

Addressing Specific Student Groups Gifted and Talented Programs

I. GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM PROGRESS

A. FINDINGS

1. The number of students identified as gifted and/or talented increased by more than 100% from 06-07 to 07-08.

A significant increase in the number of students identified for the Gifted & Talented program is a result of adding an additional grade to Somerset's developing program. Grade 3 was the only grade participating in the academic Gifted & Talented program in 2006-2007 with 27 students identified. For the school year 2007-2008 Grade 4 was added increasing the number of participants from 27 to 74 resulting in an over 100% increase in identified students. The selection criteria were revisited by a committee consisting of the Coordinator of *Reading First* and Extended Instructional Programs, elementary guidance counselors and the elementary GT/PTD liaisons during the 2007-2008 school year. The selection criteria are now more defined and academic focused resulting in a better alignment with the focus of the existing GT program.

2. Enrollment in the Summer Enrichment Program for Gifted and/or Talented increased by 26%.

There was a small increase in the number of students participating in the Gifted and Talented Summer Enrichment Program this year. Thirty nine students participated in 12 courses during the summer of 2008. This is an increase of 8 students over the previous summer when only 31 students attended the program. Five courses were offered on both ends of the county and 2 courses were offered at sites in the middle of the county totaling 12 courses available to students. Courses in Band, Culinary Arts, Sculpture and Creative Arts were the most popular.

B. PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTED PROGRESS

1. Identification Tools

Formal and informal data is used to identify Gifted and Talented students. The identification process begins with the students' performance on work completed in the Primary Talent and Development (PTD) program in Grades K through 2. Students complete two modules per year by submitting artifacts that are scored by teachers through the use of rubrics for the following targeted behaviors: communicative, perceptive, creative, resourceful and inquisitive. By the end of Grade 2 a score is provided which represents a total for the three year process. The total score is added to a spreadsheet containing additional data which is then used to determine eligibility for the upper elementary Gifted and Talented program.

Several stages in the selection process take place in the Spring for Grade 2. Surveys are sent home for parents to rate various areas of their child's abilities. At the same time, teachers, staff and community members are invited to complete surveys nominating students for the program. Final student grades in reading and math are added to the spreadsheet as well as the percentile scores posted for the

SAT-10 Math and Reading Assessment. Data submitted from the *Naglieri* Non-Verbal Ability Test (NNAT) is the final piece of information added to the spreadsheet. The whole child is analyzed with emphasis placed on academic performance to match the focus of the Elementary Gifted & Talented program.

A committee comprised of guidance counselors, coaches, facilitators, teachers and the Coordinator of *Reading First* and Extended Instructional Programs meet to analyze the data and select students for the program which begins in the fall of their third grade year.

2. Monitoring of students in PTD for indicators of giftedness

Throughout Grades K, 1 and 2 students submit artifacts selected from work completed in the two PTD modules each Fall and Spring. At the completion of each module, the PTD/GT liaison reviews student’s portfolio looking at student artifacts and teacher coding on the developmental continuum for each artifact on file. The liaisons then complete a program chart documenting and rating classroom grades and school performance along with the student portfolio rating. This documentation is then submitted to the coordinator for monitoring.

3. Coordination Support from Central Office

In the past year, the work related to the Elementary Gifted and Talented program has been directed by the Coordinator of *Reading First* and Extended Instructional Programs. This additional guidance from the central office provides the administrators at the school level with added supervision of the program and monitoring of the data submitted. The results are better accuracy in identifying students for the Gifted and Talented program. The coordinator completed on site walkthroughs during the Fall and Spring when modules are being implemented. Portfolio monitoring is completed by both the liaisons and the coordinator in order to share the responsibility and express the importance of the process. The coordinator added members to the committee to work together during the opening of the school year when all the data was available in order to strengthen the identification process.

C. RELATED RESOURCES

RELATED RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY GIFTED AND TALENTED	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained Coordinator of <i>Reading First</i> and Extended Instructional Programs 	Cost \$67,624 Source: Local/State <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hired 4 Summer Enrichment Teachers 	Cost: \$2,000 Source: Local/State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided for 4 PTD/GT Liaison Extra Duty Stipends 	Cost: \$3,016 Source: Local/State
Core Program	

RELATED RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY GIFTED AND TALENTED	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased <i>Naglieri</i> Non-Verbal Ability Test (NNAT) Assessment 	Cost: \$2,962 Source: Local/State
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased SAT-10 Math Assessment 	Cost: \$2,962 Source: Local/State
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchased Replacement Materials to Offset Implementation of the Primary, Talent and Development (PTD) Program 	Cost: \$1,067 Source: Local/State

II. GIFTED AND TALENTED CHALLENGES

A. FINDINGS

1. **Less than 50% of the identified Gifted and/or Talented students met their goals/standards.**

The following expectations have been set for meeting and/or exceeding the Gifted and Talented standards:

- A minimum of one year above grade level on *SuccessMaker*
- Students will have a compiled score of 80% or higher at the completion of the *Touchpebbles* program.

Data indicates that not all identified students participated in the program. This happens when children are identified in the fall and move from the school or district prior to the end of the year. It is not a result of poor implementation by the school. One hundred percent of the identified students who remained in the school participated in the program. However, only 49% of these students met the standards set for the GT program in 2007-2008.

2. **Inconsistent use of *SuccessMaker* for math acceleration of gifted students created inequitable opportunities among county elementary schools.**

Monthly reports generated by *SuccessMaker* indicate a correlation between the amounts of time students spent using the program and demonstrated gains. Those students with limited exposure to *SuccessMaker* made limited gains compared to their grade level peers who were not identified as Gifted and Talented. Students with the highest level of use showed the highest gains. Reports indicated that students did not use the *SuccessMaker* program as often as prescribed.

B. CHALLENGES

1. **We are challenged to determine the root cause of unmet goals among Gifted and /or Talented students.**

The Gifted and Talented program is in need of more structure in order to impact the advancement of the highly able student. Each elementary principal will have a highly qualified teacher to guide the instruction of the *Touchpebbles* program for grades 3-5 in their building. This will occur during the universal access times set aside in their master schedules. The computer labs will house the *SuccessMaker* program during the first month of school in order for the students to have enough time to test out of the Initial Placement Motion (IPM) portion of the program. IPM, includes 300 exercises that when complete ensure that each student works at an appropriate level in the course. *SuccessMaker* software uses the data from the student completed work from placement at a level that is neither too easy nor too difficult. The teacher assigned to monitor the program in each building will submit a spreadsheet with data showing the ratings of completed work by each student on the Performance Based Activities (PBA) in the *Touchpebbles* program and printouts from the *SuccessMaker* program each quarter. This data will be submitted to the Coordinator of *Reading First* and Extended Instructional Programs and reviewed for impact.

2. We are challenged to provide equal opportunity for acceleration to all gifted students.

A committee will be formed to monitor the current identification process to assure standards meet the state policy and guidelines. The committee will develop a plan of action for re-evaluating students that were not identified at the conclusion of the Grade 2 school year and/or are new to SCPS. The committee will also develop an evaluation plan for the current GT program. The elementary principals will be responsible for implementing the current program during the universal access time to ensure 100% participation. During this time, students should be provided a minimum of 2.5 days to participate in the *Touchpebbles* program and 2.5 days using the *SuccessMaker* program within a five day week. Teachers will be provided professional development on developing and scoring performance based activities to provide feedback to students and parents on progress.

C. GOALS, PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES TO CONTINUE GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Somerset County Public Schools seeks to provide a comprehensive program throughout each level that assures a full commitment to and enrichment of all of the talents and gifts of each student, regardless of his/her cultural background. An exclusive program limited to traditional measures of achievement in math and reading would deprive many young people the chance to pursue strengths and talents that are masked due to poverty and/or a serious lack of opportunities. It is SCPS's expectation and hope that to structure a program that accesses and applies Howard Gardiner's work in multiple intelligences so that, in accord with Maryland's Annotated Code 8-201, the many faces of giftedness and talent are recognized and nurtured among Somerset's children. It is with this commitment that our program remains in the beginning stages and is still developing.

**1. Primary (PK-2)
Goals**

- To nurture critical and creative thinking, questioning skills, and problem solving in all students
- To avoid the limitations of traditional student achievement results that may not cross cultures
- To broaden teachers' awareness of and response to gifted expression in student thinking and work

Strategies

- Use the open-ended, highly engaging lessons of PTD: Primary Talent Development Program
- Have teachers observe and document the 7 PTD "expert learning behaviors" as the beginning steps toward GT identification

2. Elementary (3-5)

Goals

- To identify students who academically excel on traditional measures and on PTD learning behaviors
- To provide differentiated opportunities for identified students' acceleration and enrichment within and beyond the school day and year
- To keep the door wide open for teachers to recognize students' giftedness and talent in non-traditional ways

Strategies

- Use the open-ended, highly engaging lessons within *Touch Pebbles* and mix groups of students to include identified gifted students with non-identified students.
- Provide individualized opportunities for math acceleration through *SuccessMaker*
- Provide enriched and accelerated opportunities for visual arts, musical and dramatic participation through summer enrichment and encore classes

3. Intermediate (6-7)

Goals

- To continue specialized programming for identified G/T students in core academics and areas of interest
- To provide enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for G/T students whose needs cannot be met through the regular classroom's differentiated instruction
- To keep the door wide open for teachers to recognize students' giftedness and talent in non-traditional ways

Strategies

- Use the high tech facility to enhance students' acceleration and enrichment through project based assignments
- Use extra curricular activities to enhance students' acceleration and enrichment through specialized projects and competitions.
- Provide enriched and accelerated opportunities for visual arts, musical and dramatic participation through summer enrichment and encore classes

4. Secondary (8-12)

Goals

- To continue specialized programming for identified G/T students in core academics and areas of interest
- To provide enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for G/T students whose needs cannot be met through the regular classroom's differentiated instruction
- To keep the door wide open for teachers to recognize students' giftedness and talent in non-traditional ways

Strategies

- To provide “honors” courses in Core Areas for identified G/T Students.
- Advanced Placement courses provided for high school students.
- Increased number of courses in Art and Music/Band
- Additional specialized CTE programs such as *Project Lead the Way*

As stated previously, SCPS does not wish to limit the GT program to accelerated Math and Language Arts classes. All student “gifts” deserve to be recognized and developed. SCPS will continue to offer summer enrichment in different areas for elementary and middle level students and seek a broader range of opportunities for secondary students through partnerships with University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Salisbury University, and Wor-Wic. A new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math initiative is underway with a vision to build a feeder program and activities that will support a *Project Lead the Way* program or one similar at the secondary level. Advanced Art classes have been proposed at both high schools as well as expansion of the Music and Band offerings for those students specifically talented in the arts areas. While the goals for middle and secondary level students are defined, a formal identification process that compares to the Primary Talent Development at the elementary level is not in place at the secondary level. The GT Task Force in Somerset County will continue to look for effective means to identify students for Gifted and Talented areas other than the Math/Reading programs and to provide access to appropriate enriching and accelerated learning opportunities.

D. RELATED RESOURCES

PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, & STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FOR ELEMENTARY GIFTED AND TALENTED	
Staffing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Coordinator of <i>Reading First</i> and Extended Instructional Programs 	<p>Amount Budgeted: \$71,991 Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-2009 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i></p>

PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, & STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FOR ELEMENTARY GIFTED AND TALENTED	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Gifted & Talented Liaison for Each Building 	Amount Budgeted: \$0 – Staff Time Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-09
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Committee to Monitor the Identification Process 	Amount Budgeted: \$0 – Staff Time Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-09
CORE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain use of <i>Touchpebbles</i> Curriculum 	Amount Budgeted: \$0 – Staff Time Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-09
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase <i>SuccessMaker</i> Software License (50) 	Amount Budgeted: \$27,500 Source: Local/State Timeline: 2008-09 <i>* Duplicated Reference</i>

E. CORRELATION OF PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND STRATEGIES WITH MASTER PLAN EXTENSION 2008-2010

	<i># of Action Step</i>	<i>Action Step Description</i>
1.12.2	Identification: All students participate in an early identification process in Grades K-2.	1.12.2.2. Assess all Grade 2 students for GT identification and program opportunities in higher Grades.
1.12.3	Acceleration: Acceleration opportunities expand at each level and are made available to identified students.	1.12.3.3. Monitor implementation of Touch Pebbles in Grades 3- 5
1.3.1	Elementary Math: All elementary students meet or exceed the minimum State Standard of Proficiency in Mathematics.	1.3.1.6 Use <i>SuccessMaker</i> (CAI) for differentiating instruction; monitor classroom teacher use; and target lessons appropriate for intervention strategies.

