Hackensack Public Schools
Elementary
Gifted and Talented
Program
Purpose
The purpose of this booklet is to inform parents of programs that reflect differentiated learning experiences and support available for our identified gifted and talented and enrichment students. Students in grades K-4 who are identified as gifted or enrichment are provided opportunities both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. The aim is to remove the ceiling on what is learned and promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills. These students are pushed to develop knowledge acquisition, thinking skills, creative expression, and student interaction.

Hackensack Public Schools is committed to providing a program for gifted and talented students that meet their unique emotional, social, and intellectual needs for life-long success.

Belief Statements:
1. We believe that gifted and talented students must be provided with a program that meets their unique social, emotional, and educational needs.
2. We believe that gifted and talented students should engage in multi-faceted, differentiated curriculum that focuses on challenging real-world issues to create life-long learners.
3. We believe that gifted and talented education is a collaborative effort involving parents, educators, mentors, community members, and gifted students.

Goals of the Gifted and Talented Program
1. Gifted and talented students will interact with their teachers, and fellow students in a collaborative, inquiry-based setting to meet their social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
2. Gifted and talented students will, through a differentiated curriculum, demonstrate an understanding of advanced content and connections using creative and critical thinking skills.
3. Gifted and talented students will utilize school and community resources to produce and present authentic advanced products.
4. Gifted and talented students will interact with others and participate in activities designed to promote self-awareness and acceptance, interpersonal relationships, and realistic recognition of abilities.
5. Gifted and talented students will develop self-directed learning skills and the likelihood of academic success and personal satisfaction.

Gifted and Talented Curricular Framework
The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children position paper on programming for gifted students recommends curriculum models to help the educator design an appropriate curriculum framework for their programs. The model chosen by the Hackensack Public Schools is the Kaplan Grid/Model.

The Kaplan/Grid Model examines the differentiation of the curriculum in terms of content, process, product, and the learning environment. The dimensions of depth provide teacher and students the opportunity to dig deeper into the curriculum. Complexity can be defined as the means by which knowledge is extended and broadened.

In addition, Hackensack Public Schools provides students who meet the criteria the opportunity to participate in a course one period a week that focuses on a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) approach. Lessons will challenge each student’s ability to think critically and be innovative through the engineering aspects of invention. Lessons will be inquiry based and students may be asked to continue their investigations both outside the classroom and at home.
Hackensack Public Schools utilizes the Depth and Complexity program to enrich the elementary curriculum. It is based on the work of Dr. Sandra Kaplan from University of Southern California who created icons to represent elements that generate a deeper, more complex thought process. Students involved in the learning process, whether it is reading text, watching a video, analyzing art, or listening to a presentation, can apply elements of depth and complexity as they begin to assimilate new information, make connections, and dig deeper into content. The Depth and Complexity icons are used as a visual aid to strengthen thinking skills and cognitive operations. These are strategies and skills for approaching and analyzing new information. They can be used individually or in combination.

**Habits of a Scholar**
This is the foundation for academic success as students learn to ponder, consider different perspectives, set goals, thirst for knowledge, persevere while taking intellectual risks, and strive for excellence, among others. These are traits that students are taught to exhibit through modeling, guided practice, and ongoing reinforcement. Behaviors include:

- Ponder Ideas
- Intellectual Risk-taking
- Preparation
- Excellence
- Academic Humility
- Curiosity
- Save Ideas
- Multiple Perspectives
- Perseverance
- Varied Resources
- Goal Setting
- Thinking like a Disciplinarian

Students examine content through the lens of a specific disciplinarian. This engages students in the use of academic vocabulary and specific content knowledge. It becomes a tool for differentiation, research, and interest-based exploration. Disciplinarians can be broad, specific, or in between.

**Dimensions of Depth & Complexity**
These are strategies and skills for approaching and analyzing new information. They can be used individually or in combination.

- **Language of the Discipline:** Specialized vocabulary, names of skills/tasks particular to people, working within the disciplines, tools used by the disciplinarians
- **Details:** Parts, facts, describing words, attributes
- **Patterns:** Predictability, repetition
- **Rules:** Order, structure hierarchy, laws
- **Trends:** Direction, a course that seems to follow
- **Unanswered Questions:** Ambiguities, unclear ideas, incomplete ideas
- **Ethics:** Points of view, different opinions, judging
- **Big Idea:** Generalization, principle, theory
- **Over Time:** How time influences things
- **Multiple Perspectives:** Interpretations, compare and contrast topic with perspectives
- **Across Disciplines:** Relationships between areas of study
**Enrichment Beyond the Classroom Setting**

Hackensack Public Schools offers enrichment and Gifted and Talented opportunities for students who have been identified as qualifying.

**Enrichment:**
Enrichment students are invited to participate in an after school enrichment opportunity with Junior First Lego League. Guided by Coaches (HPS teachers), teams explore a real-world scientific problem such as food safety, recycling, energy, etc. Then they create a Show Me poster that illustrates their journey of discovery and introduces their team. They also construct a motorized model of what they learned using LEGO elements. In the process, teams learn about teamwork, the wonders of science and technology, and the FIRST LEGO League Jr. Core Values, which include respect, sharing, and critical thinking. At the close of each season, teams come together at Expos to share ideas and celebrate. This takes place after school and runs for six-eight week sessions throughout the school year.

Students with a CogAT score of 112 and up and who show academic proficiency in other areas will be eligible to participate in Junior First Lego League. Multiple measures, discussed below, will be considered to insure triangulation. Criteria for Junior First Lego League is described below:

**Third Grade:**
1. CogAT score of 112 or higher
2. RI score of proficient or advanced proficient
3. Meets or exceeds expectations on ELA and Math indicators on report card

**Fourth Grade:**
1. CogAT score of 112 or higher
2. RI score of proficient or advanced proficient
3. NJSLA score of 765 or higher
4. Meets or exceeds expectations on ELA and Math indicators on report card

**Junior First Lego League Core Values**
- We are a team.
- We do the work. Our coaches and mentors help us learn, but we find the answers ourselves.
- We share our experiences and discoveries with others.
- We are helpful, kind, and show respect when we work, play, and share.
- We are all winners.
- We have fun.
Gifted and Talented Course:
Students identified as Gifted and Talented are invited to participate in a course for one period each week. They are pulled out with peers who have also been identified as Gifted and Talented and work on problem-based activities that have a STEAM (Science-Technology-Engineering-Arts-Mathematics) focus. Gifted & Talented courses stimulate higher-order thinking skills and problem solving and allow students to delve into topics of personal interest while engaging with other students who have similar abilities and passions.

Students with a CogAT score of 120 and up, and who show academic proficiency in other areas will be eligible to participate in the Gifted and Talented course offered for one period a week during the school day. Multiple measures, discussed below, will be considered to insure triangulation. Criteria for the Gifted and Talented course is described below:

Third Grade:
1. CogAT score of 120 or higher
2. RI score of proficient or advanced proficient
3. Meets or exceeds expectations on ELA and Math indicators on report card

Fourth Grade:
1. CogAT score of 120 or higher
2. RI score of proficient or advanced proficient
3. NJSLA score of 780
4. Meets or exceeds expectations on ELA and Math indicators on report card

Identification of Gifted and Talented and Enrichment Students

New Jersey Administrative Code regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1) define gifted and talented students as: "Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities."

The regulations require that students be compared to their chronological peers in the local school district. New Jersey does not have state-level criteria such as mandated tests or assessments, grade point averages, or IQ scores. Local school districts must use multiple measures to identify students. Hackensack Public Schools utilizes multiple measures in identifying gifted students.

These measures are as follows:
1. CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test)

The CogAT seeks to assess students’ learned reasoning abilities as they relate to learning and problem solving via three batteries of tests:
   - Verbal
   - Quantitative
   - Nonverbal

The CogAT is NOT a standardized achievement test of grade-level content and skills (such as the PARCC test and the NJSLS Science test) or the types of assessments teachers use to diagnose, inform, and/ or
evaluate learning, which are intended to assess the extent to which students have learned and can transfer/apply grade-level content, information, concepts and skills. Additionally, the CogAT is not an IQ test.

Students are given the CogAT in first and fourth grade. First grade scores serve as a measure of identification that is used for first, second, and third grade. Fourth grade scores serve as a measure of identification into middle school enrichment/Gifted and Talented programs and courses.

CogAT Standard Age Score and Percentile Rank Identifiers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Standard Age Score (SAS)</th>
<th>Percentile Rank (PR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>128-150</td>
<td>96 and higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>112-127</td>
<td>77-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>89-111</td>
<td>25-75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2. Reading Inventory
The Reading Inventory is a research-based, adaptive student assessment program that measures reading skills and longitudinal progress. Levels are broken up into the following categories by grade: Advanced Proficient, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic

3. PARCC (Grade 4 only)
A PARCC score of 765 and above can be a multiple measure used to determine eligibility into some Gifted and Talented offerings, specifically Junior First Lego League. Other programs may require a higher score (780 or higher).

4. Report Card Grades
Students are given letter grades in second, third, and fourth grade. Under each letter grade is a set of performance expectations. Students must meet or exceed expectations on those performance expectations to be eligible for gifted and talented or enrichment programs.

New Students to the District
Students new to the district may be screened for placement in the program for gifted and talented and enrichment students during the annual identification period (January/February). Students previously identified as gifted and talented in their former district, can share their nationally normed achievement and ability tests. This can be used as a substitute for a Hackensack prescribed test if the test has been given within the same timeframe followed in Hackensack.

Exit Procedures
In order to accommodate a child who is experiencing, for various reasons, difficulty in his or her academic program, this exit procedure is in place. Parents will be informed if their child’s placement in the program is being reconsidered and will have the opportunity to discuss the student’s circumstances and status.

Factors that may warrant program discontinuation include, but are not limited to:
- Inability to meet the requirements of the regular instructional program.
- Reluctance to participate in program activities
- Inability to function constructively or displaying inappropriate behavior that consistently endangers other students
Inability or reluctance to meet the requirements of the gifted and talented/enrichment program.

Expressed desire on the part of the student to discontinue his/her involvement in the program.

In those cases where students’ needs require removal from the program, the following exit procedure will be followed:

- Either the parent/guardian or teacher may initiate the exit process if the program activities appear not to meet the student’s needs.
- If the parent/guardian chooses to withdraw their child from the program, a written letter to that effect, must be sent to the school principal, after which a conference will be scheduled.
- A decision regarding placement will be made following a collaborative conference with the parent/guardian, student, teacher, and building administrator.
- The building principal makes the final determination of continued placement in the gifted and talented program.

**Appeal Process**

Parents/Guardians or teachers who believe a student has shown academic success in multiple areas and should be considered for inclusion in Gifted and Talented offerings must complete a Referral application (i.e. Appeal).

Parents/Guardians or teachers should state their request in writing to the Principal of the student’s school. In addition they should fill out the referral packet. This will be compared with standardized test scores (see above) as well as grades and class performance. The information will be reviewed by a school committee and parents/guardians will be informed of the decision.

**Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)**

The PAC is a group of parents and educators who:
- Advocate for gifted and talented students
- Promote the cause of gifted and talented programming
- Support students and staff who participate in gifted and talented programming
- Monitor program effectiveness

The PAC may meet yearly to focus on the following:
- Teaching strategies and exploration of resources
- Current topics/practices for parents/guardians of gifted students
- Availability and promotion of gifted and talented programs, activities, and events
- Any other topic deemed relevant to the group based on needs or interests
Parent/Guardian Resources

- The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC) assists schools, teachers, parents and students.
- The Gifted Child Society is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1957 by parents of New Jersey to further the cause of gifted children.
- At the national level, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) is an organization of parents, teachers, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those children who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences.
- The Open Education Database provides a useful list of 48 Essential Links for the Parents of Gifted Children.
- The Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development provides a list of websites for parents.