

Gifted and Talented Programs

The *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act* §5-401 requires that the updated plan “shall include goals, objectives, and strategies regarding the performance of gifted and talented students, as defined in §8-201.”

The *Annotated Code of Maryland* §8-201 defines a gifted and talented student as “an elementary or secondary student who is identified by professionally qualified individuals as: (1) Having outstanding talent and performing, or showing the potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with other students of a similar age, experience, or environment; (2) Exhibiting high performance capability in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas; (3) Possessing an unusual leadership capacity; or (4) Excelling in specific academic fields.

The focus of the 2006 Master Plan Update is on progress toward meeting goals and adjustments being made to overcome challenges. In accordance with this focus and in order to provide a status on the progress toward meeting Gifted and Talented Program goals, objectives and strategies regarding the performance of gifted and talented students, local school systems are expected to provide a cohesive, stand-alone response to the prompts and questions outlined below.

1. PROGRESS MADE IN 2005-2006 TOWARD MEETING GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM GOALS:

A. The *Primary Talent Development (PTD)* program has been fully implemented in grades K-2.

PTD is a curriculum which develops targeted natural learning behaviors in all K-2 students. Natural learning behaviors are nurtured and challenged through hands-on experiences, discovery activities and child-sensitive experiences. The development of these behaviors assists children in becoming better students. After a successful pilot program in one elementary school the previous year, PTD was implemented throughout the school system in 2005.

A total of 53 staff members were trained in the PTD program during the spring and summer of 2005. This included 91% of the K-2 teachers, principals, facilitators and special education teachers from the four elementary schools. Teachers began to integrate the PTD curriculum into their regular instruction during the 2005-2006 school year. Over 600 students in grades K-2 participated in the program. This represents 100% of the students in those grades.

B. A Gifted & Talented Summer program was offered for students in grades 3-12.

The Summer Enrichment Centers were established to provide opportunities for students to display talents and increase knowledge in areas of interest. Sessions in Drama, Art,

Band and Culinary Art were offered for students in grades 3-5. Secondary students (grades 6-11) were offered sessions in Engineering, Forensics, Academic Research and Algebra. The following chart shows actual participation in this summer program.

Summer Session Participation		
Session	ELEM	SEC
Academic Research		2
Algebra		2
Brick		1
CSI		8
Art	10	
Band	14	
Culinary Art	10	
Drama	8	
Total	42	13

2. IDENTIFY PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, OR STRATEGIES RELATED TO THE PROGRESS:

A. Increased Staffing

A .5 Gifted and Talented Coordinator position for the county was established in 2005. Assigning someone to coordinate the program enabled the focus of the program to remain consistent throughout the school system. The Coordinator was also able to follow up on the implementation with schools as well as individual teachers. Each elementary school appointed a *Primary Talent Development Liaisons*; this is a paid add-on responsibility for these staff members. This added to the progress of that program by allowing the Gifted & Talented Coordinator to have a direct contact in each building. School counselors were designated as the chair of each school level Gifted & Talented committee. The primary function of the school based committee is to advocate for Gifted & Talented initiatives, to disseminate and store programmatic information, and to assist with the formal identification process.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area are

1.5.1 Implement the Primary Talent Development Program in grades K-2

B. Professional Development

All K-2 teachers attended professional development on the PTD curriculum in the spring or summer of 2005. They were trained on how to use the science-based lessons which contain strategies for open-ended, problem-solving, learning experiences for all children. Follow up training will take place in 2006 on the use of the rubric to evaluate student responses to each lesson.

A group of 13 teachers attended a seminar on Cutting Edge Strategies for Gifted and Highly Capable Students. The elementary teachers heard Kay Law speak on

Differentiated Instruction Strategies for Gifted & Talented students in Grades K-8 and the secondary teachers attended a similar session presented by Roger Taylor. He spoke on *Classroom Strategies and Techniques Using Differentiated Instruction with the Highly Able Students*. The secondary teachers came back and trained 24 Intermediate School teachers in the spring of 2005 on the strategies Roger Taylor presented. The elementary teachers worked with 21 other elementary teachers during the summer of 2005 on Kay Law's strategies on Strengthening Instruction Through Differentiated Teaching Strategies.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area are

- 1.5.1 Provide professional development for Gifted & Talented characteristics

C. Program Development

The Gifted & Talented program has been able to move forward as a result of the Task Force revising the SCPS Gifted & Talented Handbook and related policies in 2005. Guidelines are now in place to implement the program throughout the school system. The PTD program has been fully implemented in grades K-2, Summer Enrichment Centers were established, and an identification program for students was established. A County Gifted & Talented Committee was established to analyze student identification information, give final approval of selected students, notify parents and hear appeals if necessary. School level committees were also formed to assist with staff development, collect and organize data, establish site based procedures, and report Gifted & Talented developments to School Improvement Teams. In addition procedures were established for identifying students and tracking performance through the Student Information System and Data Warehouse. This process will allow for the tracking and analysis of data for the identified students at the end of the year.

Specific Implemented Master Plan Action Steps in this area are

- 1.5.1 Implement Primary Talent Development program for grades K – 2.
 1.5.1 Establish an identification process for students.
 1.5.2 Establish summer enrichment centers.

RELATED RESOURCES FOR GIFTED & TALENTED	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eight teachers were hired to run the Summer Enrichment Centers. 	Cost: \$ 1,940 Source: Local
Professional Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All K-2 teachers were trained in on the PTD curriculum. 	Cost: \$ 7,011 Source: Local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and principals attended a conference on teaching strategies for the Gifted & Talented. 	Cost: \$ 2,398 Source: Local

RELATED RESOURCES FOR GIFTED & TALENTED	
Materials & Supplies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials were purchased to use with the science based PTD lessons. 	Cost: \$ 3,559* Source: Local * <i>Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials were purchased for the Summer Enrichment Centers. 	Cost: \$ 2,220 Source: Local

3. CHALLENGES IN MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAM GOALS:

A. Providing gifted and talented instruction during the school day was difficult in the elementary schools.

Implementation of the PTD program was successful because the lessons are science based and therefore occur during the science block of time. For FY 2007, instructional programs in math and reading will be offered for students in grade 3 identified through the Gifted & Talented process. Because *Reading First* require 90 minutes of uninterrupted time, the reading component must be offered in a format that allows for flexible scheduling. Schools must find other times throughout the day for the Gifted & Talented reading initiative at this level. Each of the 4 elementary schools will tailor the curriculum to work within their school schedule. The Touchpebbles curriculum will be followed consistently throughout the 4 schools.

1. We are challenged with scheduling time in the elementary school day to implement the Gifted & Talented program.

B. SCPS Gifted & Talented program is being expanded every year, but not at a rate satisfactory to MSDE.

Somerset County Public Schools will continue with the implementation plan established in 2004 to phase in one grade per year. Summer instructional programs for grades 3 and 4 will begin during the summer of 2007. The following school year there will be school day instruction in reading and math for grades 3 and 4. The 2008-2009 school year will include programs for grades 3 through 5. Gifted & Talented programs for grades 6 through 9 will not be developed until 2009.

1. We are challenged to implement a county wide Gifted & Talented program as soon as possible.

4. CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE PROGRESS IMPLEMENTING THE GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAM GOALS:

Challenge 3A1: Providing gifted and talented instruction during the school day

In order to meet this challenge, the system will allow each elementary school the flexibility of adapting the program to fit the school schedule. The math component will take place during the regular math time. The *TouchPebbles* reading component will take place during the social studies block.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3A1	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each elementary school will schedule the students to use the math software during regular math or science time. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Schedule Change Timeline: Fall 2006</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each elementary school will schedule the reading component during the social studies block of time. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Schedule Change Timeline: Winter 2007</p>

Challenge 3B1: To implement a county wide Gifted & Talented program as soon as possible.

In order to meet this challenge, the system will begin to accelerate the program in grades 3-5.

ACTIONS & RESOURCES TO MEET CHALLENGE 3B1	
Core Program & Intervention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The math component will be implemented for all grades 3-5 this year, not just grade 3 as planned. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$ 61,745* Source: Thornton (repeat) Timeline: Fall 2006 * software cost</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gifted & Talented Committee will meet to plan for implementing the reading component in grades 4 & 5 next year. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: None Source: Staff Time Timeline: 2006-2007</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reading component will be implemented in grades 3-5 next year according to the plan developed by the committee. 	<p>Amount Budgeted: TBD Source: Local Timeline: 2007-2008</p>