



Parent Handbook for Gifted Education Services

**Gloucester County
Public Schools
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Introduction

This guide provides information to parents of identified students receiving Gifted Education Services for Gloucester County Public Schools. This guide addresses:

- a) The GCPS service model,
- b) Differentiation strategies for curriculum, instruction, assessment,
- c) Parents as partners to advocate for effective instructional services.

Division Statement of Philosophy for the Education of Gifted Students

Students need curricula and instructional strategies designed to enhance the quality of their own lives and to help them make significant contributions to society. Gloucester County Public Schools will provide appropriately differentiated educational services in accordance with the abilities and aptitudes of identified students from kindergarten to graduation. Identified students will be provided with opportunities to think abstractly, work at various rates and levels of complexity, and pursue tasks independently while learning with others of like abilities and interests, as well as developing social and academic relationships with students of all abilities and interests.

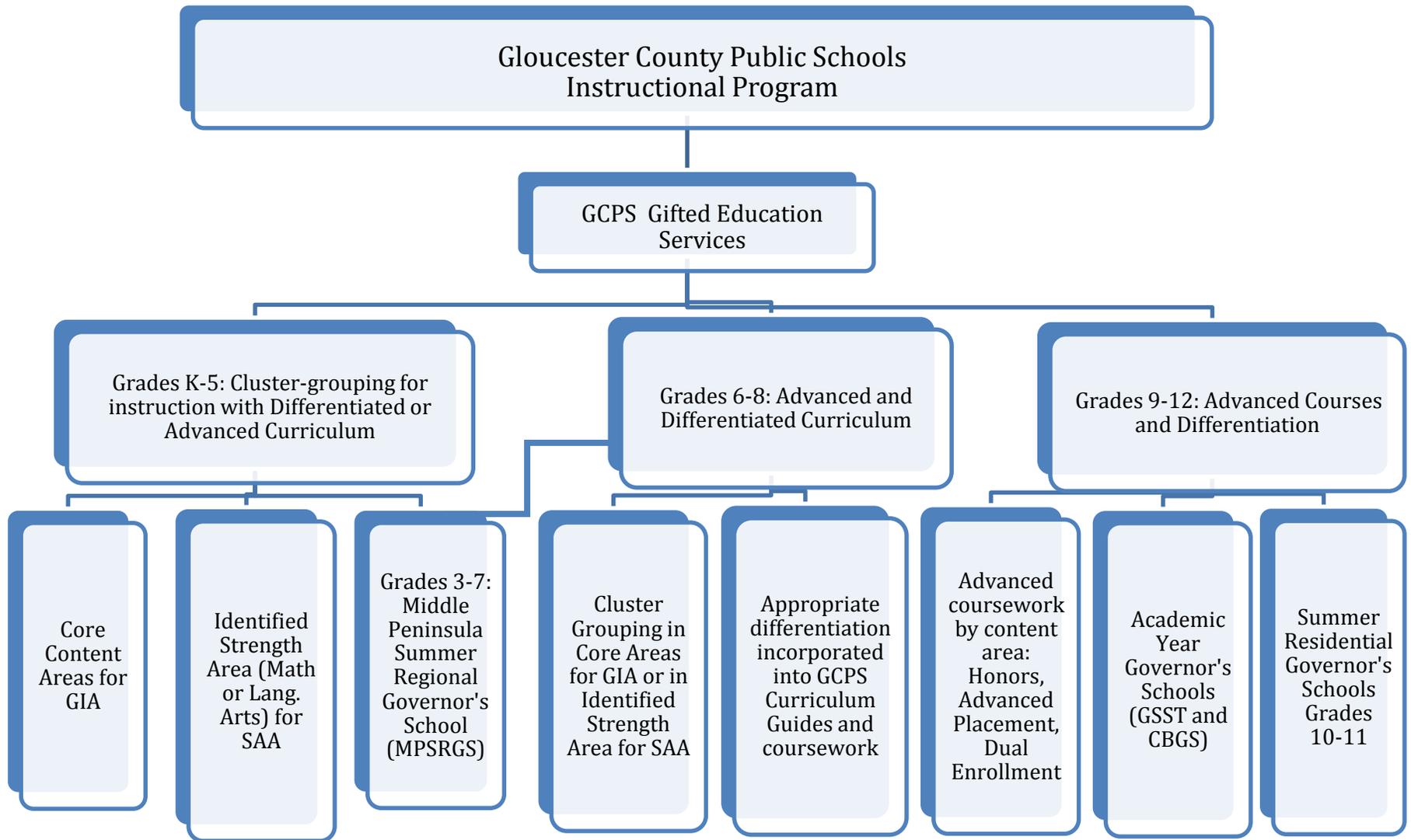
Division Operational Definition of Giftedness

Students who demonstrate eligibility for services in General Intellectual Aptitude or Specific Academic Aptitude in Mathematics or Language Arts exhibit advanced capabilities as assessed through multiple sources of information such as a portfolio of student products, a rating scale of behaviors completed by a parent/guardian, and nationally norm-referenced assessments. Services for these students should be matched to the student's specific area(s) of strength and may include differentiated curriculum and instruction that is engaging, challenging, complex, and is differentiated for depth and pace as appropriate.

Gifted Education Services Model

The model used by Gloucester County Public Schools focuses on providing differentiated curriculum and instructional opportunities throughout the instructional day. Students identified for services are served by the classroom teacher and cluster-grouped with students of similar achievement levels in their area of strength when receiving instruction, e.g., language arts and/or mathematics. Both curriculum and instructional services for identified students should (per State code reference 8VAC20-40-60A.10):

- 1) Be continuous and sequential,
- 2) Provide instructional time with age-level peers, instructional time with intellectual and academic peers, and instructional time to work independently,
- 3) Foster intellectual and academic growth, and
- 4) Include procedures for assessing academic growth.



Identified Students

Students are identified for Gifted Education Services in GCPS in one of two categories:

- 1) General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA, formerly GT; state code 1): “Such students demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate superior reasoning; persistent intellectual curiosity; advanced use of language; exceptional problem solving; rapid acquisition and mastery of facts, concepts, and principles; and creative and imaginative expression across a broad range of intellectual disciplines beyond their age-level peers.” (8VAC20-40-20. Definitions)
- 2) Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA, formerly GL or GM; state code 2): “Such students demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate superior reasoning; persistent intellectual curiosity; advanced use of language; exceptional problem solving; rapid acquisition and mastery of facts, concepts, and principles; and creative and imaginative expression across a broad range of intellectual disciplines beyond their age-level peers in selected academic areas.” (8VAC20-40-20. Definitions) For GCPS, these academic areas are English/Language Arts and mathematics.

Gifted Services

Service options in GCPS are aligned vertically through GCPS Curriculum Guides by content area, which include information about and examples of appropriate differentiated curriculum and instruction. Students identified for gifted education services are offered opportunities to work with age-level peers, work with their intellectual and academic peers, and work independently during the school day and week. Identified students are clustered by grade level for instruction within a school for mathematics and/or language arts, as appropriate for their identified strengths. If a student is identified with a strength in language arts or reading, they are grouped with students with similar strengths and provided appropriate and targeted instruction to improve their knowledge and skills. See section below on Differentiation Strategies for additional examples of how the academic needs of identified students are met during the school day.

Service options at the elementary level address student learning needs in core content areas for GIA students or the area of identified strength for SAA students (e.g., Language Arts or Mathematics). Appropriate services include:

- Flexible grouping for Guided Reading instruction and mathematics, and
- Differentiated strategies used in social studies and science when applicable.

At the middle school level, students receive advanced mathematics or language arts instruction based on division-wide criteria matching student strengths with a challenging instructional program. Differentiated strategies and curriculum are used in social studies and science when applicable.

At the high school level, students have the option of enrolling in a variety of courses that meet their academic needs and interests. Honors level courses are available at all grade levels in all core content areas. Dual-enrollment and Advanced Placement options represent an additional challenging option in grades Eleven and Twelve. All curriculum areas include differentiated options as appropriate for the coursework.

Identified students also have the opportunity to work independently as appropriate according to their developmental readiness and the content area. This information is also included in GCPS Curriculum Guides.

Appropriate Differentiation Strategies to Foster Intellectual and Academic Growth

Connecting a student's area(s) of strength with appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction is the foundation for GCPS Gifted Education Services. With an emphasis on critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving, identified students will have ongoing opportunities for reflection and self-assessment to develop an understanding of the characteristics, demands, and responsibilities of advanced intellectual development and encourage continuous intellectual growth.

Within this challenging curriculum and instruction, differentiation is central to developing students' talents. Differentiation is:

- A philosophy that guides instruction
- How a teacher responds to students' needs
- Facilitated through ongoing assessment and adjustment of instruction
- Determined by student readiness (background knowledge & skills), interest, and/or learning profile (preferences, aptitude)
- Focused on maximum growth and success for all students
- Different/challenging work, not more work (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000)

For General Intellectual students (Local Code: GT, State Code: 1), differentiation strategies should be provided in all core academic courses and used to enhance extended academic courses. For Specific Academic students (Local Codes: GL for services in language arts or GM for services in mathematics, State Code: 2), these strategies should be provided in the student's strength area (e.g., mathematics or language arts) and used to enhance other core and extended academic courses as appropriate.

Accelerated Learning: There are many types of accelerated learning.

- Subject Acceleration is represented by placement in an advanced course ahead of the standard grade-level progression of courses. For GCPS students, this includes accelerated math placement in grades 6-12 and Foreign Language in Grade 8.
- Advanced Content, another example of acceleration, involves the use of advanced reading materials such as texts that are above the student's assigned grade level, or curricular materials, such as the William and Mary Language Arts Curriculum for High-Ability Learners at the middle school level. Other examples include supplementary high school or college-level textbooks, advanced primary source documents, advanced scientific investigations, and pre-Advanced Placement or Advanced Placement resources.
- Full grade-level acceleration is used in GCPS but on a case-by-case basis and decisions are made using a variety of indicators, including standardized assessments and socio-emotional maturity. The instrument that is used to

facilitate this decision is the *Iowa Acceleration Scale*. The process is facilitated by members of the Instructional Team and through a committee meeting at the student's school.

Compacting Curriculum: Curriculum compacting "is a procedure used to streamline the regular curriculum for students who are capable of mastering it at a faster pace". The compacting process has three basic phases: a) determine the goals and objectives of the regular curriculum; b) assess students for previous mastery of these objectives; c) substitute more appropriate (challenging) options" (Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1992). This strategy is used in combination with the Instructional Strategy "pre-testing to determine mastery". The main steps for curriculum compacting can be remembered as (Tieso, 2007):

- **Name It:** Identify the specific learning objective for the upcoming unit or lesson and develop an appropriate pre-assessment
- **Prove It:** Pre-assess all students
- **Change It:** Eliminate practice time or instructional time based on the pre-assessment results; offer as an alternative enrichment or acceleration options within the same content area and keep records of instructional options available to participants.

Choice in the selection of a product encourages creativity and expression while requiring students to demonstrate what they know about, understand, and are able to do within a specific content standard or objective.

Individual Research or Project: These allow students to work independently in an area of interest or strength.

Small Group Projects: These allow students to work with peers with similar interests and abilities.

Simulations are teacher-directed experiences that require application of content-knowledge and high-level reasoning skills. Examples of simulations include model societies/organizations (e.g., Model UN, student governments), some WebQuests, gaming simulations, the Stock Market game, Writer's Workshop (or Author's Tea), Reality Store, model village/town economy, Socratic Seminar, Creative Writing Group, etc.

Pre-assessment to determine mastery is a useful tool for teachers to identify the prior knowledge and experiences for all students related to a specific upcoming unit of study. Pre-assessment to determine mastery (e.g., 85% or 90% as mastery) allows teachers to identify sub-areas of a unit or lesson that a student has mastered and signals a need for alternative or advanced work in that section of the learning plan. This is most often used in combination with Curriculum Compacting. Pre-assessment often focuses on specific areas of knowledge (i.e., what countries participated in WWII?) OR it could be about prerequisite skills (i.e., usage and mechanics in writing, math facts, stages of scientific investigation, map-reading skills, etc.).

Project-based Learning: This is a teacher-guided learning experience that is centered on team collaboration, built around driving questions, connected to real-world issues or

scenarios, and involves an authentic audience at the completion of the project. Examples include: Economic micro-loans, SIRS projects for seniors, STEM or history fair projects, etc.

Problem-based Learning: This is a specific curriculum strategy that uses an ill-structured problem that requires action, decision, or a solution related to the content area being studied. Students learn required information to help them identify and address the problem, incorporating content-based standards while applying content to a situation.

Tiered Assignments is a strategy used for differentiation that addresses a particular standard, key concept, and essential understanding, but allows several pathways for students to arrive at an understanding of these components, based on the students' readiness, interests, or learning profiles (Adams & Pierce, 2006). Tiers are based on assessment of the students' abilities or readiness to handle the content of the lesson. Examples include: leveled reading of text based on students' instructional reading levels, open-ended vs. structured learning activity, strategically selected homework problems in math, etc.

Additional examples of differentiation include guided reading groups where students work with a small group of peers at a similar reading level, differentiation through word study stage and appropriate assignments, choice in writing prompts, open-ended demonstration of learning projects, etc.

Assessing Academic Growth: The Gifted Education Services Semester Report

The Semester Report is a reporting tool to demonstrate to parents how teachers and administrators have matched appropriate instructional strategies and programs with a student's identified area for gifted education services. Semester Reports are provided for students identified for gifted education services in grades K-8. Student performance in grades 9-12 is documented through parent access to Parent Portal and report cards.

Parent Involvement

Parents are important partners for children and schools. Parents of students identified for gifted education services are encouraged to contact the following educators with questions about curriculum, instruction, assessment, and enrichment opportunities:

- Child's classroom teacher(s)
- School administrator(s)
- School Gifted Contact/Lead Teacher (one per Elementary school, one per grade level at Page & Peasley)
- Office of Governor's Schools/Gifted Education (804-693-4795 or gifted.services@gc.k12.va.us)

Gifted Advisory Committee

The GAC is an organization established by the Virginia regulations for gifted education (8VAC20-40-60, Section B). The purpose of the GAC is: (i) to review annually the local plan for the education of gifted students, including revisions, and (ii) to determine the extent to which the plan for the previous year was implemented. The findings of the annual program effectiveness and the recommendations of the advisory committee shall be submitted annually in writing to the division superintendent and the school board.

The GAC meets a minimum of three times a year and members need to commit to attending at least two meetings. Members commit to serving a two-year term. Meetings will be held on the following dates, 6:30 PM, at the Thomas Calhoun Walker Education Center: Thursday, October 15, 2015; Thursday, March 10, 2016; Thursday, May 5, 2016.

2015-2016 School Gifted Contacts

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Petsworth	
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Peasley Middle School *school team decides how to divide the duties for Gifted Services Contacts; 1 contact per team splitting one supplement per grade-level	Page Middle School *school team decides how to divide the duties for Gifted Services Contacts; 1 contact per grade-level team
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