



Pasadena Unified School District
Academics Division
Office of Gifted and Talented Education

To: Dr. Brian McDonald, Superintendent
Pasadena Board of Education members
From: Elizabeth J Blanco, Chief Academic Officer
Date: November 5, 2020
Re: GATE Program Updates
Board Policy: AR 6172, BP 6172

Attached is a detailed update on the Program for students identified eligible for gifted and talented services provided to me by Ms. Helen Hill, Director of CIPD & Karen Anderson, Coordinator for the Arts & GATE. Please share this information with the Board of Education.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide updates on progress in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) department during the 2019-20 school year and as we have shifted to distance learning in the 2020-21 school year. Changes in systems, professional development, and communication have expanded access and equity in the GATE program and enhanced our ability to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of students in Pasadena Unified School District. Please refer to the [2020-21 Arts & Enrichment Department](#) strategic plan for a complete breakdown of goals and services provided.

The [GATE by numbers](#) document provides a one-sheet overview of the impact of 2019-20 GATE office activities and demographics.

Student Identification

Yearly, we universally screen all 2nd graders and students new to the district in grades 3-8 in the fall. For the initial screening, students are given the Cognitive Abilities Test Form 7 (CogAT7), an online teacher proctored test that measures cognitive potential in verbal, quantitative, and non-verbal reasoning. One change that was made in 2019 was the exclusion of the “sentence completion” section of the verbal reasoning test. This is a component that is dependent on the processing of oral language in English. After discussing with the experts at cogAT7 and looking at best practices in

similar districts, we decided that eliminating this section might level the playing field among our diverse socio-economic groups and language learners.

An additional component to the initial screening is the [Teacher Observation Checklist](#). A [companion document](#) with descriptions of behaviors that a teacher might encounter in the classroom that could be representative of giftedness is also provided. This helps support the professional development of all teachers in expanding their understanding of the characteristics of the gifted from varied populations of students and to attempt to remove bias from their observations.

In the initial screening in 2019, 1488 students were tested and a numerical formula for identification in the *Intellectual* category was employed. Students who scored in the 90th percentile or above in at least two areas of the test, and scored above 75% on the teacher observation form qualified for initial identification. With this method, 91 students (6.1%) were initially identified. For the initial screening in 2018, 1589 students were tested and 91 students (5.7%) were initially identified. It is too early in our data analysis process to draw conclusions on the increase in initial identification, although it could be inferred that as teachers receive more training on the characteristics of giftedness and the checklist, the more accurate the alignment is between the observable characteristics and the raw potential that is revealed on the quantitative assessment (initial identification in 2017 was 4.6%).

After the initial screening, the GATE site reps met to analyze the data to look for potential for secondary review. For example, a student who scored above the 90th percentile in two areas, but whose observable characteristics were below 75%, a student who had very strong observable characteristics, but didn't score in the 90th percentiles, or a student who had one area that was particularly high (96th percentile or more). In this way, the representatives from the school were able to deeply analyze the results through an equity lens to reveal potential in the students that they know, rather than simply looking at quantitative cut-off points. We paid special attention to students who were a part of a subgroup and scored in the 65th - 90th percentile in our recommendations for secondary review. Many questions were revealed that related to student's language status, socio-economic challenges, or other special needs that the quantitative results alone do not provide. From this process, each school generated a list of students who were eligible for the [Secondary Review](#) process.

The *Secondary Review* process criteria was developed by analyzing researched based processes for alternative identification. Strategic focus was placed on processes that would more accurately assess students of color and ELLs in the *Intellectual* and *High Achieving* categories. The development of a method for expanding our identification to include the *Creative* category is also included. GATE site reps and/or Instructional Coaches are trained in how to administer a Secondary Review, and teachers provide the evidence needed. School site teams meet to review the evidence and recommend (or not recommend) students for gifted identification. The school sites then forward the portfolios to the GATE office for review. An additional 109 students were identified through the Secondary Review

Process (13 in creative category, 51 in high achieving category, 45 in intellectual category) for the 2019-20 school year. Of the students screened, this increased the percentage of screened students who were identified as gifted to 13.4%, which is above both the California (12.5%) and the national (9.5%) averages for identification.

An additional 90 students were eligible for *Secondary Review* screening, but due to school closures the process was not completed. The schools are completing this process this fall, and portfolios are due to the GATE office by Nov. 13, 2020. Due to the demographics of the students who qualify for *Secondary Review*, once this data is included in our total identification data we will increase our percentages of students identified from subgroups.

For the 2020-21 school year, due to the constraints of distance learning, we will not be universally screening for GATE using the cogAT7. Rather, we will focus on providing professional development and conducting *Secondary Reviews* for students in grades 3-8 who may have been missed in our previous processes. In the 2021-22 school year, we will universally screen all 2nd and 3rd grade students, as well as those new to PUSD.

GATE Equity Focus Group

In the summer of 2020, a GATE Equity Focus Group was formed to address problems of practice in GATE identification and services through a continuous improvement lens. The problem of disproportionality in GATE programs is not a problem that is unique to PUSD, but it is a problem that the GATE department has been actively working to disrupt. According to the research conducted by Dr. Marcia Gentry on “Missingness” in Gifted Education programs, our disproportionality ratios are very much in line with CA state disproportionality. The focus group is analyzing this data and engaging in professional development in order to go through a process to actively disrupt this problem through multiple pathways to identification. It is important to distinguish between multiple measures and multiple pathways. The traditional measures for identifying gifted youth are based on national norms for populations that do not reflect the population of students in our district. This is why the idea of a “GATE ID test” as the only means of identifying potential is antithetical to the concept of equity. We are looking at establishing multiple pathways that build upon our existing Secondary Review process.

The focus group was selected based on both their background in gifted education and their commitment to equity in our district. For the initial study, we made a conscious decision to convene a group of teachers in order to engage in deep inquiry into our systems from the ground up. As the group develops, we will most likely expand to include key administrators and parents.

Members include:

Tamyke Edwards, Instructional Coach, Norma Coombs Elementary

Elena Camarillo, Instructional Coach, Madison Elementary

Dr. Dawna Tully, K-8 teacher, McKinley School

Dr. Wenonah Green, elementary teacher, Washington Elementary
Dr. Kyle Chapman, secondary teacher, Math Academy
Rene Rodriguez, secondary teacher, Blair IB
Karen Anderson, Arts & Enrichment Coordinator/GATE specialist

Developing and Monitoring the Progress of GATE Students

In alignment with board policy, the SPSA, and research based practices in GATE, identified gifted students in elementary schools are ideally placed in clusters with GATE certified teachers. This model allows for opportunities for students to work with intellectual peers as well as “age appropriate” peers as outlined in the National Standards for Gifted Education. We believe that this model best serves the whole child and provides many and varied opportunities for learning in the social, emotional, and cognitive realms.

Individual School Site Dashboards are provided as a place to clearly communicate all GATE data with school sites. The dashboard includes a list of identified students with parent emails, and the list of GATE certified teachers with their year of certification. The dashboard is a place to enter parent and teacher requests for testing or *Secondary Review*, as well as status on the *Secondary Review* process. School site reps, principals, and instructional coaches use this as a communicative forum with the GATE office. The GATE office has received positive feedback from school sites on this tool for monitoring the GATE status of students as well as the certification status of teachers.

Another important standardization of our processes in monitoring progress of GATE students was the creation of a universal [Individualized Learning Plan](#). GATE site reps collaborated to develop this tool and the Arts & Enrichment Coordinator brought in resources of best practices from the field to incorporate in the process. The recommendation is that every GATE student would have an opportunity to work through this plan with their teacher in order to set individual social, emotional, and cognitive goals. Professional Development is offered to school sites that wish to engage in this process.

Additional Support for Students and Sites

Each site develops a plan for the [SPSA Principal's GATE Checklist](#). This is an important document within the SPSA as it can be used as an additional resource in supporting our teachers and to provide plans for implementation of support and services for gifted students. The 2020-21 plans include listed GATE parent meetings, areas of focus, and a list of key GATE certified teachers who have a GATE cluster in their class. During the 2019-20 school year, classroom *Learning Walks* were conducted with a focus on analyzing GATE instructional practices, especially with the teachers who were identified in the plan. The Arts & Enrichment Coordinator, along with the principal and instructional coach, conducted these learning walks at schools throughout the year. Through this reflective cycle, teachers

receive productive feedback on lessons and instructional practices to meet the needs of their GATE identified students.

A highlight example of this reflective cycle was at Washington STEAM Multilingual Academy, where the Instructional Coach and the Arts & Enrichment Coordinator met monthly to conduct *Learning Walks* and reflect on teacher practice. As a result of the *Learning Walks*, the coach conducted meaningful coaching sessions with classroom teachers, and made changes to existing structures in the school and in the leadership class that she teaches. For the 2020-21 school year, the coach conducts an advisory class for GATE students and other student leaders where she empowers them to define their personal path and engages them in age appropriate Social Emotional Learning lessons that cater to the unique needs of gifted adolescents. We hope to expand on this model in other middle schools across the district.

When PUSD went to remote learning in March, the GATE department developed a Powerschool Learning page for teachers, students and parents to access instructional resources appropriate for gifted learners. Over the summer, this page was translated to Canvas and is available for all teachers to upload elements into their personal Canvas classrooms. It includes activities in math, reading, and critical thinking to support GATE clusters.

Professional Development and Certification for Teachers

Teachers are required to participate in 30 hours of professional development in order to become GATE certified in PUSD. Every 3 years, GATE certified teachers are required to participate in 6 hours of professional development. For the 2019-20 school year, teachers were provided with a variety of options for this process including taking classes in an accredited university program, engaging in professional development after school with the GATE TOSA, and/or one-on-one coaching with the GATE TOSA. Four [modules of study](#) were developed for teachers to attend, as well as the introductory course, “Differentiation 101” and the recertification course, “Differentiation 201”. The philosophy of instruction is collaborative, and the objective is to increase teacher capacity through collaborative learning and integration of strategies into practice. To this end, the courses met every other week so that the teachers could take what they learned, plan and implement a lesson, then come back to the course to reflect and share practice. For each 6 hours of face to face professional development in a module, teachers could earn up to 9 hours towards certification through lesson planning or coaching time.

PD was offered throughout the 2019-20 school year outside of contract hours by Dr. Michelle McGuire, an expert in gifted education from the California Association for the Gifted and the University of Southern California, although some sessions were cut short due to school closures. The Arts & Enrichment Coordinator also meets with teachers for one-on-one or group coaching by request to develop teaching strategies, lesson plans, or a combination of the two.

The summer of 2020 brought with it many opportunities for online teacher professional development, a positive outcome of the constraints of the state at home orders and distance learning. Seventy four PUSD teachers attended some form of online PD in gifted education over the summer, which included self selected 1-2 hour webinars, 18 hour institutes, and day long symposiums sponsored by CAG (California Association for the Gifted) or by NAGC (National Association for the Gifted). Third grade teachers from Willard, Hamilton and Madison Elementaries are participating in professional development in gifted pedagogy at the University of Southern California through Project Reach Each, which focuses on reading strategies in 3rd grade for inclusive classrooms. Ms. Anderson has had the opportunity to follow up with these teachers and continue to provide lessons and support from the University for them to integrate into their practice this year. The GATE Equity Focus Group members attended the I-URGGE (Consortium for Underrepresented Groups in Gifted Education) town hall meetings, sponsored by SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted). It was a productive summer of learning in many and varied ways.

In October, we had a cohort of teachers attend the CAG Fall Institute, *Creating Educational Change for Equity in Gifted Education*, and we have a cohort of second grade teachers signed up to become GATE certified through USC in a unique course on [Racial and Intellectual Equity in Gifted Education](#). The goal is to have at least one teacher from each elementary school attend this certification course.

Online professional development courses are being developed in Canvas for teachers to engage in asynchronously. This is a positive development from school closures, as these courses will open up GATE certification to teachers who were unable to attend our after school classes in the model we employed in past years. Partners from the University of Southern California will support the development of the courses.

Professional Development for School Sites/Teachers/Administrators/Coaches

The Arts & Enrichment Coordinator also continues to provide PD in differentiation and identification at school sites on A Mondays, as well as embedded in the regular coaches meetings. Topics vary depending on the needs of the school, and the goals of the SPSA. The Arts & Enrichment Coordinator collaborates with the Principal and Instructional Coach to determine the needs of the staff. Some examples of topics for A Monday PD can be explored below:

- [Overview of characteristics/GATE 101](#)
- [Overview of identification process](#)
- [Scholarly Traits](#)

Parent Resources and Education

- GATE Enrichment Evenings
- Site Level Parent Meetings

All sites are required to host four scheduled parent GATE meetings as aligned to their SPSA. Topics may vary depending on needs, but all events were designed with the GATE learner as the priority. The SPSA Principal's Checklist can also be a guide for this work. At the district level, the GATE Office hosted three GATE Enrichment Evenings in 2019-20 that focused varying topics. The critical shift with this model is that we provide an enriching class with a GATE certified teacher for the students at the same time that the parents receive a practical workshop in supporting the needs of their children. On [October 8](#) we focused on what it means to be gifted and what PUSD offers. On [November 13](#), we focused on MTSS and how the development of scholarly dispositions can support gifted learners at school and at home. On February 12, we had a guest speaker, Mr. The Bui, a CAG teacher of the year and advocate for gifted youth. We served over 250 students and 300 parents at these evenings in 2019-20, even though we were not able to conduct our fourth event in April due to school closures. Instead, the GATE office provided a comprehensive [newsletter for parents](#) in April to support their needs during distance learning, as well as building up our online resources on the [GATE website](#).

GATE Events

Innovation Club

Twenty Innovation Clubs from fourteen schools were up and running during the second semester of the 2019-20 school year. Approximately 400 Students participated in this offering. Teacher facilitators attended [Professional Development](#) and were provided with lessons and resources developed by the Arts & Enrichment Coordinator and the STEM TOSA. Innovation Club is an opportunity for GATE students to engage in meaningful, interest based inquiry projects and experiences. One of the main objectives is to expose them to the categories of inquiry presented in the PUSD Innovation Exposition held annually. All funds for Innovation Club are connected to the GATE budget.

Most of our Innovation clubs were cut short and did not complete in the spring. For 2020-21, we will offer virtual innovation clubs, which leads to more opportunity, as we aren't as limited by school site. Students from varied sites can choose a club based on area of interest, such as Invention, Science Fiction, Environmental Innovation, Engineering (reverse), and Scientific Inquiry, rather than geography. We look forward to the re-imagining of Innovation Club for Spring 2021.

Innovation Exposition

The Pasadena Unified School District's [Innovation Exposition](#) was cancelled in Spring 2020 due to school closures. We have not yet determined if we will attempt to hold a virtual Innovation Exposition, or put more emphasis on the process with the clubs.

Junior Docent Program

Nearly 60 GATE students in grades 7 and 8 participate annually in the Junior Docent Program at the Pasadena Museum of History and Gamble House. Students learn about the exhibits at their respective institutions and subsequently lead tours for their families and for all PUSD 3rd grade

classrooms throughout the school year. This program is an opportunity for our middle school students to learn about local history and to practice their public speaking and presentation skills. The GATE budget provided the funding for the transportation. For the 2019-20 school year, the students completed their training and began to provide tours for 3rd graders, but were cut short by school closures.

We are so grateful to our partners at the Gamble House for their dedication to keeping the Junior Docent program going during 2020-21 Distance Learning. They have agreed to take on 12 Jr. Docents this year, train them on Webex using the virtual tour features on their website, and support them in providing virtual tours for the 3rd grade classes starting in January. 7th and 8th grade Jr. Docents will join 3rd grade classes virtually to provide the My Masterpieces experience. This is another place where there is a benefit of not being limited by geography. We can pair the Jr. Docents with colleagues from across the district, so that they have more opportunity to collaborate with intellectual peers who are not from their school.

Math Field Day

Objective: The goal of Math Field Day is to provide 4th - 8th grade students an opportunity to celebrate mathematics through a fun competitive event that focuses on building collaboration and communication skills while challenging them to think critically and creatively to solve advanced mathematical problems.

Math Field Day was cancelled in 2019-20 due to school closures, but many school teams practiced and continued to meet to celebrate math throughout the Spring.

For the 2020-21 school year, we are looking into using a platform known as "[Math Madness](#)" to allow school teams to compete virtually in an ongoing tournament style. The benefit of this system is that more students would have the opportunity to participate and for longer periods of time, as it is not a one day event, but rather a competition in rounds, much like basketball playoffs. We will be presenting this idea to the schools and to the Pasadena Educational Foundation in November to see if it is a feasible option.

Budget

- Since cogAT7 testing is being postponed to next year, it will need to be reallocated to 2021-22 budget.
- Since Field Trips are cancelled this year, the funds will be reallocated to provide additional Enrichment Clubs for students.
- An individual funder through PEF provided financial support for our GATE Enrichment Evenings, enrichment resources, and conference attendance in 2019-20, and there are still some accessible funds in that account.

Description of Service	2019-20 Budget	2020-21 Budget
Annual CogAT 7 Testing	\$15,825	\$16,000 (not being used this year)
Teacher Supplemental for Innovation Club and GATE coordinator supplemental hours	\$18,000	\$18,000
Transportation (Docent Program)	\$5,100	\$5,000 (will be reallocated)
Material and Supplies/Mailings	\$1,500	\$1,155
PD and Parent Ed Consultants	\$3,500	\$3,500
Innovation Exposition (Added to GATE Budget in 2018)	Included in materials	Included in materials
Conference & Professional Memberships	\$2,000	\$2,121
Total	\$45,925	\$45,776

The [GATE by numbers](#) document provides a one-sheet overview of the impact of 2019-20 GATE office activities.