

Spring 2018

Howell Township Public Schools

Department of Gifted & Academically Talented Programs

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Gifted and Academically Talented Programs is to motivate, challenge, and educate all students to achieve their highest level of performance so they can contribute to the positive development of themselves and society.

Through the district's comprehensive K-8 Gifted and Academically Talented Program, the Howell Township School District fully commits to its responsibility in recognizing the specific needs of its students and fostering these students' interests in order to ensure that they become life-long learners. In turn, district programs will ultimately provide a sophisticated and challenging environment in which high-level cognitive and social-emotional processes are further nurtured and developed.

PASSION, PLAY AND PURPOSE

Howell Township follows the P³ Enrichment Framework for enrichment work within the general education classroom. The P³ framework encompasses a concurrent enrichment curriculum with motivational milestones in an effort to meet students personalized educational needs. For more information on this framework, please visit the district website.

OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT PROGRAMS

The district has established four programs to recognize and address the unique characteristics and needs of its gifted and academically talented students. These programs provide a broadened and enriched academic experience closely aligned with the advanced abilities and achievements of the students.

In order to meet the needs and enrich the skills and abilities of gifted and academically talented students, the district offers four distinct programs:

- Project Explore for grades K-1
- Project ECG (Enrichment Cluster Groups) for grades 2-5
- Project GOAL (Great Opportunities for Advanced Learning) for grades 4-5
- Project PLUS (Program for Learning and Unified Studies) for grades 6-8

Should you have any questions regarding Project Explore, Project ECG, Project GOAL, and Project PLUS programs, as well as the programs' identification and screening procedures, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Raymond Gredder
Supervisor - Grades K-5
Newbury School
179 Newbury Road
Howell, NJ 07731
732-751-2491

Peter Goodall
Supervisor - Grades 6-8
Middle School South
220 Ramtown-Greenville Road
Howell, NJ 07731
732-836-1327

DISTRICT PROGRAMS FOR ACADEMICALLY TALENTED STUDENTS

Project Explore (K-1): Project Explore is integrated into each K-1 classroom throughout the district. Teachers use enrichment activities that build upon the grade level curricula and provide differentiated learning activities to further challenge students' higher-order thinking skills. Students, who are identified by their classroom teachers as having specific areas of interests or needed challenges, are provided with opportunities within the regular classroom to further develop these observed strengths.

Project Enrichment Cluster Groups (2-5): Beginning in second grade and continuing through fifth grade, students are identified for placement into Enrichment Cluster Groups (ECG). Each group consists of identified ECG students placed together in a general education classroom to maximize exposure to peers with similar strengths. The "cluster" of students allows them to learn together while avoiding permanent grouping arrangements. The number of identified students in the program varies from year to year and from school to school, based upon established criteria. Students placed in a cluster group are re-evaluated at the end of the school year to determine their placement for the following year.

The goals of Project ECG are as follows:

- Students will have an enriched educational experience where their learning needs are met in the general education classroom.
- Students will receive enrichment utilizing differentiated instruction that provides concept enhancement while developing and improving complex, cognitive skills.
- Students will apply knowledge gained to real-world situations and will participate in activities designed to stimulate and improve critical thinking abilities.
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Project GOAL (4-5): Project GOAL, the district's 4th and 5th grade magnet program is housed at Newbury School. This program provides a self-contained model of program delivery to provide a full-time service for high ability students. Students of like-ability are grouped together all day in a homogeneous setting to maximize their interests and learning development. The instructional processes and products are distinctly differentiated from the manner through which curricula is experienced by students in the general education classroom.

This program, consisting of approximately 25 students, will service the top 2-3 % of the fourth and fifth grade population district-wide, in terms of academic achievement and cognitive ability. Students in the Project GOAL program will have mathematics content accelerated one full year, resulting in each student having completed the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade curricula upon his/her entrance into the middle school. Acceleration is the practice of allowing a student to move through learning material in a content area prior to the prescribed timeframe based upon early mastery.

Project PLUS (6-8): Project PLUS uses a self-contained model of program delivery for the core programs of Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts. The Project PLUS program features Mathematics acceleration and enrichment in Science, Social Studies, and advanced content in Language Arts. Students in the Project PLUS program will take Pre-Algebra in sixth grade, Algebra in seventh grade, and Geometry in eighth grade.

Program goals for Project GOAL and Project PLUS include guiding students to:

- Exhibit a positive attitude toward learning and a genuine desire to succeed.
 - Demonstrate a superior ability to understand abstract concepts.
 - Understand complex ideas and perceive relationships.
 - Conceptualize and apply learned information to new real-world situations.
 - Utilize higher level thinking skills.
 - Develop creative and original ideas.
 - View situations from different perspectives.
 - Participate in academically challenging activities.
 - Engage in independent activities.
 - Ask thought-provoking questions and participate in higher level discussions.
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IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Teacher Observation Inventory (TOI)

Teachers in grades K-1 use an optional Teacher Observation Inventory (TOI) to identify students with above grade level potential. The TOI behavioral chart is organized into several categories ranging from identifiable domains that include, but are not limited to: creativity, spatial relationships, and reading. Teachers use the TOI to monitor academic/behavioral interests and needs, in order to more effectively tailor and adjust classroom instruction. Consistent with the district belief of personalized learning, students in grades K-1 are challenged and informally identified for enrichment by their homeroom teacher.

Pathways to Nomination for Project ECG, Project GOAL, and Project PLUS (Steps 1-5)

*The guidelines below specifically outline the district's identification procedures as they apply to the screening processes for Project ECG, Project GOAL, and Project PLUS. **Please note, changes for STEP 3: Parent Nominations are discussed below.***

*Step 1: Automatic test score nomination: Initial screening of students based upon grade level Renaissance Learning STAR test scores. These assessments will determine the first group of students to qualify for further review by the screening committee.

*Step 2: Teacher nomination: Teachers may nominate students who display characteristics of giftedness that are not easily determined by tests. These teacher-nominated students are then accepted for further review.

*Step 3: Parent nomination: Parents may nominate students if a teacher is not anticipating nominating a student. Communication is key; as parents should discuss nominations with classroom teachers. If a parent decides to nominate a student, they should provide a written request to the classroom teacher **before May 15th, 2018**. If a parent/guardian decides to nominate his/her child, a letter of nomination must include the following:

- Student Name
- School and Grade
- Homeroom Teacher
- Parent/Guardian(s) Name
- Address and Telephone Number

The content of the letter must include:

- Information about your child's personal qualities that you believe are associated with exceptionality and what has made you realize that your child is exceptionally able.
- Learning/behavioral characteristics of your child associated with general intellectual ability.

A parent or guardian does not have to nominate his/her child for further screening if he/she is nominated by test scores and/or teacher recommendation. As stated above, notification of these nominated students will be received by classroom teachers on or before May 15th.

*Steps 4-5 continued on page 4

Identification Procedures, continued

*Step 4: Special Nominations: A teacher from a previous year can recommend a student who has not yet been nominated through another manner. In addition, resource/special area teachers can also make recommendations based upon their own experiences.

Please note: Teachers nominating students for further screening in steps 2 & 4 must complete a GATES checklist (Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales) form and forward it to their building's administration, who will, in turn, forward the form to a Gifted and Talented Supervisor. These GATES checklists can be obtained through the main office.

Student recommendation for screening in steps 1-4 does not provide automatic admission into the program. Nominated students will then be reviewed by a screening committee, which will then make a selection decision.

*Step 5: Data Gathering, Analysis, and Decision Making are applicable to all nominated students. Data is gathered from the following sources:

- Renaissance Learning STAR test scores
- GATES – Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (completed by teacher)
- SAGES – Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary & Middle School Students (for students being considered for Project GOAL & Project PLUS)

Entrance into Project ECG for Students Entering Grades 2-5

Once all pertinent data is collected and analyzed, the screening committee will determine a student's qualifications regarding participation into the ECG program. Students entering grades 4 and 6 will receive notification of acceptance/non-acceptance by the end of June. Students entering grades 2,3 and 5 will receive notification by the end of July.

Entrance into Project GOAL for Students Entering 4th Grade

As a result of the Project ECG Grade 4 screening process, select students will be asked to complete additional assessments, the SAGES-2 (Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students) and Creativity Assessment, for placement into Project GOAL.

Before the SAGES-2 is administered, families must consider that if their child qualifies, they will need to be prepared to complete the transfer to Newbury School for the Project GOAL program. **Students and parents who feel that changing schools is not an option, should not participate in the additional testing.**

Students who meet the established entrance criteria and qualify for placement into the Project GOAL classroom will be notified in August.

Entrance into Project PLUS for Students Entering 6th Grade

As a result of the Project PLUS screening process, nominated students will be asked to complete an additional assessment, the SAGES-2 (Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students), for placement into Project PLUS. Those students who meet the established entrance criteria and qualify for placement into the Project PLUS program will be notified in August.

Appeals Process

The Supervisor of Gifted and Academically Talented Education, along with building administration, are prepared to work collaboratively with parents to answer any questions and review decisions. Should you have additional questions pertaining to district programs or related services, please feel free to contact the Department of Gifted and Academically Talented Education.
