annually depending on individual student needs and interests.

Extracurricular Enrichment and Extension

The WSSD Middle School is committed to providing opportunities for young gifted and talented students to participate in opportunities for introductory, exploratory, and social learning. The after school Seminar program has long afforded our students extracurricular exposure to a rich and varied menu of topics led by a variety of teachers and community experts. Students may participate in offerings according to their individual interests and availability. Students who opt out of these extracurricular programs should not feel that their gifted services are being compromised. The academic curricular program offers rich opportunity for inquiry, challenge, choice, and social learning, and many of our students do not participate after school because of commitments to other after-school opportunities. The after-school Seminar program is an extra-curricular opportunity for additional challenge and choice for students so interested.

Resources:

Lanrum, Mary S., et. al. *Aiming for Excellence: Gifted Program Standards: Annotations to the NAGC Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards*. The National Association for Gifted Children. 2001.

Olszewski-Kubilius. *Gifted Adolescents*. Prufrock Press. 2010.

Rakow, Susan. *Educating Gifted Students in Middle School: A Practical Guide*. Prufrock Press. 2005.

Winebrenner, Susan. *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use To Meet the Academic Needs of the Gifted and Talented*. Free Spirit Publishing. 2001