



HORACE MANN SCHOOL

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Gifted and Talented Services Bulletin September 30, 2009

We continue our journey to remodel the Gifted and Talented Program at Horace Mann School. We want a learning environment where every teacher uses teaching strategies for the gifted and talented, every student is challenged by rigorous work at their level, and every student receives enriching opportunities. The process is ongoing and organic, taking time and adapting to district initiatives and student needs. We are moving away from a static concept of giftedness to a fluid and dynamic concept. We know that even though a student scores at a certain level, they need to be reassessed and the programming must be adjusted regularly as we discover their learning needs. The ultimate goal is for every student to make at least one year's growth, no matter where they start.

Our Gifted and Talented students need an educational plan that is based on the child's strengths and areas for growth. Identification is both a tool and a limitation. We will look at several factors this year in determining services. The Naglieri Non-verbal Aptitude Test (NNAT) is the district screening tool that determines broad eligibility. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is our building's online academic assessment. This tool not only provides a measure of a student's knowledge in reading, math, and science (4th grade), it also gives growth measures. The MAP indicates who could use support beyond the homeroom in the areas of math and language arts. MAP scores at or above the 98th percentile indicate the need for additional instruction or interdisciplinary types of enrichment units in the resource room with the Gifted and Talented Specialist. We will use teacher observations, classroom performance, student needs, and past participation to determine the services we provide for students who score in the 95th-97th percentile.

Instead of a single program, we are working to provide a variety of services in both general and Gifted and Talented education settings that match student needs. How can we meet your child's needs? First, all children will be served daily in the homeroom. Guided reading groups and individualized work in reading and writing will provide additional challenges or extend learning. Flexible grouping during the second half of the math lesson does the same.

This year Horace Mann teachers are adopting new curriculum in reading and spelling. Mondo Bookshop creates a differentiated reading curriculum. Words Their Way teaches phonics and spelling through differentiation. In addition, teachers will begin to develop, construct, and communicate major projects that are open-ended and challenging. These projects will give students an opportunity to conduct research, create a product, or to create a presentation.

For some students, the homeroom teacher might also connect the project with curriculum compacting, an assessment method that allows your child to skip skills she/he already knows, allowing time for more complex projects. The Gifted and Talented content coach will support teachers with both the new curriculum and the project development.

What will service look like for your child? Students may receive services through a pull-out class or through the specialist's partnership with the homeroom teacher.

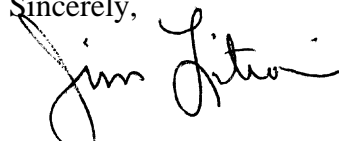
Grade Level	Type of Instruction	Subject Area
K-2	Team Teaching	Catalyst-higher order thinking skills
1-4	Pull-out	Math
3-6	Pull-out	Literacy
5-6	Team Teaching	Social Studies
5-6	Afternoon Flex Grouping	Math

Last year the teachers received training from our consultant, Dr. Richard Cash, District Supervisor of Gifted & Talented Programs and Director of Dimensions Academy in Bloomington, MN. We will continue our work with Dr. Cash this school year. This summer we read *Making Differentiation a Habit*, a great resource for strategies and activities.

These changes take time and are accompanied by growing pains and false starts. Our financial resources limit us to a half-time Gifted and Talented Specialist. The number of students who need support remains quite large. We will continually assess our program and our students' progress. Your feedback is very important. To help our communication, we will have a parent meeting this fall with Dr. Cash on October 20 at 6:30 p.m. Look for an invitation coming soon.

We have a tremendous teaching staff. Your partnership, the teachers' professional dedication to ongoing learning, and everyone's passion to see each child succeed will lead us to a fantastic program.

Sincerely,



Jim Litwin, Principal