



# Gifted and Talented Handbook

## **Introduction**

The Paramus School District is dedicated to meeting the needs of our high achievers and has created an environment to address our student's unique learning styles through our Gifted and Talented and Enrichment Programs.

Identification begins at the elementary level and is ongoing, by student performance, achievement test scores, and teacher recommendations. We address the needs through differentiated instruction in the classroom, and by programs developed by elementary media specialists/Enrichment teacher(s) and an Enrichment/G&T teacher at the middle school level. With the guidance and assistance of our administrators, teachers receive professional development and support in the classroom to meet the needs of identified students.

## **Philosophy**

Our goals in Paramus is to promote innovative thinking by enhancing knowledge to improve our world through:

- Critical thinking
- Project-based units with a student-driven approach
- Developing digital literacy, the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and express information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills
- Curriculum-aligned or related units of study
- Real-world problem-solving

## **Definition of Giftedness**

Paramus Schools defines a gifted student as one “who possesses or demonstrates a high level of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.”

[New Jersey Student Learning Standards](#)

## Identification for Inclusion in Program

Identification begins at the elementary level and is ongoing using multiple measures of assessment, of varying kinds, gathered at multiple points in time. **No singular measure** will automatically include or exclude a student from the program.

Eligibility criteria include:

- Standardized norm-based assessment of aptitude (CogAT Complete) at or above the gifted range, as compared to their local peers;
  - CogAT Complete assesses general, abstract reasoning skills while providing reliable, valid, and accurate data for all students, regardless of language, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status.
  - All students are administered the CogAT Complete in the fall of Third Grade.
- Standardized norm-based assessments of student growth and performance (Link It! Benchmark Assessments, NJSLA)
- Alternative test data, where appropriate;
- Student performance and products
- Teacher, Parent, and Student Feedback

We address the needs through differentiated instruction in the classroom and by programs developed by elementary media specialists and an Enrichment teacher at the middle school level.

Please take a moment to examine the charts below which list some differences to help you distinguish between a bright child and a gifted learner (Szabo, 1989L Winebrenner, 2001). The lists below do not describe all the traits and attributes of gifted children, as all children are diverse in their characteristics; however, it is a tool for distinguishing characteristics.

| <b>Bright Child</b>   | <b>Gifted Learner</b>   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knows the answers</li> <li>2. Is interested</li> <li>3. Is attentive</li> <li>4. Has good ideas</li> <li>5. Works hard</li> <li>6. Answers the questions</li> <li>7. Top group</li> <li>8. Listens with interest</li> <li>9. Learns with ease</li> <li>10. 6-8 repetitions for mastery</li> <li>11. Understands ideas</li> <li>12. Enjoys peers</li> <li>13. Grasps the meaning</li> <li>14. Completes assignments</li> <li>15. Is receptive</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asks the questions</li> <li>2. Is highly curious</li> <li>3. Is mentally and physically involved</li> <li>4. Has wild silly ideas</li> <li>5. Plays around, yet tests well</li> <li>6. Discusses in detail; elaborates</li> <li>7. Beyond the group</li> <li>8. Shows strong feelings and opinions</li> <li>9. Already knows</li> <li>10. 1-2 repetitions for mastery</li> <li>11. Constructs abstractions</li> <li>12. Prefers adults</li> <li>13. Draws inferences</li> <li>14. Initiates projects</li> <li>15. Is intense</li> </ol> |

(Sazbo, 1989)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b><u>High-Achieving</u></b><br/> Knows the answers<br/> Has good ideas<br/> Commits time and effort to learning<br/> Answers questions<br/> Is a top student<br/> Understands ideas<br/> Listens with interest<br/> Is pleased with their own learning<br/> High achievement, high growth</p> | <p><b><u>Gifted</u></b><br/> Asks the questions<br/> Has original ideas<br/> Performs with ease<br/> Offers detailed and unique responses<br/> Is intense<br/> Manipulates information<br/> Shows strong feelings and opinions<br/> Is highly self-critical<br/> High achievement, low growth<br/> (Winebrenner, 2001)</p> |
|---|--|

### Program Overview

The Paramus Schools Enrichment Program includes units to foster and develop:

- Communication and expression of ideas
- Innovation
- Creativity

- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Engineering
- Inventing and exploring solutions for a better world
- STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, math)

Using a tiered approach in elementary schools, a combined framework of tiered services and accelerated courses in middle schools, and a diverse offering of honors, advanced placement, and dual enrollment opportunities at the high school level, students can stimulate their academic growth in their areas of strength. The goal of our gifted and talented program is not to label a student, but rather to recognize and respond to their ever-changing educational needs.

The district's gifted and talented program is guided by the National Association of Gifted Children's (NAGC) definition of giftedness: "Students with gifts and talents perform - or have the capability to perform at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains." This is consistent with the New Jersey Department of Education's definition put forth in the New Jersey Administrative Code "Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act" 6A:8-3.1(a)(5): Gifted and talented "means a student who possesses or demonstrates a high level of ability in one or more content areas when compared to his chronological peers in the school district and who requires modifications of his educational program if he is to achieve in accordance with his capabilities."

### **Program Entrance/Exit Procedures**

Elementary students in Grade 4 are not automatically enrolled in the middle school Enrichment program. Students are reevaluated using the Middle School Enrichment Matrix and will continue to be reevaluated each year with the most current data available for eligibility.

Students may be exited from the Gifted and Talented Program if the student displays any

of the following:

- Behavior inhibiting the learning of others
- Not meeting the requirements in the regular education content areas
- Not performing on a level of expectation in the Enrichment Classes

A parent may send the Enrichment Teacher a request for their child to exit the Gifted and Talented/Enrichment program in writing.

## **Complaint Process**

An individual who believes the district has not complied with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-34 et seq. may file a complaint with the Board of Education.

Please send an email to the Superintendent of Schools and Business Administrator/Board of Education Secretary including the following information:

- Name of person filing complaint
- Address
- Phone Number
- Name of student
- Student's school and grade
- Description of the nature of the violation against N.J.S.A. 18A:35-34 (Gifted & Talented Education Programs)
- Name(s) and titles of any district personnel you

## **Resources for Parents/Teachers**

[National Association of Gifted Children:](#) NAGC is the nation's leading organization focused on the needs of gifted and talented children. Dedicated to uplifting and empowering those who support children with advanced abilities, NAGC provides energizing professional learning, impactful research, and inspiring advocacy to ensure all children have equitable opportunities and support to develop their gifts and talents.

[New Jersey Association of Gifted Children:](#) The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children is a champion for gifted children. They are passionate advocates promoting

programs, networks, and legislative actions to meet the needs of these students statewide.

**[Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted:](#)** SENG empowers families and communities to guide gifted and talented individuals to reach their goals.

**[The Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\):](#)** The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the success of children and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents.

**[The Association for the Gifted \(TAG\):](#)** The Association for the Gifted (TAG), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), embraces and supports the needs of students with gifts and talents, focusing on multi-exceptional and other diverse learners, through advocacy, professional learning, and resources.

**[CogAT Parent Information - Google Slides](#)**

**[CogAT \(riverside insights.com\)](#)**

**[The Gifted Child Society](#)**

**[Montclair University Summer Program](#)**

**[Applied Digital Skills](#)**

**[Khan Academy](#)**

**[Mensa for Kids](#)**

**[Kids Discover Online](#)**

**[Climate Action Project](#)**

**[Institute of Competition Sciences](#)**

**[World Book Discover](#)**

**[Eduporium](#)**

**[Wonderopolis](#)**

**[Code.org](#)**