

Missoula County Public Schools Gifted Education Plan

Philosophy Statement

Missoula County Public Schools recognizes that some students have exceptional, intellectual and creative abilities that vary from those of the general population. We are committed to making the necessary accommodations for these exceptional students.

Definition

The term "gifted and talented" means children of outstanding abilities who are capable of high performance and require differentiated educational programs beyond those normally offered in public schools in order to fully achieve their potential contribution to self and society. The children so identified include those with demonstrated achievement or potential ability.

Identification Process

Students may be referred for identification for gifted services by parents, teachers, counselors and other educators and can occur as early as kindergarten and based on STAR 360 scores in September and January. Qualification for Gifted Education Services is determined by the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) which measures Verbal, Quantitative and Non-verbal Reasoning.

A student is identified as a gifted learner when 2 scores of a possible 4 scores are at or above the 95th percentile on the CogAT (*Verbal, Quantitative, Non-verbal and Composite Scores*) or when 3 or more scores are clustered at the 95th percentile. Sometimes a student will not score at this level and additional information, test scores and/or examples of the student's work is reviewed. Parents can appeal the decision but will be expected to provide additional data as well. Parents will receive a letter and test results after decisions have been made.

A student, who officially qualifies as "Gifted" in other districts, will also qualify as "Gifted" in MCPS provided documentation of their previous qualification can be reviewed (standardized test results). If the student was identified in the state of Montana, a letter from the previous district that states that the student was officially identified as a "gifted" will suffice.

Curriculum and Instruction

Gifted students should receive on-going differentiated instruction that is planned and embedded in the core curriculum when needed. In order to more fully meet the unique educational needs of gifted and high ability students, MCPS offers program options which may look different in each respective school. These options may include but not limited to:

- Early entrance to Kindergarten
- Single-subject acceleration
- Whole grade acceleration
- Curriculum compacting
- Differentiated Instruction
- Independent or small group research/study
- Flexible grouping
- Cluster Grouping
- Small group pull-out
- Student Conferences
- Assistance with social and emotional needs
- Mentorships as needed and when available
- Advanced Placement classes
- Honors and upper level course work
- Dual Credit
- Advanced Opportunities in Music
- Clubs and Activities in a variety of interest areas (ie. Flagship, DECA, Speech and Debate, Robotics, Key Club)
- Advanced competitions

Support Services

MCPS provides a variety of services for all students. These services are available for gifted and high ability students on an as needed basis. Support services include but are not limited to school counselors, school psychologists, mentors, resource room, curriculum specialists, Gifted Education Specialist and additional school programs.

Parent Involvement

Parents are welcomed advocates for their gifted child's appropriate placement, curriculum and social and emotional needs. Periodically throughout the school year, district-wide parent meetings may be offered as well as at individual schools as requested. Meetings include presentations on understanding the academic, social and emotional needs of gifted children. These meetings also give parents an opportunity for parents to give input on the MCPS gifted program.

Relevant materials and books are available for parents through the Gifted Education Library. Parents can also support gifted learners by volunteering in classrooms with small groups of students, by attending field trips and through advocacy.

Professional Development

Professional Development will focus on instructional management, instructional delivery and curriculum modification which are the three key components of the gifted education delivery system and will be aligned with the MCPS District Goals.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation of Gifted Education Services will include the following areas:

- identification of gifted students,
- program options, and
- teacher training and support.

In order to improve services, input from teachers, parents and students will be included in the evaluation process when appropriate.

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