

MISSION

The mission of the Upper Merion Area School District's Gifted program is to ensure that all gifted and talented students are identified and provided with individualized and challenging educational programs. We offer a range of options so that individual programs can be designed around each student's needs. These programs are based on each student's strengths and needs and are designed to develop their unique talents and abilities. We encourage gifted and talented students to join all students in making positive contributions to society.

After determining eligibility and need for specially-designed instruction (in compliance with Chapter 16 guidelines), an appropriate educational program is determined by a multidisciplinary team comprised of school personnel, parents, and (where appropriate) the student.

PROGRAM GOALS

The Upper Merion Area School District's Gifted program was designed with input from teachers, administrators, parents, and students. We provide services to a diverse population of gifted learners. Goals of the program include:

- identifying candidates for the program and assessing their eligibility using a variety of tools and procedures.
- emphasizing a positive working relationship between parents and school personnel.
- creating an individualized, flexible, and appropriate program based on the measured strengths and needs of each eligible student.
- providing counseling and appropriate support services for eligible students, including those who are low achieving or at risk.
- providing staff development opportunities for all school personnel, including support

for the preparation of differentiated educational plans, materials, and curriculum by regular classroom teachers.

- promoting the use of strategies developed for challenging students' analytical and critical thinking skills in regular classrooms.

SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION

Students can be identified as potential candidates for the gifted program by classroom teachers, parents, or other school personnel. Referrals are made by written request to the building principal, who will acknowledge the referral in writing and send a letter to the parents explaining the gifted screening process, including procedural safeguards. Screening then proceeds through three levels:

Level 1:

The classroom teacher and school counselor review student performance in the general education curriculum, report card information, Upper Merion Area School District performance tasks and standardized assessment information. If this data is in the advanced range, the counselor administers the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT), a short-form IQ test, and achievement tests. If the student's measured IQ is 125 or above, the student proceeds to Level II screening. If these criteria are not met, a letter is sent to the parents explaining the decision and the procedures for contesting it.

Level II:

Parents complete a Parent Input Form, describing the student's perceived strengths and needs. The student's regular classroom teacher completes a Gifted Evaluation Scale - Teacher Form and may submit a work sample or portfolio.

If the input forms indicate strong evidence of possible giftedness, a need for specially designed instruction, and the KBIT score is 125 or higher, the case proceeds to Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE), the student proceeds to Level III screening.

If this criteria is not met, a letter is sent to the parents explaining the decision and the procedures for contesting it.

Level III: MDE

The MDE follows state guidelines for assessment and eligibility; see the "Parent Guide to Special Education for the Gifted" for details. The MDE includes administration of a Full Scale IQ test by a district school psychologist. If the student scores a Full Scale or Composite IQ greater than or equal to 126 and exhibits multiple criteria of giftedness (as shown in the Parent and Teacher Input Forms), then the student is deemed Mentally Gifted. A Gifted Individualized Educational Plan (GIEP) is then developed by the multidisciplinary team.

If wide discrepancies exist between verbal and spatial scores on the IQ subtests, or if there is evidence that other factors (such as English as a second language) are masking the student's aptitude, the evaluation team considers the other criteria for giftedness more closely before making a decision.

Parents are kept informed at every stage of the screening process, and their input is actively sought. Parents also have the right to contest the decisions made, as outlined above.

PROGRAMMING

We believe that gifted, like all students, learn best when provided with challenging instruction which can be delivered in a range of settings. Programming can include the following: **Acceleration**, in which instruction is matched to the competence level of the student; **Enrichment**, in which opportunities for the investigation of appropriate materials are given and **Individualization**, in which instruction is matched specifically to the student's achievement, abilities and interests.

Research has shown that gifted students benefit from being grouped together for meaningful instruction during the day.

Each student who is identified as Gifted will have a GIEP tailored to his/her specific strengths and needs. The GIEP is reviewed and updated annually at a meeting involving the student's gifted support teacher, a regular classroom teacher, parents, a school administrator, and other specialists as needed.

All teachers have received training in meeting the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. Our curriculum is rigorous and instruction is driven by multiple sources of student data to ensure that all students are appropriately challenged.

RESOURCES

Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education
PAGE Incorporated
3026 Potshop Road
Norristown, PA 19403
www.penngifted.org
Gifted Children Monthly
www.gifted-children.com

Gifted Education Resource Institute
(Perdue University)
www.geri.soe.purdue.edu

Future Problem Solving Program
www.fpsp.org

Hoagies Gifted Education
www.hoagiesgifted.org

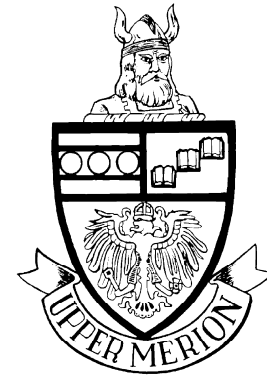
SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted)
www.sengifted.org

National Association of Gifted Children
www.nagc.org

Pennsylvanians for the Education of Gifted Students (PEGS)
www.pegsgifted.org

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Gifted Programming