



**Education for
Advanced Learners**

Handbook For Families

McFarland School District

Dedication

This handbook is dedicated to parent and guardians who have experienced the joys and challenges of raising children with high potential. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are the first to recognize their child's strengths and to build on their interests. They spend countless hours in classrooms, in school buildings, and with after-school extended activities. They learn that giftedness presents both opportunities and challenges. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are active partners with schools in the child's educational life.

This handbook was developed as a parent resource guide to Advanced Learner education in the McFarland School District. Please feel welcome to contact the Advanced Learner Coordinator (608/838-4500 x 4760) or our Director of Instructional Services (608/838-4510) with questions or comments.

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***“... and grateful for the wit to see
prospects through doors we cannot enter –
Ah, let us praise diversity
which holds the world upon its center.”
- Phyllis McGinley***

District Mission Statement

The School District of McFarland will graduate learners who achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to make a positive contribution to a changing world. This mission will be accomplished by:

- setting high expectations for students, staff and community;
- expecting and supporting consistent, high student achievement;
- ensuring accountability through documenting and analyzing all that we do;
- providing an environment of challenges, support, and respect;
- sharing a commitment to our mission among students, staff and community.

McFarland's Philosophy of Gifted & Talented

The McFarland School District strives to meet the needs of all students, including those in the gifted/talented population. We recognize outstanding talents in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata and in all areas of human endeavor. We strive to identify students in five areas of giftedness¹:

- Intellectual
- Academic
- Creative
- Artistic/Dramatic
- Leadership

McFarland's Definition of Giftedness

The District's working definition of giftedness mirrors the state definition² as well as that more recently cited in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Under these definitions, gifted students are those who: "give evidence of high achievement capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership or specific academic areas and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop those capabilities"

Another complementary perspective is provided by a group of respected professionals in the field of Gifted who suggest a definition based on the gifted child's differences from the norm. They define giftedness as:

"... asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. The asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally".³

1 See page 9 for a description of each area of giftedness

2 Reference: s. 118.35(t), Wis. Stats.

3 Columbus Group (1991, July). Unpublished transcript of the meeting of the Columbus Group. Columbus, Ohio.

Is My Child Gifted?

All children are special and have their own areas of strength. However, some children have unusually advanced abilities that benefit from special adjustments at home and school to help them grow and learn to their fullest potential. As you watch your child grow and develop, you may notice skills or characteristics that are quite different from those of other children the same age. For example, your child may:

- Be very curious and observant
- Use adult-sounding words and reasoning
- Think of many unusual ideas
- Recognize complex patterns or relationships
- Come to surprising solutions to problems
- Show a strong memory
- Ask unusual questions
- Demonstrate advanced talent in a certain area (such as mathematics, science, writing, art, music, or drama)
- Learn letters or numbers early and read before being formally taught

Children can demonstrate giftedness in a variety of ways, and often parent(s)/guardian(s) are the first to notice special abilities. If you are seeing a number of these traits, skills, and behaviors in your children, it might be a signal that their development could be advanced.

What Should I Do If I Believe My Child is Gifted?

Family members play an important role in providing learning experiences for children. There are many ways in which you can recognize and build on the strengths and talents you see in your children. For example:

- Encourage your children's curiosity and creativity
- Help your children find activities they love
- Give your children opportunities to take healthy risks as they explore the wonder around them

Like all children, young gifted children need to become comfortable with trying new things and learning from their mistakes. Help them "fail forward!" When your child has mastered one activity, present an opportunity for new challenges. Recognize that your child may be ready for experiences earlier than other children, and that his or her questions and interests may surprise and challenge you. Educate yourself about gifted children and about learning opportunities for them in the community. There may be times when you want to consult with your family physician or a psychologist who has experience working with gifted children. Another resource is the National Association for Gifted Children⁴; they have excellent publications that can support you in supporting your child.

⁴ See Resources at the end of the Handbook for contact information.

Common Characteristics

The bright child has educational strengths that can be supported and enhanced within the classroom environment. Children who are considered gifted have an exceptional ability as defined by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Standard (t)⁵. Differentiated curriculum, instruction, and assessment coupled with a teacher/facilitator who is able to extend curriculum to meet the bright child's needs also allow some of our gifted learners' needs to be met within the regular classroom environment. The information in the chart below may help you think about the differences between bright and gifted children⁶.

BRIGHT CHILD	GIFTED LEARNER
Knows the answers.	Asks the questions.
Is interested.	Is highly curious.
Is attentive.	Is mentally and physically involved.
Has good ideas.	Has wild, silly ideas.
Works hard.	Plays around, yet tests well.
Answers the questions.	Discusses in detail; elaborates.
Top group.	Beyond the group.
Listens with interest.	Shows strong feelings and opinions.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.
Six to eight repetitions for mastery.	One to two repetitions for mastery.
Understands ideas.	Constructs abstractions.
Enjoys peers.	Prefers adults.
Grasps the meaning.	Draws inferences.
Completes assignments.	Initiates projects.
Is receptive.	Is intense.
Copies accurately.	Creates new designs.
Enjoys school.	Enjoys learning.
Absorbs information.	Manipulates information.
Technician.	Inventor.
Good memorizer.	Good guesser.
Prefers straightforward tasks.	Thrives on complexity.
Is alert.	Is keenly observant.
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical.

⁵ See page 20 for a description of Standard (t).

⁶ Chart developed by Janice Szabos.

Ten Myths & Facts About Gifted Students and Gifted Education⁷

Myth #1: Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They don't need any special help in school or anywhere else.

Fact: Everyone needs encouragement and help to make the most of their abilities and succeed in life. In fact, research shows that 25% of gifted people are underachievers and quit trying because nothing they do leads to any measurable success or satisfaction.

Myth #2: Gifted kids love school, get high grades, and greet each new school day with enthusiasm.

Fact: Most schools are geared for average learners, not gifted learners, which can make it hard for gifted students to get excited about going. Some of the most talented students in the United States actually choose to drop out of school altogether.

Myth #3: Gifted students come from white middle- and upper-class families.

Fact: Children with gifts and talents are represented in all cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Myth #4: Gifted kids are good at everything they do.

Fact: Some gifted students are good at many things; others are exceptionally able at only a few things. Some gifted students are also learning disabled, which means that they might not be very good at schoolwork.

Myth #5: Teachers love to have gifted students in their classes.

Fact: Some teachers do, some don't. Some teachers may feel uncomfortable with gifted students and can get defensive when they suspect that these students know more than they do.

Myth #6: If gifted students are grouped together, they will become snobbish and elitist.

Fact: Some students will, some won't. What's especially pernicious about this myth is that some adults use it to rationalize decisions about not allowing gifted students to work or study together or not providing them with opportunities that meet their learning needs. Gifted students need to be able to work together to learn and communicate at as rapid and in-depth a pace as they are able.

Myth #7: All gifted students have trouble adjusting to school and forming relationships.

Fact: Some gifted students do, some don't – just like other students.

Myth #8: Gifted students don't know that they're "different" unless someone tells them.

Fact: Most gifted students don't need to be identified or labeled before they are aware that they're not quite like their age peers.

Myth #9: Gifted students must constantly be challenged and kept busy or they'll get lazy.

⁷ Adapted from: Galbraith, M.A., and Jim Delisle. *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*. MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1996.

Fact: Some gifted students might get bored, but they won't necessarily get lazy – just like other students.

Myth #10: Gifted kids are equally mature in all areas – academic, physical, social, and emotional.

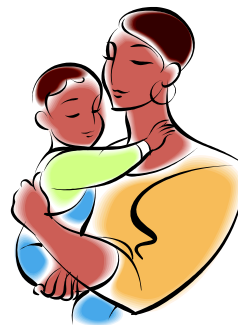
Fact: This might make things simpler, but it's not true or reasonable. In fact, research has found that gifted youngsters tend to be asynchronous in their development. They may be way above their age peers in cognitive development and highly sensitive for their age, but may lag behind in physical development and socially they prefer younger kids or adults as companions.

What Gifted Students Want from Their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)⁸

Sometimes it's hard to know what to do to support your child who has gifts or talents. Here's what the students themselves have told us.

These are the top ten things gifted students want from their parent(s)/guardian(s):

- Be supportive and encouraging; be there for us; be on our side
- Don't expect too much of us; don't expect perfection
- Don't pressure us, be too demanding, or push too hard
- Help us with our schoolwork/homework
- Help us develop our talents
- Be understanding
- Don't expect straight As
- Allow us some independence; give us space; trust us, because chances are we know what we're doing
- Talk to us; listen to us
- Let us try alternative education/special programs



"Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death!"
–Albert Einstein

⁸ Galbraith, M.A., and Jim Delisle. *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*. MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1996.

Advocacy

Here's what effective advocacy for your child could look like:

- Know the facts; be informed – if you're not sure, ask questions to learn what you need to know.
- Educate yourself on educational terminology, especially the vocabulary related to gifted education.
- Become familiar with the state guidelines and national guidelines to deepen your own knowledge base about giftedness.
- Be willing to give your child's school or classroom your time and talents – not just your critiques and suggestions
- If you wish to talk with your child's teacher, make an appointment and tell the teacher in advance what you wish to discuss, being as specific as possible. Remember, in the hallway right after school is never the best time and place for a serious conversation. Help ensure that your advocacy will make the most difference by allowing the teacher to give you his/her full attention.
- Network with other interested parent(s)/guardian(s), teachers and community members to discover what has worked for them, what has not worked, and who in the community has been most helpful.
- Be willing to listen to other perspectives.
- Bring your sense of humor – everyone, including your child, will appreciate it.
- Be respectful of the professionals who are doing their best to educate every child, just as you are doing your best as a parent.
- Avoid becoming a hovering or "helicopter" parent – even gifted children need to develop their own sense of independence and the ability to speak for themselves in a tactful manner.
- Focus on your main issue and be willing to collaborate and compromise in order to move the conversation and next steps forward.
- Focus on your student's needs, not the "gifted" label. Teachers teach youngsters, and each student has a unique array of gifts and challenges.
- Be assertive, not adversarial – remember that you are modeling how to interact with the world for your child.
- Join gifted organizations, attend gifted education conferences, and subscribe to gifted education resources – all of these will help reassure and challenge you as well as move you in a constructive direction.

***"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."
-Mahatma Gandhi***

Supporting Your Gifted Child

There are many things that parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians can do to encourage children with gifts and talents to grow more able, more curious, more compassionate and well-adjusted. You will see from these examples that these are things we want for all our children!

✧ **At Home**

- Set an example; model life-long learning
- Collect examples of your child's work and creativity in a portfolio
- Encourage and model good communication
- Create an accepting environment and encourage your child to share his/her feelings, questions, comments
- Be a good listener
- Be a facilitator and a guide – share in the adventure of learning new things
- Allow childhood to be a part of your gifted one's life; do not expect him/her to feel and act like a miniature adult
- Avoid comparing your child with others – don't lose sight of his/her individuality
- Make free time a regular pastime – don't over-schedule your child
- Set clear and consistent expectations and consequences; involve your child in the process
- Help your child believe in him or herself
- Emphasize your child's strengths; be positive
- Supplement your child's learning at home; nurture your child's passions, interests, and creativity
- Model respect for others
- Value risk-taking, hard work and the satisfaction of achievement
- Discuss effective problem-solving techniques and strategies to cope with failure
- Encourage independence by giving your child responsibility
- Provide opportunities for your child to interact with other gifted children, older children and stimulating adults
- Check out special-interest classes and camps -- apply early
- Encourage self awareness
- Remember the value of humor

✧ **In School** – Successful partnerships between home and school largely depend upon common knowledge, direct and honest communication, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. For example:

- Develop rapport with your child's teacher
- Share your child's "at home" work and creativity with the teacher at appropriate times
- Ask your child's teacher for suggestions to encourage and nurture a particular talent, interest, or ability
- Be a volunteer in your child's classroom or school
- Keep written documentation of meetings with school staff so you can be more helpful if there is a question in the future
- Offer to assist school staff in designing a Differentiated Educational Plan (a document that identifies the student's strengths and weaknesses, personal goals, indicators of academic growth, and avenues of parental support)
- Take time to thank your child's teacher and other school staff

Checklist of Characteristics for Areas of Giftedness⁹

Here is what the National Association for Gifted Children has shared to help parent(s)/guardian(s) and educators as they think about how best to recognize a child who may have special gifts or talents in a specific area of giftedness.

GIFTED AREA	CHARACTERISTICS
General Intellectual Ability	understands complex concepts draws inferences between content areas sees beyond the obvious thrives on new or complex ideas enjoys hypothesizing intuitively knows before taught uses an extensive vocabulary does in-depth investigations learns rapidly in comparison to peers one or two repetitions for mastery manipulates information
Specific Academic Ability	strong memorization ability advanced comprehension – one or two repetitions for mastery intense interest in a specific academic area high academic capacity in special-interest area pursues special interests with enthusiasm operates at a higher level of abstraction than peers asks poignant questions discusses and elaborates in detail
Creative Thinking	independent and/or flexible thinker exhibits original thinking in oral and/or written expression generates many ideas to solve a given problem possesses a keen sense of humor creates and invents intrigued by creative tasks improvises and sees unique possibilities risk taker resists conformity
Artistic (Visual/Performing Arts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • art • dance • drama • music 	communicates their vision in visual/performing arts unusual ability for aesthetic expression compelled to perform/produce exhibits creative expression desire for creating original product keenly observant continues experimentation with preferred medium excels in demonstrating the visual/performing arts
Leadership	takes an active role in decision making high expectations for self and others expresses self with confidence foresees consequences and implications of decisions follows through on a plan appears to be well liked by peers ideas expressed accepted by others sought out by others to accomplish a task

⁹ Adapted from the National Association for Gifted Children.

Identification Process

In the School District of McFarland, identification of students with gifts and/or talents is an on-going process that allows parent(s)/guardian(s) and school staff to discover potential and follow-up with appropriate programming opportunities. Referrals are accepted; the referral form is available on the District GT Website at: [http://www.mcfarland.k12.wi.us/msd/parent\(s\)/guardian\(s\)](http://www.mcfarland.k12.wi.us/msd/parent(s)/guardian(s)).

A gifted or talented student may demonstrate one or more of the abilities described earlier and may be identified by traditional or non-traditional screening criteria. The District uses multiple forms of data, gathered over time, to identify students with gifts and talents. These data sources include but are not limited to the following:

- **Standardized tests**¹⁰
 - Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE)
 - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
 - Out-of-level tests through the Northwestern University Midwest Academic Talent Search(NUMATS) such as the Explore, the Plan, and the ACT or SAT
 - Individualized tests as needed, such as the TOMAGS, THE SAGES
- **Teacher surveys**, administered annually to allow teachers the time to reflect on their students' abilities, gifts, and talents and to talk with the building GT Resource Teachers about what they should be looking for
- **Referrals** from parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians, teachers, and/or others who know the child well
- **Products** in the form of written observations, student projects, records of school and/or community achievement and other demonstrations of student ability
- **Program participation**, to ensure that the identification process takes into account students' participation in external programs that focus on a specific interest of ability

Data such as these are collected and analyzed by the District's GT Coordinator, working with the building GT Resource Teacher(s). District criteria are applied to the data to determine the level of giftedness; these criteria are included below. Over time, we have found that the inclusion of these varied data collection methods, with special attention to giftedness among our District's various cultural and socio-economic groups, help us ensure that we identify and serve our students with gifts and talents. It is never a perfect process, however, and we invite our parent(s)/guardian(s) and teachers to continue to work with us to refine our process and strengthen our programming.

¹⁰ More about these tests is available in the Glossary.

Criteria for Determining Levels of Giftedness

The process for identifying students with gifts and talents includes consideration of the multiple forms of data with respect to the criteria shown below. Parent(s)/guardian(s)/guardians are key participants in the identification and programming conversations.

Level I - Talent Pool (top 5 – 15 % of the population)

Students who exhibit strengths/ abilities in the areas of: intellect, creativity, the arts, leadership, specific academics

Evidence found in at least **three** of the following:

- Nomination for and participation in enrichment opportunities
- Information from staff and others
- Successful participation in qualifying programs outside of school
- Strong standardized test scores (95%ile or better)

Level II - EX or Exceptional (top 2 - 5% of the population)

Students with exceptional learning needs because of strengths and abilities in one or more of the areas: intellect, creativity, the arts, leadership, specific academics

Evidence found in at least **three** of the following:

- Consistent nomination for and participation in GT extension opportunities
- Information from staff and others
- Standardized test scores (96%ile or better)
- Consistently ranked 65%ile or above on NUMATS
- Successful participation in qualifying programs outside of school

Level III - *EX* or Exceptional Star (top 1-2% of the population)

Students with extraordinary learning needs because of extreme strength and ability in the areas of intellect, creativity, the arts, leadership and/or a specific academic area

Evidence of at least **four** of the following:

- **Consistent** nomination for and participation in GT **extension** opportunities
- Information from staff and others
- Standardized test scores consistently at 98%ile or better
- Consistently ranked 85%ile or higher on NUMATS
- Successful participation in qualifying programs outside of school

***"Use what talent you possess: the woods would be very silent
if no birds sang except those that sang best."
-Henry Van Dyke***

Programming Options

Level I or Talent Pool "TP"– Regular classroom differentiation
Services for this level may include the following:

Alternate assignments: Assignments given to a particular student or small group *instead of* the assignment given to the rest of the class. The assignments are designed to be more challenging and/or to capitalize on a student's special interests or skills.

Change in content/process: Modification of what is taught or studied, or how it is taught or studied, in order to better match the learning styles or needs of talent pool students.

Choice in the content, the process of learning or the product of the learning: Choice may be offered by varying these according to different types of intelligence or levels of thinking.

Compacting: Allowing students to spend less time learning a topic, chapter, or unit by either: 1) pretesting for mastery so some material can be eliminated, or 2) creating a study guide or other procedure for students to cover material at a faster pace or in less time than the rest of the class. The purpose of compacting is to move on more quickly to new material or to create class time for more challenging enrichment or accelerated activities.

Creative thinking skills: Specific instruction in techniques that encourage the development of fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality, complexity, curiosity, imagination, and risk-taking.

Enrichment: A curricular choice that expands the learning beyond the existing curriculum.

Flexible grouping: Grouping talent pool students together within a classroom or between classrooms in order to provide instruction or activities at an appropriate level for the students' talent areas. Groupings may be short-term or long-term and will change depending on the educational needs of the students.

Higher level thinking: Activities or assignments that require the students to operate at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The activities may be enhanced by teaching students the differences between the levels of thinking and by discussing the thinking levels/skills used in various activities.

Open-ended projects: Projects that allow students to create their own options and that encourage problem-solving, higher level and/or creative thinking.

Pretesting for mastery: Assessment in which students demonstrate mastery of basic skills, knowledge, and concepts that are planned for instruction with the regular class in order to eliminate some work and allow students to move on to new, more challenging material.

Research projects: Activities in which students may identify a topic or subject for study, narrow the focus of study, gather resources, locate information through reading or other means (e.g., surveys, interviews, audiovisual material) and/or create a product or presentation. Such projects may be used to pursue an area of interest either related or unrelated to the grade-level curriculum.

In addition, classroom teachers work collaboratively with their building's GT Resource Teacher to provide individual, small group, and/or whole class activities that stretch students with an additional level of challenge.

Level II or Exceptional "EX"– Special group programming may include:

Acceleration-subject: Students move ahead one or more grade levels in a subject area but remain at the regular grade level for most of their schedule.

Accelerated/Honors classes: Advanced classes are offered in any discipline at the middle or high school level.

Cluster groups/classes: An arrangement in which a group of students with similar talents and interests is assigned to a classroom teacher in order to facilitate modifications and extensions of the curriculum.

Electives in a talent or interest area: Courses that are not required but which students may choose to take.

Extracurricular activities: Activities that are available outside of the regular school day such as student council, debate, school newspaper, art clubs, math clubs, etc.

Independent projects: Projects that provide the opportunity to explore a topic of personal interest to the student when the classroom content is already mastered. These may be accompanied by a learning contract that indicates the goals of the learning, how they will be accomplished, and the expected product that serves as evidence of the learning.

Pull-outs: Programming in which students meet once or twice a week over a period of several weeks to a year to participate in specific enrichment activities in their talent areas, usually under the guidance of a gifted and talented resource teacher or other adult.

Social/emotional groups: A school-based discussion and/or counseling program that provides small groups of students with the opportunity to interact and discuss issues that specifically pertain to giftedness. These may be facilitated by a guidance counselor, and/or a member of the GT staff.

Youth options: Opportunity to access college classes once the student has exhausted the curricular opportunities the school has to offer.

Workshops: Programming in which students participate for a block of concentrated time, generally from a half day to a full day.

Level III or Exceptional Star "EX*"– Individualized services may include:

Acceleration-full grade: Students are moved ahead one or more grade levels for their entire schedule.

Early grade-level acceleration: An acceleration strategy in which a student enters kindergarten earlier than the customary age.

Independent study: A programming option in which students pursue an extensive study of an area of interest, or complete a course independently rather than by attending a class. In some cases, students may earn credit for the independent study program. A mentor, often a member of the GT staff, is available for consultation throughout the study.

Individual groups/guidance: An arrangement through which the student receives individual guidance related to issues of talent, including, for example, help with underachievement, college and career planning, and social/emotional issues arising from giftedness.

Mentorship: An option in which students are paired with a teacher, parent, or community volunteer in an area of expertise or interest. It is usually done on a one-to-one basis for an extended period of time to enable a student to develop knowledge and skills in a specific area and/or to develop a product from the experience.

Other services: Any other services that provide for the specific needs of a gifted individual, such as continuous progress curriculum, early graduation, correspondence courses, post-secondary options through Youth Options, and credit by exam.

Building-Level Services

The School District of McFarland provides a part-time GT Resource Teacher in each of our buildings as well as a part-time GT Coordinator to support our gifted/talented students and the staff who work with them. An overview of the kinds of support offered at each level:

Conrad Elvehjem and McFarland Primary School

The G&T Resource Teacher provides support and perspective during conversations about

early entrance and the grade acceleration process. The Resource Teacher conducts regular classroom visits to the first and second grade classes to extend the curriculum and enhance the thinking skills instruction. The Resource Teacher also serves as a resource for teachers, providing ideas and materials to extend the curriculum within the regular classroom. Small pull-out enrichments groups are provided as needed. The process of identifying students with gifts and talents begins at this level.

Waubesa Intermediate School

The students in grades three through five are served by the GT Resource Teacher and department in a variety of ways. Classroom visits by the GT Resource Teacher may focus on higher-level thinking skills or curricular extensions. All students have the opportunity to participate in contests such as *Math 24* and *Yahara River Writers*. Students with identified talents and gifts may be invited to participate in pull-out groups such as *Science Browsers*, *Math Extensions*, *Writing Group*, the *Math Meet* team or discussion groups that focus on social and emotional issues. The GT staff also collaborates with the regular education teachers to meet the needs of the learners through, for example, math enrichment, extensions to the curriculum or acceleration. McFarland also is able to provide opportunities to participate in Northwestern University's Midwest Academic Talent Search, and student programs sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth and UW-Outreach. Identification of students with gifts and talents continues at this level.

Indian Mound Middle School

Gifted and talented students at Indian Mound Middle School are provided with many engaging, enriching and challenging experiences. The GT Resource Teacher collaborates with classroom teachers to extend and enrich the curriculum with higher-level thinking skills, meaningful projects, and products that reflect students' abilities and interests. Identified students may be invited to participate in *Math Meet*, *The Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY)* online learning co-ops and in independent projects. Identified students are also offered participation in the *Midwest Academic Talent Search*. The GT Resource Teacher supports enrichment activities such as the *Math 24* competitions and the *Yahara River Writers' Anthology* project. Identification of students with gifts and talents continues at this level.

McFarland High School

The MHS GT Resource Teacher assists identified high school students with high school and college plan development, independent research, selection of and application for college classes through the state *Youth Options* program, enrichment activities, and summer coursework. Advocacy for curricular modifications, acceleration, and/or alternative course selection is also provided when needed.

Extracurricular Opportunities

All McFarland schools offer a variety of enrichment activities that may be of special interest to highly able students. Among these are the *National Honor Society*, *Forensics*, *Model UN*, *Spelling Bee*, *Geography Bee*, *Destination Imagination*, *Drama*, *Science Olympiad*, *Newspaper*, and *Mathlete*. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are encouraged to request additional information from their school's GT Resource Teacher or guidance counselor.

***"Hide not your talents, they for use were made.
What's a sundial in the shade?" –Benjamin Franklin***

Resources

The following sections provide resources that families of GT students may find helpful. They include:

- the District's process and procedures for accelerating able students through the curriculum
- Wisconsin statutes relating to gifted and talented education
- other definitions from Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction website
- A list of resources, including publications and websites
- a glossary of terms

Questions are welcomed by all Advanced Learner staff as well as by the Director of Instructional Services (608/838-4510).

Acceleration

Acceleration does not mean pushing a child. Acceleration is about appropriate educational planning. It is about matching the level and complexity of the curriculum with the readiness and motivation of the child. It is about letting students soar. Acceleration is about respecting individual differences and the fact that some of these differences merit educational flexibility. Acceleration helps match the level, complexity and pace of the curriculum with student readiness and motivation.

Colangelo, N. et al. (2004). A nation deceived: How schools hold back America's brightest students. Iowa: Belin & Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development.

McFarland Acceleration Policy

Policy Number 345.3

The McFarland Board of Education strongly supports acceleration and requires the staff and administration to take responsibility for moving all students through the curriculum as rapidly as they wish and are able. Acceleration may include single or multiple subject advancement or full-grade acceleration and should be approached with caution. Students may be advanced only after comprehensive evaluation and discussion with administration, guidance counselor, teacher(s), Gifted and Talented staff, and with joint approval of parent(s)/guardian(s).

Acceleration Procedure

The School District of McFarland recognizes the need for educational alternatives for students. This recognition includes consideration of the fact that some students may be candidates for acceleration through an individual course or full grade because they are able to demonstrate advanced proficiency in the subject matter.

Accelerative options can be divided into two categories:

1. Enabling students to study advanced materials earlier than usual (early entrance to any level of schooling, full grade acceleration (grade skipping), concurrent enrollment in two levels of schooling simultaneously, credit by examination, extracurricular programs
2. Curriculum compacting or compression of curriculum into shorter periods of time (telescoping in which two years of study are compacted into one year) or fast-paced classes. The following document presents district policy and formal procedures that will be used to address student acceleration. Acceleration decisions are made on an individual basis and are the responsibility of the building principal, guidance counselor(s), classroom

teacher(s), and Gifted and Talented staff. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are an integral part of the acceleration process. (Center for Talent Development)

Accelerations in the McFarland School District will be coordinated through the building CARE teams

1. Any staff person or parent may make a written request as follows:

Staff making a request will submit a CARE referral to the CARE team. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must be notified.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) making a request should submit a letter to the building administrator for consideration of a student for academic course/grade acceleration. With this request, the building administrator initiates a CARE referral.

2. The CARE team will consist of a combination of the following individuals.

1. Building administrator
2. Pertinent teachers (past, present, resource, special education, etc.)
3. Teachers of course/grade to be skipped
4. Receiving teacher/department
5. Counselor
6. Psychologist
7. Advanced Learner program personnel

CARE team will review the request and if appropriate, will appoint an evaluation team that will include some of the above individuals (see Acceleration Chart).

Written permission from parent(s)/guardian(s) to conduct an evaluation for possible acceleration must be obtained.

3. The evaluation team will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the child to determine intellectual functioning, academic skill levels, and social-emotional adjustment. The specific assessments used will be determined according to subject/grade in consideration and may include the following:

1. Achievement test data
2. Midwest Talent Search scores at the MS/HS level, if available
3. Demonstrated academic excellence in prior course work
4. Demonstrated successful participation in a comparable program outside of the district (summer programs at the university, etc.)
5. Teacher and/or mentor recommendations (See Teacher Recommendation forms – ask for two or more recommendations)

6. Successful completion (80%) on representative course assessments, such as unit tests or tests devised by high school academic departments. The student may prepare for such exams with appropriate materials for the course in consideration. Academic subject assessments should be equivalent to what other students in the course should know.
7. Assessments of intellectual and emotional functioning and Iowa Acceleration Scale when considering full-grade acceleration.

4. Once data have been collected, the CARE team will reconvene to complete the criteria chart and to discuss the evaluation team's findings. Based on the information and input provided from these sources, the CARE team will make a recommendation to the building administrator. The final decision will rest with the building administrator. Parent(s)/guardian(s)/students may appeal the decision to the district administrator and school board.
5. A decision for acceleration may be made conditionally upon fulfillment of a plan for any supplemental activities deemed necessary to make the transition successful. The building level CARE team will devise a written transition plan.
6. The student's parent/s will have an opportunity for a meeting with the building administrator and representatives from the evaluation team.

Updated: July, 2009

***"We can't become what we need to be by remaining what we are."
– Oprah Winfrey***

WI Statutes Regarding Gifted & Talented Education

Statutes

Wisconsin Statute 121.02(1)(t): Each school board shall provide access to an appropriate program for pupils identified as gifted and talented.

Wisconsin Statute: s. 118.35, Wis. Stats. Programs for gifted and talented pupils.

1. In this section, "gifted and talented pupils" means pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities.
2. The state superintendent shall by rule establish guidelines for the identification of gifted and talented pupils.
3. Each school board shall:
 - a) Ensure that all gifted and talented pupils enrolled in the school district have access to a program for gifted and talented pupils.
4. From appropriations under s. 20.255(2)(fy), the department shall award grants to nonprofit organizations, cooperative educational service agencies, and the school district operating under ch. 119 for the purpose of providing advanced curriculum and assessments for gifted and talented pupils.

Administrative Rule 8.01(2)(t)2. Each school district shall establish a plan and designate a person to coordinate the gifted and talented program.

Gifted and talented pupils shall be identified as required in s. **118.35(1)**, Stats. This identification shall occur in kindergarten through grade 12 in general intellectual, specific academic, leadership, creativity, and visual and performing arts. A pupil may be identified as gifted or talented in one or more of the categories under s. **118.35(1)**, Stats.

The identification process shall result in a pupil profile based on multiple measures, including but not limited to standardized test data, nominations, rating scales or inventories, products, portfolios, and demonstrated performance. Identification tools shall be appropriate for the specific purpose for which they are being employed. The identification process and tools shall be responsive to factors such as, but not limited to, pupils' economic conditions, race, gender, culture, native language, developmental differences, and identified disabilities as described under subch. V of ch. 115, Stats.

The school district board shall provide access, without charge for tuition, to appropriate programming for pupils identified as gifted or talented as required under ss. **118.35(3)** and **121.02(1)(t)**, Stats. The school district board shall provide an opportunity for parental participation in the identification and resultant programming.

Related Standards¹¹

Standard(b). Staff development plans should include information to develop awareness and understanding of the needs of gifted and talented pupils as well as materials, resources, and appropriate strategies to deal with those children and youth in the classroom.

Standard(e). Provide guidance and counseling services to gifted and talented students - critically important to overall program success.

Standard(k). District curriculum plans should include objectives, content, and resources, which challenge the most able and most talented children in any classroom.

Standard(n). Many gifted children are at risk and need special attention, counsel, and support to help them realize their potential.

Standard(p). Pupils identified as gifted or talented may require special accommodation in programming which is outside the normal sequence of a course(s) or the standard requirements for graduation.

Standard(s). Data derived from a testing program may be used as part of multiple-criteria identification process.

Definition of Terms Related to the Statutes¹²

Access: An opportunity to study through school district course offerings, independent study, cooperative educational service agencies, or cooperative arrangements between school district boards under s. 66.30, Stats., and post-secondary education institutions (from PI 8.001, Wis. Admin. Code).

Appropriate program: A systematic and continuous set of instructional activities or learning experiences, which expand the development of the pupils identified as gifted and talented (from PI 8.01(2)(t), Wis. Admin. Code).

Gifted and talented: Pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities (from s. 118.35(t), Wis. Stats.).

¹¹ Referenced from: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/cal/caltgtrs.html>

¹² Referenced from: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/cal/caltgttm.html>

Organizations

National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)

1707 L Street NW Suite 550
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-785-4268
Website: www.nagc.org

Wisconsin Association of Talented and Gifted (WATG)

Executive Assistant, Nancy Woodward
1553 Smithfield Dr
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
Phone: 608-318-0671
Fax: 608-318-0725
Email: watg@watg.org
Website: www.watg.org

Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY)

1025 W. Johnson Street
Madison, WI 53706
Phone: 608-271-1617
Fax: 608-271-8080
Email: info@wcaty.org
Website: www.wcaty.org

Periodicals

Exceptional Children and Teaching Exceptional Children, published by Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091. For information, call 703-620-3660.

Gifted Child Today, published every two months. For information, call 1-800-998-2208.

Gifted Child Quarterly, published by National Association for Gifted Children, 1707 L Street, NW Suite 550, Washington DC 20036. For information, call XXXXX

Journal for the Education of the Gifted, a publication of the association for the Gifted, a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. For information, contact: JEG, University of North Carolina Press, PO Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288

Parenting for High Potential, and Gifted Child Quarterly, a quarterly magazine from NAGC. For information, call 202-785-4268

Resources

Daniels, Susan and Michael Piechowski *Living with Intensity*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press, 2009.

Delisle, James and Judy Galbraith, *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1996.

Delisle, James R. Ph.D., and Judy Galbraith, M.A. *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers: How to Meet Their Social and Emotional Needs*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002.

Dweck, Carol *Mindset: How You Can Fulfill Your Potential*. New York, Ballantine Books, 2006.

Galbraith, Judy M.A. *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide For Ages 10 & Under* (Revised & Updated 3rd Edition). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 1996.

Gosfield, Margaret Wayne, Editor **Expert Approaches to Support Gifted Learners Professional Perspectives, Best Practices, and Positive Solutions**
A collaboration with the California Association for the Gifted

Greenspon, T.S. *Freeing our Families from Perfectionism*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2002.

Rimm, Sylvia. *How to Parent So Children Will Learn: Strategies for Raising Happy, Achieving Children*. Great Potential Press, 2008.

Walker, Sally. *The Survival Guide for Parent(s)/guardian(s) of Gifted Kids: How to Understand, Live With, and Stick Up for Your Gifted Child* (rev). Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002.

Webb, James T.; Gore, Janet L; Amend, Edward R. *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press, 2007.

Websites

McFarland School District Advanced Learner Website:

<http://www.mcfarland.k12.wi.us/families/AdvLearner.cfm>

Belin and Blank Center: www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page: www.hoagiesgifted.org

Creative Learning Press: <http://www.creativelearningpress.com/>

Future Problem Solving Program <http://www.fpspi.org/>

**Greater Dane County Advanced Learner Network
International Baccalaureate Organization** <http://www.ibo.org/>

Johns Hopkins University (including Center for Talented Youth (CTY): <http://cty.jhu.edu/>

Mensa for Kids, <http://www.mensaforkids.org/>

Prufrock Press (publisher of *Gifted Child Today* and *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, <http://www.prufrock.com/>

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted), <http://www.sengifted.org/>

Underachievement www.sylviarimm.com

Glossary of Terms

Ability grouping: Small group or whole class grouping of students based on similar abilities.

Academic competitions: Competitions that may include but are not limited to, Odyssey of the Mind, Future Problem Solving, Math Olympiad, Math Counts, Quiz Bowl, Invent America, Westinghouse Science Talent Search, Academic Decathlon.

Acceleration: Acceleration is a strategy used to allow students to move through an educational program at a faster rate or at an age that is younger than typical (*Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration, Belin-Blank Center, University of Iowa*).

Acceleration Path: A path is simply an explanation of how a student may travel through the curriculum. It may be: a listed sequence of courses or a graphic representation of possibilities. An acceleration path defines how a student may move at a more rapid pace.

Advanced classes: Advanced classes offered in any discipline at the middle or high school level. Student participation is based on five criteria including teacher recommendation, academic history, high standardized test scores, strong learning and motivational characteristics and a desire to participate.

AP (Advanced Placement) classes: A nationally recognized program that consists of college-level courses and examinations for high school students. Some colleges award college credit for students who pass the final examinations with a certain score.

APEX: A technological support for advanced placement courses.

Apprentice: A relationship in which an apprentice (i.e., protégé) works with a skilled mentor.

Aptitude: An inclination to excel in the performance of a certain skill.

Asynchrony: A term used to describe disparate rates of intellectual, emotional, and physical rates of growth or development often displayed by gifted children.

Autonomous learner: A self directed student; a learner who makes positive educational decisions which further his/her learning.

Bloom's Taxonomy: Developed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom, the taxonomy is often used to develop curriculum for gifted children. There are six levels with the taxonomy that move from basic to high levels of thinking; they include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Cluster grouping: An arrangement in which a group of students with similar talents are assigned to a classroom teacher in order to facilitate modifications of their curriculum.

College/correspondence Courses/Youth Options: College courses offered to high school (or younger) students either via correspondence, on-site at the college campus or on the high school campus site. Usually, these courses are granted both

college and high school credit.

Compacted courses: A programming strategy that compresses two or more courses in a given subject area into one course or a one-course (or shorter) time frame.

Contracting: Allows students to contract for grades and/or choose from a variety of available project/product options, permitting them to eliminate repetition of material already mastered and move at their own pace, while ensuring mastery of content through enrichment and/or acceleration.

Cooperative learning: A teaching strategy utilizing the concept of cooperative group effort in achieving a goal or purpose. Each participant has a determined role in helping the group reach their goal. Not synonymous with group work.

Course waiver: An option that provides appropriate educational alternatives for students who participate in pre-approved summer courses and who are able to successfully demonstrate mastery of specific course content to advance through the traditional pre-requisite course sequence.

Credit by exam (testing out): A method wherein a student is allowed to "test out" of a course and receive academic credit for the course if mastery is demonstrated.

Curriculum compacting: The process of modifying or stream-lining the regular curriculum in order to eliminate repetition of previously mastered material and to provide time for appropriate enrichment and/or acceleration activities while ensuring mastery of basic skills.

Differentiated curriculum: Curriculum that is modified according to content, pacing, and/or product to meet unique needs of students of different abilities in the regular classroom.

Dual enrollment: A structure whereby students at any grade level, who are allowed to simultaneously take courses at the next school level.

Early graduation: A process that allows students to graduate before what would be the end of their senior year when all high school requirements have been met.

Early entrance: An acceleration strategy whereby students enter kindergarten or first grade earlier than the age usually designated.

Enrichment: Ways of providing curriculum to ensure that students have opportunities to be challenged with more complex, higher level thinking and/or broader based activities instead of regular classroom work (different work, not more work).

Executive Function Disorder: There are 4 behavioral components of executive function: goal formation, planning, carrying out goal-directed plans, and effective performance. Children with executive function problems may have difficulties in one or more of these areas.

Flexible grouping: The grouping of students based on similar interests or abilities. Students' groups may change regularly according to purpose or topic.

Grade-level acceleration: A method whereby students move ahead one or more years beyond the next level in the normal sequence of promotion.

Guidance group for gifted/talented issues: A counseling opportunity that provides small groups of talented students with the time to interact and discuss issues which specifically pertain to giftedness/talents.

Heterogeneous grouping: Grouping students by need, ability, or interest. Although variations between students exist in a homogeneous classroom, the intent of this grouping pattern is to restrict the range of student readiness or needs that a teacher must address.

Independent study for credit: A program that allows a student to pursue an area of interest for school credit. Requires pre-approval.

Independent projects: A programming option that allows a student or small group of students to pursue an area of interest related to a specific curricular area or an individual area of interest.

ILP (Individual Learning Plan): An individualized plan for ensuring assessment, placement, curriculum and instruction of a talented student.

Integrated instruction: A way of organizing curriculum, combining aspects of two or more traditionally separate areas of interest, e.g., coordinating the study of Rome in a history class with the study of mythology in an English class.

Intelligence: The ability to learn, reason, and problem-solve. Debate revolves around the nature of intelligence as to whether it is an innate quality or something that is developed as a result of interactive with the environment or a combination of the two.

Intelligence quotient: A numerical representation of intelligence as measured by a standardized test such as the Stanford Binet, the WISC IV or others. IQ is derived from dividing mental age by the chronological age multiplied times 100. Traditionally, an average IQ is considered to be 100 with a standard deviation of 15.

Internship: A programming option similar to apprenticeship; it may involve more independence.

Learning styles: Preferred way(s) in which individuals interact or process new information across three domains of learning: cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills) and affective (attitude). An individual's preferred learning style is how he/she learns best.

Mentorships: A programming option that provides an opportunity for students to be paired with a teacher, parent, or community volunteer in an area of expertise or interest. It is usually done on a one child-one adult basis for a fair length of time to enable a student to develop her/his knowledge in the specific area and, perhaps, to develop a product from the experience.

Metacognition: Thinking about one's own thinking and learning; knowing how one learns best.

Multiple intelligences: Howard Gardner's theory of intelligence that addresses different types of intelligences, such as verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist) and how they impact instructional methods and product development.

Proficiency: The level of proficiency varies from district to district and state to state but, in general, proficiency is determined through: use of varied assessment tools including content level exams and standardized test scores and a demonstration of 80% to 90% knowledge of a particular course of study. Grades are not the sole indicator.

Project/product options: Allowing student choices in the way they demonstrate acquired knowledge through their personal strengths and interests.

Pull-out program: A program which takes a student out of the regular classroom during the school day for special programming.

Rubric: A chart composed of criteria for evaluating levels of fulfillment of specified criteria. A rubric allows for standardized evaluation according to specified criteria, making grading simpler and more transparent.

Specialty schools: Magnet or charter school specific to an identified area (e.g., technology, art, music).

Subject/content acceleration: Form of acceleration in which the student takes the next level of a particular subject at an earlier age/grade level than what is typically considered normal.

Talent development: Programs, curricula, and services for gifted and talented students that can best meet their needs, promote their achievements in life, and contribute to the enhancement of our society when schools identify students' specific talent strengths and focus educational services on these talents.

Tiered assignments: A differentiated instructional strategy in which all students work toward the same goal, but activities are geared toward each student's level of understanding.

Twice exceptional: A term used to describe a student who is gifted and has another diagnosable condition that requires special services.

Twenty first century skills: Skills considered essential skills for success in today's world such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration.

Underachievement: Students who demonstrate a discrepancy between intellectual ability or potential and their academic achievement.

***"The object of education is to prepare the young
to educate themselves throughout their lives."
-Robert Maynard Hutchins***