

**Riverview Gardens School District
Gifted Education Program (REACH)
Overview**

Core Beliefs

Gifted students are unique and are as different from one another as they are from the population as a whole.

- Gifted children may evidence uneven development in intellectual, emotional and physical domains.
- Gifted children have potential that is extraordinary and idiosyncratic.
- Gifted students are generally not gifted in all areas and may not be “straight-A” students.

Gifted students exist in all cultural groups, within all economic levels, among populations with other special needs, and in all areas of human endeavor.

- Gifted students may be twice exceptional, having gifts as well as disabilities.
- Gifted students evidence different characteristics depending on their cultural, educational and economic backgrounds.

Gifted students learn differently and require special educational experiences in order to grow academically and achieve their highest potential.

- Gifted students need instruction tailored to their unique abilities, interests and learning styles.
- Gifted students need an academically challenging curriculum that is both accelerated and enriched.
- Gifted students need to explore many fields of study, to “fall in love” with ideas, and to study subjects in depth.
- Gifted students need to engage in learning that requires persistence and task commitment.
- Gifted students need the opportunity to use and develop their creativity.

Gifted students, because of heightened intellectual and social-emotional intensities, need support and encouragement from individuals who recognize, validate and nurture their giftedness.

- Gifted students are a special needs population and can be “at risk.”
- Gifted students benefit from the expertise of both classroom teachers and specially trained gifted education teachers.
- Gifted students benefit from contact with intellectual peers and mentors.
- Gifted students benefit from parents who help them achieve meaningful social, emotional and academic goals.
- Gifted students are children first and need to be valued for who they are.

Philosophy

Recognition of the special needs of gifted students has a longstanding tradition in Missouri. Legislation states, “School districts are expected to provide programs of instruction suitable for the full range of student ability, from handicapped and disadvantaged learners to those who are academically advanced.” “Each district should, therefore, identify gifted and talented students at all levels and provide differentiated instruction suitable for their levels of intellectual and social development.”

The Riverview Gardens School District is committed to an educational program that recognizes the unique needs, gifts, and talents of gifted students. Gifted students possess extraordinary abilities to think both critically and creatively. Riverview Gardens recognizes the significance of providing a differentiated learning environment which allows gifted students the opportunity to grow and learn at a pace that is commensurable to their ability. Gifted students also need time with their intellectual peers apart from the regular school program for further intellectual and affective development.

Gifted students should be challenged with learning opportunities that require critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, independent study, and exploration. They should also be encouraged to become risk takers. When engaged in learning, gifted students can maximize their strengths, maintain passion for learning and have the opportunity to contribute to the strength and vitality of our schools, district and community. We believe it is essential to help gifted students become autonomous learners with a lifelong desire to maximize their potential and become constructive contributors to society.

Learner Outcomes

As a result of offering differentiated curriculum and personalized support, gifted students will have the opportunity to achieve district goals at the level commensurate with their ability. They will also be challenged to apply their knowledge and skills in complex and advanced ways so that they can continue to be productive citizens to their community.

Goals to address in the performance areas include:

Students will:

1. Acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze and apply information and ideas.
2. Acquire the knowledge and skills to recognize and solve problems.
3. Acquire the knowledge and skills to use critical thinking and logic to support ideas and explain relationships.
4. Acquire the knowledge to communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom.
5. Acquire the knowledge and skills to make decisions and act as responsible members of society.

Goals to address in the content areas:

Students will:

1. Acquire a solid foundation in the disciplines of communication arts, mathematics, science and social studies.
2. Operate at advanced levels within these disciplines and apply the knowledge to produce work that reflects individuality and creativity and is advanced in relation to other students of similar age and experience.

The goals of the REACH Program are to be addressed in the following three interrelated areas:

Cognitive – Promote cognitive skills through:

- Research
- Technology
- Problem-solving
- Critical thinking

Creative – Develop creative skills through:

- Divergent thinking
- Creative thinking
- Creative drawing and art activities

Affective – Cultivate students' understanding of self and others through:

- Personal and social responsibility
- Increased self-esteem
- Interpersonal group activities
- Leadership training
- Moral and ethical questioning

Content and Processes Related to Equity, Technology, Research and Workplace Readiness Skills

Throughout the gifted curriculum, teachers integrate appropriate content and processes related to gender equity, racial/ethnic equity, application of technology, research strategies, and workplace readiness skills to ensure that students of the school district successfully demonstrate understanding and application of the Show Me Standards, Grade Level Expectations and Depth of Knowledge levels.

Examples of integration of those content and processes are listed below.

Equity: In the unit on the Harlem Renaissance, lessons include a focus on minority and female writers and the challenges they encountered in being recognized for their contributions to American literature.

Research: Students conduct research on chosen topics, demonstrating knowledge of primary and secondary sources, and applying the information they find to an individual or group project. For example in the unit on the Rainforest, students use primary and secondary sources to research and develop an original rainforest product and marketing plan.

Technology: In the unit on College and Career Planning, students will use computer-assisted design software, Power Point, Microsoft Publisher and Excel to develop plans for a college tour and a personalized four year college and/or career plan.

Workplace Readiness: The unit on Entrepreneurship entitled “The J.O.U.R.N.E.Y.”, which stands for Just Our Understanding Redirecting Entrepreneurship for Youth, provides students information about the business world and utilizes community partnerships. Students are also afforded the opportunity to create resumes and shadow various career professionals in the community.

In order to accomplish these goals, the following strategies will be used:

The learning environment:

- Is student-centered
- Encourages independent research
- Promotes personal goal setting
- Is multi-disciplinary and multi-sensory
- Is intellectually challenging
- Provides a variety of hands-on learning experiences
- Promotes equity awareness
- Enhances workplace readiness skills

The teaching process:

- Emphasizes higher level thinking and questioning (DOK)
- Is investigatory and experimental
- Allows for diverse learning styles and divergent products
- Provides a variety of independent, small and whole group learning experiences
- Incorporates technology
- Employs differentiated instruction

Definition of Terms:

Academically Gifted – students with superior ability or aptitude for academic learning.

Acceleration – the process of moving a student through curriculum and/or grades at a more rapid rate than grade level peers.

Affective – relating to feelings and emotions.

Alignment – how a curriculum connects across grade levels.

Ascending Levels of Intellectual Demand – the process that escalates one or more facets of the curriculum in order to match a learner's profile and provide appropriate challenge and pacing.

Cognitive – that mental functioning involving involved in perceiving, knowing, and understanding.

Compacting – the instructional practice of assessing students' prior knowledge and skills and modifying and/or eliminating curriculum that would be repetitious or could be learned at an accelerated rate. Pre-assessments are an essential component of the compacting process.

Cluster Grouping – refers to the top five to eight in a class or grade level being placed with a facilitator best qualified to teach gifted children.

Critical Thinking – thinking that proceeds on the basis of careful evaluation of premises and evidence and comes to conclusions as objectively as possible through the consideration of all pertinent factors and the use of valid procedures from logic.

Curriculum – a set of organized experiences appropriate for learners that are written down and adopted for use in a school district (gifted curriculum would include learning experience specifically developed for gifted children).

Cultural Enrichment – supplying aspects of the performing arts such as music, art, drama, dance and creative writing.

Curriculum Mapping – a strategy for describing the relationships of major concepts in an interdisciplinary unit or between subjects or grade levels.

Differentiated Instruction – a teacher's response to varying learner characteristics, such as students' readiness, interests, preferred styles and learning rate. Most commonly, the focus of differentiation efforts involves adjustments to content, process, products, and the learning environment.

Disadvantaged - an impoverished range of experience.

Enrichment – involves offering topics, experiences and resources that go beyond the regular curriculum to provide greater challenge and opportunities for depth of learning.

Gifted - a child whose mental age is considerably higher than his actual age compared with children in general population.

Formative Assessment – the initial and ongoing process of gathering and analyzing information regarding student learning. Formative assessment helps teachers modify and improve student learning during the time a

unit or segment of curriculum is being taught. Examples include classroom questions, observations, and drafts of papers.

Honors/AP Classes - a secondary level course specifically designed to be advanced in content, process, and product. Traditionally, students who meet prerequisite criteria are accepted into these courses. Honors / AP classes should be available for, but not limited to, identified gifted students.

Integrated or Interdisciplinary Curriculum – curriculum that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic or experience.

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) – a measure for expressing level of mental development in relations to chronological age; obtained by dividing the mental age (as measured by a general intelligence test) by chronological age and multiplying by 100.

Measurable Learner Objectives – objectives that describes expected learner outcomes in terms of observable learner behavior. It includes a clear statement of the most important content and skills to be learned and the learning level that will be assessed in the course or unit. Objectives should relate directly to the district's goals for graduates, should incorporate ideas from appropriate Missouri Show-Me Standards, and should be cross-referenced or aligned with those standards.

Performance Tasks/Projects/Assessments – assessments that are authentic and mirror issues and problems faced by adults; range in complexity from short-term tasks to long-term, multifaceted projects; generally allows students to personalize the task.

Problem-Solving - a process employed to discover or educe new relationships among things observed or sensed.

Prompts – open-ended questions or problems that require students to engage in critical thinking and prepare a response or product.

Scope – refers to the comprehensiveness of a curriculum.

Self-Concept – the individual's perception of himself as a person, which includes his abilities, appearance, and other phases of daily living.

Self-Esteem – the judgment and attitude and individual holds toward himself.

Sequence – refers to the organization and ordering of curriculum experiences to maximize learning.

Summative Assessment – the final evaluation of how successfully students achieved learning goals. Examples include such post-assessment tools as project presentations, end-of-unit self-assessments and teacher-made examinations.