

District 15 Gifted Committee Meeting – December 12, 2006

The Committee

Mary Zarr (Dir. of Curriculum) led a meeting the Gifted Committee with a roomful of attendees including parents, teachers, administrators and Board members. Attendees were given data including birth date comparisons, data on gifted refusal rates, gifted qualification test results and cut scores, achievement levels of identified students, a summary of surrounding gifted programs, and a summary of the Gifted Committee's needs/purpose from the last meeting.

History

Mary Zarr gave a brief overview of the Gifted program at D15. In 1985 the Gifted program started as ½ hour enrichment only in 2nd - 4th. In 1994, the Gifted Committee decided to implement the self-contained Gifted classrooms. In 1997, D15 was a pilot program for the state of IL in having 1 ½ hours/week pullout for 2,3,4 and self-contained 5,6. The committee at that time had to create a program that did not cost the district any money (self-contained 5,6 was already in the district). The program was not intended to address individual curriculum needs, but was enrichment and critical thinking skills based. It was noted that the CoGAT originally counted for more in the testing matrix to get into Gifted (than it does now).

Birth Order Effects

Attendees had previously asked for information on birth-order effects on getting into the gifted program. The administration brought back data showing that birth order was not well correlated with entrance into the gifted program, with as many April birthdays as September birthdays in the program.

Gifted Refusal Rates

Attendees had asked the administration for information on the non-participation rate of gifted students, i.e. students who tested into Gifted, but declined to participate. The table of data showed students listed by their home school and showed how many students were non-participants at various stages (3/4 or 5/6) of the Gifted program. The refusal rates were generally low, but high in some schools, especially those without resident gifted programs (meaning the students had to be bused). Refusal rate was zero at the Jr. High because everyone was at their home schools.

Gifted Qualification Data and Cut Scores

Attendees had asked the administration for information on how cut scores changed year to year. The table given shows the cut scores by year for 2nd graders as they entered the Gifted program (Level I is "out-of-level" and Level II is "Gifted"). Four of the last 6 years, the cut score has been 20, with the remaining two years (the most recent) having a cut score of 21. The administration also shared data showing that the percentage Gifted in each grade level ranged from 5 – 7%, with higher grades containing more Gifted students, as students are admitted (or opt-in) later into the program. It also shows that many students who test into the program in 3rd grade, currently would not make it into the top "5%", since the effective cut score is higher in 5th grade (cut score = 23 for top 5%).

There was some discussion as to the meaning of this, but generally it pointed to the need to reevaluate how the Gifted program meets the needs of the students, being flexible and having yearly evaluations to help identify needs, rather than focusing on the criteria for entering into the program.

Achievement Levels of Identified Students

The administration shared data showing the achievement levels of identified Gifted students. The matrix used to identify Gifted students allows for a range of abilities, such that a high CoGAT score, combined with lower achievement scores may still qualify a student for the program. Similarly, students may be High Math but Low Reading scores and vice versa. This data shows several things:

For Level 2 = Gifted

- 85% are high achievers in both reading and math (i.e. above 96th percentile)
- 10% are Low-to-Mid Readers but High in Math
- 17% of Gifted have CoGAT's below 125, essentially testing into Gifted on Achievement alone (scores below 125 give zero points on the matrix)

For Level 1 = Out of Level

- 48% are High Achievers with High Reading and High Math, but not quite high enough to test into Gifted – these are the “Bubble Kids”
- 36% are Low-to-Mid Readers but High in Math – these are the “Out of Level Math Kids”
- Less than 5% are High Readers, but low in Math
- 53% have high CoGAT scores, but combined CoGAT/Achievement is not enough to place into Gifted – these are the potential “underachievers”

Surrounding District Gifted Programs

The administration shared data from gifted programs in 11 surrounding districts, including Arlington Heights, Barrington, Naperville and others. Only Barrington, Schaumburg and Naperville have self-contained classrooms. Several schools had push-in and pull-out programs starting in 1st grade. Schools use a range of techniques for instruction and testing, some with a broader definition for identification (top 10%) and some using parent inventories, teacher checklists and observation inventories. Sample matrices include ones that have a heavier weight on the Co-GAT and a K-2 student evaluation.

Feedback from D211

Kids from D15 Gifted do not automatically go into D211 Gifted – the EXPLORE test is used to place kids. D211 has a very small Gifted program, that many teens opt out of due to scheduling issues. Honors classes are filled with Gifted as well as kids that did not go through the Gifted program.

Future Work

Attendees suggested that there needed to be a better way to report grades for Gifted, that notes that the work they are doing is more difficult than the standard curriculum. Attendees also suggested that parent education will be an important part of any change to

the Gifted program. The Administrative Facilitators will be surveying Gifted students. Next time will have a panel from other districts with different Gifted models as well as the Administrative Facilitators. Homework is to look over materials and email survey questions.

The next meeting is scheduled for Jan 16th.