

# 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 can be referred for identification for gifted services by parents, teachers, counselors and other educators and can occur as early as kindergarten. Qualification for Gifted Education Services is considered based on Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT), achievement scores and input from teachers and parents. The CogAT measures Verbal, Quantitative and Non-verbal Reasoning. All students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in MCPS are screened using the CogAT and then referrals are made for those students. Referred students are tested with the CogAT during two testing windows, one in the fall and one in the spring.

When a referral is made, the referral form is sent to the school counselor who manages referrals in each school building. The data, which includes grades, the most current standardized test scores and a teacher rating form, is collected and analyzed by the classroom teacher, counselor and principal to determine if further testing is warranted.

If further testing is recommended, a parent packet is sent home which includes a parent permission to test, "Getting to Know Your Child" and "Things My Child Likes to Do". When all information is gathered, testing can be scheduled.

A student is identified for services when 2 scores of a possible 4 scores are at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile (CogAT – *Verbal, Quantitative, Non-verbal and Composite Scores*) or when 3 or more scores are clustered just below the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. Final decisions are made by the Gifted Education Specialist, school counselor, teacher and one administrator from the school. If the team cannot meet consensus, more information is requested from the teacher and/or parents. This information or data must not be something already gathered. 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. Documentation of their qualification needs to be included in their file

(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 must receive on-going differentiated instruction that is planned and embedded in the core curriculum. Time spent with a Gifted Education Specialist, while extremely valuable, cannot be the only accommodation for high ability students.

In order to more fully meet the unique educational needs of gifted and high ability students, MCPS offers the following program options, which 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
- SAT Challenge
- 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
- UM Pilot Program
- AP testing opportunities for upper level languages
- Advanced Opportunities in Music
- Clubs and Activities in a variety of interest areas (ie. Flagship, DECA, Speech and Debate, 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 are planned 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.

In turn, parents support the program by volunteering in classrooms with small groups of students, by attending field trips and through advocacy opportunities.

### **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.

*Revised March 1, 2012*