

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR GIFTED LEARNERS

AVON MAITLAND
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

A Publication of Learning Services

Information for Parent/Guardian

The Child

The Ministry of Education for the Province of Ontario define gifted learners as, “those who have an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability such that differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program are required.” Special Education: A Guide for Educators (2002). Gifted learners represent a very small percentage of the school population and by virtue of their intellectual exceptionality, are subject to the policies and procedures that govern all Special Education students.

Gifted Learner Characteristics

Advanced Cognitive Abilities

Gifted students **generally**:

- process, retain, and recall information quickly and easily;
- display an advanced, often technical, vocabulary;
- conceptualize and generalize easily;
- thrive on complexity;
- manipulate information, extending responses to a greater depth;
- think in the abstract and readily identify cause-effect relationships.

Advanced Intellectual Curiosity

Gifted students **generally**:

- are highly inquisitive, questioning, and intuitive;
- explore varied intellectual activities;
- enjoy the pursuit of open-ended issues and problems;
- have a wide range of interests;
- have keen powers of observation and an eagerness to examine the unusual.

Heightened Sensitivity and Creativity

Gifted students **generally**:

- possess strong creative and imaginative abilities;
- apply concepts in creative ways, discusses in detail and elaborates;
- generate inventive ideas and products;
- see unusual and diverse relationships;
- dislike routine and drill;
- have a keen sense of humour that is often off-beat.

Heightened Motivation

When their interest is sparked, gifted students **generally**:

- become absorbed in certain topics, focusing their attention intensely on those topics to the exclusion of other demands;

- are task-committed, goal-oriented, and self-directed;
- exhibit inconsistent commitment to teacher assigned tasks – completion may be in a haphazard manner;
- work efficiently and usually independently;
- lose awareness of time due to the in-depth investigation of an individual pursuit;
- engage in daydreaming about topics of interest;
- express frustration with inactivity, absence of progress, or repetition;
- tend toward perfectionism – may present as highly critical of self.

Extended Affective Capacities

Gifted students **generally**:

- display evidence of uneven development of their cognitive and emotional abilities;
- become passionate about their beliefs;
- are unusually sensitive to the critical reactions and responses of others – may minimize own abilities;
- are inspired by interaction with their intellectual peers, and may become complacent or unmotivated when they have no opportunities for such interaction, and may prefer interaction with adults;
- display heightened sensitivity to criticism and a high level of vulnerability to peer-group rejection or bullying – may feel a sense of alienation from peers;
- demonstrate leadership abilities – may tend to dominate discussions and group work.

The Formal Identification

Identification of gifted learners must include:

- Teacher observation/checklist
- Informal assessment, and when inconclusive
- Formal assessment

An Identification Placement and Review Committee completes the process and confirms appropriate program placement.

The Program Structure

All classrooms in AMDSB work to create positive, inclusive learning environments where all students feel a sense of belonging and their outcomes are leveraged through new pedagogies and embedded technologies in order to engage students in authentic tasks.

For Grades K, 1, 2, 3:

- Program is based upon Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies within the regular classroom

For Grades 4, 5, and 6:

- Out-of-School Gifted Withdrawal Program
- One day per week
- Provides opportunities to interact with peers of similar intellectual ability
- Central locations (Stratford Northwestern Public School and Seaforth Public School)
- Program provided by teachers of the “Out of School Gifted Program”

- Involves a diverse selection of topics
- Participation is optional
- Locations depend upon topic

For Grades 11, 12

- Program uses DI and UDL strategies
- Student pathways focus on individual strengths, needs and learning preferences recognizing each student has their own unique pattern of learning and can succeed

For Teachers:

Staff is available, upon request, to provide in-service, program recommendations, and additional information.

Programming for all gifted learners provides opportunities:

- To be challenged intellectually to maximize learning potential
- To develop an understanding of personal giftedness
- To explore the Student Outcomes of:
 - creativity
 - critical thinking
 - communication
 - collaboration
 - problem solving
- As well as:
 - organization skills
 - time management strategies
- To pursue their interests/talents within a framework
- To experience differentiated instruction through:
 - content, process, product
 - self and peer evaluation

The Parents

- Gifted learners may expect and demand perfect performances and be frustrated with less than perfect results. Parents may assist children to set realistic goals for themselves through cooperative planning.
- Through collaboration with the child's teacher(s), develop an understanding of the program objectives and share learning achievements and/or concerns.