

La Cañada Unified School District

GATE Program

Gifted and Talented Education



August, 2017

District Profile:

La Canada Unified School District serves the incorporated city of La Canada Flintridge, a residential community located near Pasadena, 13 miles north of the Los Angeles Civic Center. The district serves 4,174 students and consists of three elementary schools (K-6), and La Canada High School, a grade 7-12 secondary school. Parents are highly educated and actively involved in their children's education. LCUSD students consistently demonstrate high levels of achievement with ninety-eight percent of them enrolling in post-secondary schools.

The two largest groups in terms of ethnicity are white (50%) and Asian (35%), followed by Hispanic (11%) and multi-ethnic 4%. 3% is socio-economically disadvantaged. English learners make up 4% of the student population and are predominantly Korean speakers. Students with Disabilities account for 10% of the population. The GATE population accounts for 15% of the population.

As a Professional Learning Community, the district is strongly committed to the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds plan which coordinates various monitoring strategies and support programs to help all students achieve or exceed grade-level academic expectations. A second significant focus is Developmental Assets, which centers on the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors needed in the lives of young people to help them develop in positive and healthful ways.

The district's GATE program serves 609 students and contains all elements of the recommended standards, including identification and program options, a plan for involving parents, and a district-wide commitment to and training in differentiation. All teachers K-12 have had and continue to receive training in differentiated instruction. Programs for GATE students at the elementary level include part-time homogeneous groupings in which students attend classes or seminars that are organized to provide advanced or enriched subject matter for a part of the school day. Another service delivery option is an after-school program in which GATE students participate in GATE gatherings once a month to explore topics not covered in general education classrooms. Other after school enrichment courses are offered to all students and a list of offerings is available at the sites.

Purpose of the Program:

The Gifted and Talented Education Program is an integral part of education in the La Cañada Unified School District. Providing enriching educational opportunities for GATE students is a responsibility and a privilege. GATE identified students make up 15% of the overall LCUSD student population.

The GATE Program offers students quality experiences designed to enlarge their intellectual horizons and stimulate their curiosity for learning at the highest levels. The cornerstone of the GATE Program is differentiated instruction that takes place within the classroom at all grade levels.

The GATE plan for La Canada Unified School District (LCUSD) contains all elements of

the recommended standards, including philosophy and program goals, identification and program options, differentiation at every level, and leadership, humanitarianism, and citizenship.

The purpose of the program is to deploy well-qualified teachers and resources to stimulate identified gifted students to explore and enlarge their intellectual, academic, and creative horizons, to stimulate curiosity and passion for learning at the highest levels, and to build on the fundamentals of citizenship, leadership, and community. The District believes all students deserve an education that challenges them to meet their full potential; therefore, is committed to differentiating the core curriculum for all students during the regular school day. Teachers plan classroom experiences that extend and enrich the core curriculum for GATE students.

GATE Identification Process:

An assessment/identification process is in place to ensure that all potentially gifted students are appropriately assessed for identification as gifted students and procedures are in place to inform parents of a pupil's placement and participation or nonparticipation in the gifted and talented program. Signed parent permissions for participation are on file and updated on a yearly basis. Participation in the program is based on the criteria of identification and is not dependent on the perception of a single identification.

Intellectual ability is measured by means of the Otis-Lennon Abilities Test (OLSAT). Each spring, the district administers the OLSAT to all third grade students (with parent permission). The schedule for this testing is published in the master calendar and communicated to families. The OLSAT is also administered in the fall to all new students who enter the district in grades 4-8. A PR-S score of 98% or above for total verbal and math is required for placement. After two years, students who have not qualified may be retested using this measurement. Parent request is made in order to initiate retesting. Transfer students who present scores on a nationally normed test of cognitive intelligence ability need to take the OLSAT to qualify for placement in LCUSD. Those who have taken the OLSAT and have scored at 98% or above need not retake the test.

Students may also qualify for GATE placement based on high academic achievement through standardized testing and internal common assessments. A matrix of various measurements is assembled to assess the student's level of achievement. The District utilizes students' California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores as part of the alternative criteria for GATE identification. The District Writing Assessment is also used as an alternative criteria for GATE identification. To qualify based on the alternative criteria, the student must demonstrate the following:

- 98% or above on the CAASPP ELA assessment and
- 98% or above on the CAASPP math assessment and

- a rubric score of 4 (above grade level proficiency) on the district writing assessment
- A minimum score of 80% on OLSAT

At the middle school level, new students are assessed at the start of each school year to appropriately identify GATE students and provide them with access to the GATE program.

School counselors serve as the GATE site coordinators who communicate with parents regarding student's participation or nonparticipation in the gifted and talented program. They maintain data on qualifying and non-qualifying students for use by the Student Study Team (SST) and monitor student progress each quarter to make sure GATE students are not underperforming. For those who are underperforming, appropriate supports are put in place to ensure their success at school. GATE participation is indicated in a student's cumulative record and in the district computer system.

GATE Services:

The GATE program provides the following services for gifted education and is available to all gifted learners with parent permission for participation.

All students receive differentiated instruction in their general education classrooms from teachers who are trained in differentiation. At the elementary level, GATE students in Grades 4-6 receive 45 minutes of extended instruction held each week during non-academic segments of the school day. The instructor has specific training as a GATE educator, and adds depth and complexity to the standards-based curriculum.

Monthly after school GATE gatherings are held at each site to provide enrichment to the GATE students. Students have the opportunity to explore topics that are not usually covered in the general education classrooms. Math Olympiad is open to students who excel in mathematics and thrive in competitions. Teachers and parent volunteers coordinate the program with the funding provided by the District. Several other afterschool enrichment programs are available to students. A list of these programs may be obtained from the main offices at each site. Through the Developmental Assets program, which is for all students district-wide, GATE students develop sensitivity and responsibility towards others and develop realistic, healthy self-concepts.

With differentiation as the cornerstone and "academic excellence and personal growth" as a part of the District's mission statement, the GATE program becomes more inclusive at the middle school level. Math Counts, a national middle school competition, is in place for students who excel in math and would like to engage in challenging word problems and computations. LCHS 7/8 GATE students may enroll in GATE homerooms twice a week for 35 minutes. GATE homerooms emphasize different

subjects (History, Science, English, math, etc.). Students may also attend monthly GATE gatherings after school coordinated by the GATE homeroom teachers. Middle school students benefit from the fact that they are on the same campus as high school students and are thus able to participate in learning environments commensurate with their potentials. Where appropriate in specific subject areas, middle school GATE students may access these secondary level courses. The Information Resource Center (IRC) is available for both middle and high school students and serves as a valuable support for research embedded assignments and projects.

At the high school level, the concept of inclusivity continues. Students at all levels are instructed by teachers trained over time in differentiation. In addition, five world languages are offered to our students: Spanish, French, German, and Korean. Some of the teachers in the science department collaborate with scientists from the nearby Jet Propulsion Laboratory in order to bring authentic learning experiences to our students. Several other clubs and afterschool enrichment programs are available to students. A list of these programs may be obtained from the Assistant Principal's office.

LCCHS supports an open enrollment policy with regard to students gaining access to honors and Advanced Placement courses. Honors courses present curriculum of a greater breadth and depth than general education classes. Honors courses are available in Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, English, Geometry, Physics, Pre-Calculus and Social Science.

Many of our GATE students enroll in these courses and are thriving as they prepare for college entry exams and applications. Professional development opportunities are provided to our AP and honors teachers to ensure quality instruction and teacher efficacy. Advanced level courses are guided by a national curriculum targeted at the college level. At the culmination of these courses, students take the AP exam aligned with the course. Students who perform at an advanced level on AP exams receive college credit. La Cañada High School offers AP courses in the following subjects: American History, Biology, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English Language, English Literature, Environmental Science, European History, Government, Music Theory, Physics, Psychology, Spanish and Statistics.

LCCHS has partnerships with area community colleges to offer college credit classes of interest. These courses provide transferable college units and core and elective credits toward graduation. LCCHS students also benefit from a 35-minute STEP class twice a week. Each student may select a class that is of interest to him/her above and beyond their daily schedule of classes. This is a unique opportunity and students take advantage of it.

Program Evaluation:

To ensure quality instruction is provided to our students, the GATE coordinator visits classrooms often and provides feedback to the teachers. The elementary GATE teacher gets evaluated by the GATE Coordinator based on the requirements set by the District and 7/8 GATE teachers and elementary site counselors get evaluated by the principals at

each site. Counselors serve as site coordinators of the program and stay connected with parents and the community and communicate parent feedback at the GATE Advisory Committee meetings. Student surveys are administered at the end of each year to the elementary and middle school students to conduct an annual review and measure student satisfaction with the services. Modifications are made to the program based on student feedback through surveys and parent input through the GATE Advisory Committee. The parents on the GATE Advisory Committee serve as site representatives and communicate parent feedback from their sites to the committee. Suggestions and concerns are taken seriously and constructive criticism is welcomed. Changes are made to the program with the approval of the GATE Advisory Committee. The goal is to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of the program in order to continue to provide a rigorous and meaningful learning experience for students.

Parent Participation:

To ensure continuous parent participation in recommending policy for planning, evaluating, and implementing the district program, LCUSD formed a GATE Advisory Committee. The GATE Advisory Committee is chaired by the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services and decisions are made through consensus. Membership includes District GATE Coordinator, elementary site GATE coordinators/counselors, an elementary school principal, and the middle school principal, parents from the elementary and the 7-12 sites, and the GATE pull-out instructor at the elementary level. The members represent the perspectives of their school sites and provide parents with educational opportunities related to gifted education.

The GATE Advisory Committee meets once a quarter. Information on the GATE program can be obtained through the www.lcusd.net website. All meeting agendas and minutes are available to parents on this website.

A district-wide orientation meeting is held at the beginning of each school year to welcome parents and to inform them of the GATE program and services that are offered at LCUSD. GATE identification process and the program at all levels is presented by the GATE Coordinator and the site coordinators/counselors. Parents not only get the opportunity to meet these individuals but also connect with other parents of GATE students from their site.

Program Funding:

The District used to have an allocated GATE budget which was used to fund the services necessary to sustain the program. Currently LCUSD funds the program from the general fund. Funds are allocated for staff development, assessments for identification, and differentiated services. Both general education teachers and GATE teachers are provided with the opportunity to grow professionally and improve their teaching practice. Based on teacher needs, GATE coordinator invites experts to train the staff. Teachers are also encouraged to attend trainings of their choice outside the district upon request and approval from the Educational Services Office. Through district provided

collaboration time (10 times a year, 1/2 day per session), teachers learn from one another, from Colleague Coaches (extra duty assignments) and from Teachers on Special Assignments (TOSAs). The TOSAs have expertise in instructional leadership and integration of technology. Teachers benefit from their support and are able to make improvements to their instructional practices.