

# Santa Ana Unified School District

## *Gifted and Talented Education Program*

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*SAUSD's administrators, teachers, and parents recognize that gifted and talented students possess unique characteristics. The goal of the SAUSD GATE program contains the following elements:*

- Identification procedures that are diverse, extensive, and sensitive to students from a wide range of cultures, races, and ethnic groups
- Differentiated and individualized curricular experiences
- Appropriate services to meet the individual needs of gifted students.
- Knowledgeable persons who can plan and implement appropriate programs and the best practices
- Parent, professional, and student participation in the initiation, implementation, and evaluation of the gifted program

# Characteristics of “Gifted” Students

Gifted students generally demonstrate extraordinary talent or ability in the areas of academics, visual and performing arts, intellectual capacity, or leadership. The characteristics of an individual gifted student may include one or more of the following:

- ❖ **Observant**....they “see more,” “get more,” notice changes around them
- ❖ **Curious**....they investigate discrepancies or happenings, are attracted to the unusual
- ❖ **Questioning**....they often reject “pat” answers, want to know “Why?”
- ❖ **Logical**....they see cause and effect relationships and connections
- ❖ **Critical**....they make judgments, strive for perfection, and may harshly evaluate themselves and their work
- ❖ **Expressive**....they use advanced vocabulary and talk a lot; can dominate discussions
- ❖ **Inventive**....they reason in clever, unique ways to find original solutions to problems; may dislike routine
- ❖ **Versatile**....they may participate in lots of activities and adapt readily to new situations
- ❖ **A Quick Study**....they memorize facts and procedures quickly
- ❖ **Persistent**....they stay with a task which is challenging; can become intensely focused
- ❖ **Sensitive**....they may show sympathy for others and express their own feelings
- ❖ **Perceptive**....they see the essence of a situation

Each gifted and talented student is unique, with different educational, emotional, and social needs. **Typically, all students are not gifted in all areas and should not be expected to excel in every subject and activity.** It is important that a student’s characteristics be considered in planning individual programs and guiding student progress.

# Questions and Answers

***Can a gifted child have learning disabilities too? Where can I get information?***

Some gifted children have learning disabilities such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, and visual or auditory processing difficulties. It is sometimes difficult to identify the special needs of these children because they often use their high abilities to cope with and mask their learning disabilities. For more information, access ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education at [www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm](http://www.cec.sped.org/ericec.htm).

***Are there any other enrichment activities beyond the classroom in which my child can be involved?***

Individual schools offer various extended activities in which GATE students can participate. These activities promote unique learning and interests of gifted students:

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pentathlon                     | Math/Science Olympiad             |
| Decathlon                      | Visual & Performing Arts Programs |
| Science Fairs                  | PAL Clubs                         |
| CA Scholastic Federation (CSF) | Student Leadership Councils       |
| Kiwanis Bowl                   | UCI Talent Search                 |

Check with your child’s teacher or school administrator to find out what is offered at your school.



## Resources

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| California Association for the Gifted<br><a href="http://www.cagifted.org">www.cagifted.org</a> | National Association for Gifted Children<br><a href="http://www.nagc.org">www.nagc.org</a> |
| Hoagies<br><a href="http://www.hoagiesgifted.org">www.hoagiesgifted.org</a>                     | California Department of Education<br><a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov">www.cde.ca.gov</a>   |



## Contact Us

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## Questions and Answers

### ***What is a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program?***

In California, public schools may apply for educational funds to assist in providing appropriate learning opportunities for those students identified as gifted and talented. A basic gifted program will include: testing to identify gifted students; grouping students within a class or for all or part of the school day by ability; providing curriculum that is challenging and allows continuous progress; developing social and emotional skills; training for teachers and administrators in the education of gifted learners; providing counseling and support for gifted students who are at-risk; and involving parents in the planning and evaluation of GATE programs. A written plan defining how the district will meet the needs of gifted children as articulated in the state GATE standards must be submitted to the California Department of Education (CDE) for approval for one to three years. To obtain a copy of the GATE Law, and/or a copy of the standards, link to CDE from [www.CAGifted.org](http://www.CAGifted.org), call CDE at 916-323-5124 or 916-323-5831 or go to [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov).

### ***How is GATE instruction different from what the general education student is receiving?***

All students in the Santa Ana Unified School District receive comprehensive instruction in the basic skills and the core curriculum with an emphasis on meeting the district's rigorous and challenging academic standards. The GATE Program applies the state-adopted approach of Depth and Complexity to enhance and make the core curriculum different. Depth and Complexity is used to differentiate learning opportunities that stress the complexity of subject matter, develop greater depth in thinking and reasoning skills, and provide for the creation of new ideas and new products. GATE instruction emphasizes the use of multiple resources and research. Students create unique products that apply higher level critical thinking skills and involve purposeful communication.

### ***How do I find out if my child is gifted?***

Some children are able to concentrate for long periods of time at a very young age or demonstrate their gifts and talents by using a large vocabulary, constant questioning, creativity, and/or exceptional ability in a particular subject area. Differences commonly found between most gifted learners and their age peers are advanced comprehension, a faster pace of learning and a need for schoolwork that provides activities which are both complex and fast-paced. Parents should consult their child's teacher, school counselor, or the district GATE department for additional information.

## Objectives of the GATE Program

### **Program Design**

The GATE Program provides a comprehensive continuum of services and program options responsive to the needs, interests, and abilities of its students. The program is managed by full-time district coordinators for the elementary and secondary level, as well as a site coordinator at each school. The GATE Program provides services for students in grades 3-12 who have been identified in the intellectual, high achievement, specific academic or visual and performing arts categories. Students in grades K-1 are not formally identified, but are challenged to their highest potential. Depending upon the number of identified GATE students, elementary schools serve gifted students during the school day via the "cluster" model, with approximately 5-10 identified gifted students placed in a general education class. Schools with high numbers of identified students offer special day classes with the majority of the students in the class being formally identified. In the secondary classrooms, gifted students are scheduled into honors-level and Advanced Placement classes. Teachers use the grade level standards and core curriculum for all students, as well as differentiated strategies, to challenge GATE students to their highest potential.



### **Staff Development**

Many gifted students begin the school year already knowing much of what will be taught by the teacher that year. Because of this, the GATE Department believes it is necessary to provide staff development to teachers which prepares them to differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of GATE learners. The GATE Department adheres to the definition of differentiation described by the California Association for the Gifted, "Adapting the curriculum to meet the unique needs of learners by making modifications in complexity, depth, and pacing." (*Meeting the Challenge*). Staff development is designed to provide the teacher with the knowledge and tools to differentiate the core curriculum or instruction so that students who have already mastered the material continue to progress and so that students who have a particular interest in an area can pursue it in greater depth or in a personalized way" (*Differentiating the Core Curriculum and Instruction to Provide Advanced Learning Opportunities*.) Staff development is designed to help teachers differentiate curriculum through content, process, resource, and product, and to use various instructional models and strategies that are aligned with and extend the state academic content standards and curriculum frameworks. Staff development is also provided to teachers,

(continued)

## *Staff Development* (continued)

administrators, psychologists, and counselors which support the social and emotional development of gifted learners to increase responsibility, self-awareness, and other issues of affective development in gifted individuals. GATE teachers are encouraged to participate in various staff development opportunities which include but are not limited to: district sponsored staff development days provided by a cadre of trained SAUSD GATE teachers, consultants hired by the GATE Department, state and local GATE conferences, and summer GATE academies. Parents are also notified of opportunities and encouraged to attend District GATE Parent Nights and conferences to learn about the affective and curricular needs of their children.



## **Identification**

The district's identification procedures are equitable, comprehensive, and ongoing. Teacher and parent workshops addressing the characteristics of gifted students prepare teachers and parents to recognize unique talents and gifts. In grades K-1, teachers are encouraged to refer students to a pre-GATE program. These students are not formally tested, but the schools take into consideration their classroom placement with other high ability students. Formal assessment begins with screening of all second graders. Parent permission is required to test students using the Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test (NNAT), an instrument that is sensitive to language and cultural differences. Students in grades 3-12 are administered the NNAT by teacher referral and parent request. To obtain the most accurate assessment of the student being considered for identification, an Eligibility and Placement Committee reviews a variety of informational data: teacher recommendation, student writing proficiency, grades, achievement test scores, and NNAT scores. Nontraditional methods for effective identification of English learners are also considered, such as rapid gain in English acquisition and standardized test scores. Parents are notified of their child's acceptance or denial into the GATE Program and must give signed consent for their child to participate in the program. A beginning of the year orientation regarding student placement and participation is offered to the parents by the district coordinators. Once a child is identified, schools attempt to place the student in one of the district's program design options with teachers who are trained in differentiating the curriculum and who will challenge them to their highest potential.

## **Association for Gifted and Talented Education** **(AGATE) Parent Advisory Group**

The Gifted and Talented Education Department meets regularly throughout the year with the Association for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE) Advisory Committee. Members have an important role in the decision making process of educational programs designed to meet the needs of the gifted learner. We urge you to seriously consider becoming an active member of this organization whose purposes are:

1. To involve parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Gifted and Talented Education Program
2. To promote parent education regarding giftedness
3. To act as a resource for sharing and disseminating information about GATE programs that benefit gifted children
4. To advocate for the continued existence and improvement of gifted programs
5. To serve as a support group for parents
6. To promote extracurricular educational activities for gifted children
7. To create community support and business partnerships for GATE

Educator and parent involvement in the schools is a key factor in the improvement of our children's education. The Santa Ana Unified School District is a leader in advocating involvement in all aspects of education. The Board of Education, the Superintendent and staff strongly believe that positive gains result from educators and parents who take an active interest in their schools. If you are interested in participating on the AGATE Committee, contact the SAUSD GATE Department or your child's school site coordinator. You can make a difference in the quality of your child's education.

### **Glossary of GATE Terms:**

*Accelerated Learning:* Pacing students through the curriculum at a rate commensurate with their advanced ability, allowing them to go as far and as fast as they want to go.

*Curriculum Compacting:* A process used to give students validation for what they already know. It allows students who demonstrate mastery to omit portions of assigned curriculum, or to move more quickly through curriculum than would be typical. Students are thus able to "buy time" which can be used to accelerate content or to pursue enrichment activities while the unit is being taught to other students.

*Differentiation:* Adapting the curriculum to meet the unique needs of learners by making modifications in complexity, depth, and pacing. It may include selecting, rather than covering all, the curriculum areas dependent on the individual needs of students.

*Flexible Grouping:* Grouping students by need, interest, or ability. Groups can be formed and reformed to meet varied instructional purposes. All students need to participate in both homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping patterns.