

INTRODUCTION

Innovative programs have been designed and implemented to provide appropriate challenges for gifted students. The variety of programs offered in the county is designed to complement the diverse individual characteristics displayed by gifted students in the school setting.

The purposes of this brochure are to provide an overview of the gifted program, a description of the identification process, characteristics of the gifted student, the program design for gifted students in Pittsylvania County Schools, and answers to questions often asked about the gifted program.

IDENTIFICATION

Gifted students are those students whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. They are students who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, leadership capacity or specific academic fields.

All schools within the Pittsylvania County School System follow the same procedure for identifying gifted students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Identification is a way to determine which students require different educational opportunities. At this time, the county identifies intellectually and academically gifted students in grades K-12. Students may be nominated for the gifted program at any time during their school careers by a teacher, parent, community person, peer or by the student.



In order to identify gifted students many types of information are gathered. A point system using multiple criteria is used. If the student already has standardized achievement test scores and an ability score, he/she may not have to receive additional testing. If these are not available, then the Peabody Individual Achievement Test and the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test will be administered by the gifted resource teacher at the student's school after parents have given written permission. In addition to standardized test scores, grade point averages and rating scales for characteristics of giftedness are used by an identification/placement committee to make a final decision.



CHARACTERISTICS

Being familiar with characteristics of gifted students will provide a clearer understanding of why special programming is needed. When looking at characteristics often displayed by gifted students, it is important to remember that the gifted are not a homogeneous group and as such an individual may not exhibit all of the characteristics of giftedness.

- The gifted student has a remarkable memory. He can retain information quickly from what has been seen, heard, read or experienced. As a result, he has a large storehouse of knowledge.
- The gifted student seems to possess a great deal of curiosity. She is most interested in knowing the how and why for everything. She asks many questions and demands answers.
- The gifted student seeks to make sense out of the world and, in doing so, likes to organize and bring structure to people, things and situations. At the same time, he is able to accept disorder caused by details because he can recognize the ones that merit his attention.
- The gifted student has the ability to grasp abstract concepts. She can compare and contrast, show interest in cause and effect, and draw relationships between seemingly unrelated things. She has the ability to reason things out.
- The gifted student possesses keen powers of observation. He often sees things others miss. He is more aware of what is going on around him than

other children and many adults. He shows a willingness to examine the unusual.

- The gifted student has a large vocabulary for her age. She uses language in a way to express precisely what is happening around her.
- The gifted student displays a wide range of interests. He likes to do many different things and relishes in doing new activities.
- The gifted student has the tendency to put ideas or things together in ways that are unusual or not obvious (divergent thinking). She can see things from many different points of view and has the capacity for creative problem solving. She can generate original ideas and solutions.
- The gifted student is persistent and goal directed. He will go beyond time limits to finish a task or to study a topic in depth.
- The gifted student shows a keen sense of humor. She understands the joke when others her age do not. She sees the inconsistencies in situations and finds humor in them. She has a quick wit.
- The gifted student establishes high expectations of self and others. The student can be self critical and often unrealistic in his expectations. He tends to be a perfectionist.
- The gifted student has a heightened sensitivity to her feelings and the feelings of others and takes what others say very personally. She is also concerned and worried about what is happening in the adult world around her.

CURRICULUM

The program design for gifted students in Pittsylvania County Schools is an integral part of the regular curriculum. In order to implement this type of program effectively, teacher training has been a primary goal of the gifted program. Each school plans and implements a program to meet the needs of its identified gifted students.

The basis for the gifted program focuses on activities which stimulate thinking at higher levels, develop process skills (skills which allow students to transfer and apply what they have learned to other situations) and encourage creativity. The gifted program also provides opportunities for enrichment and independent research.

FACTS

- ⊙ The program is administered by Teresa Petty and coordinated by Elizabeth Craig and Cedric Hairston. In addition, each school has a resource teacher who helps identify gifted students and plan and implement the school-based program.
- ⊙ To implement a school-based program for the gifted, each school receives yearly allocations of money based upon the number of identified gifted students.
- ⊙ Classroom teachers have been trained to provide for the special needs of gifted students. Each school also develops a program that includes speakers, trips, classes, and materials appropriate for gifted students. Parents are informed of these activities and are encouraged to participate in their planning and implementation.
- ⊙ Changes in student placement regarding the gifted program are done on an individual basis. The needs of the individual student are considered when making changes in placement.
- ⊙ Being gifted does not mean the student will automatically get good grades. Grades are only one part of the identification process in Pittsylvania County.
- ⊙ While gifted students possess mental abilities beyond those of others the same age, they will still behave like their peers in most aspects. The gifted student needs the same kind of love and guidance all students need.
- ⊙ Gifted individuals should not be expected to be gifted all of the time in all things. "Tight halos give very bad headaches."
- ⊙ Honors/advanced/virtual courses are offered for highly motivated, high achieving students in the high schools including online virtual advanced placement college courses. In conjunction with Danville Community College, dual enrollment courses in a variety of subject areas are offered at each of the school division's high schools.
- ⊙ Identified gifted students in grades 4-7 are eligible to apply for admission to the Piedmont Regional Governor's School held each summer in Chatham, Virginia.
- ⊙ Students in grades 10-11 are eligible to apply for admission to the year round Piedmont Governor's School for Mathematics, Science and Technology.
- ⊙ Identified gifted students in grades 10-11 are eligible to apply for admission to the summer state residential Governor's School.
- ⊙ Identified gifted students in grades 8-10 are eligible to apply for participation in the Summer Enrichment classes offered through Danville Community College.



Gifted Coordinators

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Revised 10/2017

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Gifted Program



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