

Summer 2011

Dear GATE family,

I am very happy to share with you the enhancements to the Gifted and Talented Education Program for the 2011-2012 school year. Facing some of the most severe budget cuts in Washoe County School District history, our department has been fortunate to continue to implement improvements to elementary and middle school programming using existing funding and transportation savings. These changes ensure that Washoe County School District is providing learning environments where students can explore their gifts and talents through academic risk-taking, which develops creativity, ingenuity, problem-solving and critical thought.

GATE elementary school students will be served on-site/pull-out gifted services at every elementary school. This change benefits the GATE students and families by eliminating transportation (a savings of \$474,000). We will be working with school administration to schedule our time for gifted enrichment. Some schools will have multi-aged class groupings of second through six grade students and some will be served in multi-ages groups of grades 2/3, 3/4, and 5/6. The grouping will depend on the number of gifted students at each elementary school or whether the school has 6th grade students. A tentative schedule will be posted on the Gifted and Talented Education website along with next year's curriculum and calendar. Registration is no longer required to participate. The benefit of making the transition to an on-site program out-weighs the reduction of a full day of gifted programming. Our staff is looking forward to working in collaboration with general education instructors and administration.

Benefits of On-site GATE programming:

- Able to serve gifted students within the normal school day hours and all calendars (traditional, multi-track, single-track green)
- Develop a stronger connection to students, families, and teachers
- Support GATE testing, reducing a back-log of assessments

In addition to elementary on-site programming, a cluster grouping model will be implemented within the general education setting. Research shows that gifted students make greater academic gains when grouped with their intellectual peers and are provided with appropriate curricular and instructional modifications. This model not only benefits all gifted students, it positively affects the achievement levels of all students at any grade level. The model will look different at every elementary school because of the number of gifted students at each school and each grade. In schools with large numbers of gifted students, it will not be appropriate to place all gifted students into one room. Our department administration and on-site teachers will continue to provide professional development regarding the cluster model and differentiation.

Middle school gifted students will be provided two options of services. **First, four middle school gifted magnets will be opening this next school year for grades sixth through eighth.** The participating middle schools are: Clayton, Pine, Swope, and Mendive. All magnet schools will be providing 6th through 8th grade gifted services in all core subjects (math, language arts, social studies, and science) for existing GATE students and any 6th - 8th gifted students interested in attending one of the four magnet middle schools. I encourage your gifted middle school student to experience this opportunity of academic courses in an enriched environment with classmates who are seeking intellectual challenge, are motivated to learn, and are committed to excellence. Because this is an additional option, transportation will not be provided. Please contact our office if you are interested in registering for the fall. Those who have shared interest will receive registration information and current Clayton, Pine, Swope, and Mendive students are automatically registered into the program. Participating in the GATE magnet middle school is going to provide:

- Accelerated coursework with high school credit (when applicable) will be offered, leaving more options for advanced study in high school
- Project-based learning, inquiry, and integrated subject opportunities
- Teachers endorsed in gifted education, highly qualified in core subjects and supervised by the GATE administrator
- Middle school elective offerings

Secondly, gifted students who remain at their zoned middle school will be supported with a GATE specialist on-site. This teacher will conduct on-site teacher training and coaching, providing teachers with a variety of instructional approaches and interventions for gifted learners, in response to the needs of the school site. Other duties may include professional development and training for the school staff in strategies of differentiation, assistance with curriculum planning, as well as development of enrichment activities and elective courses for gifted students.

We are at the beginning of a wonderful journey in the path to accomplishment and service. We are here to support and encourage you along the way.

Sincerely,



Lisa Riggs

Administrator of Gifted and Talented Education Programming