

## **District 15 Gifted Committee Meeting – November 14, 2006**

### ***The Committee***

Mary Zarr (Dir. of Curriculum) led a meeting the Gifted Committee with almost 50 attendees (spread across 2 meetings), including parents, teachers, administrators and Board members. Attendees were given packets containing the latest IL Statutes concerning gifted education. IL has not provided any funds for gifted education for several years, but is possibly considering funding it again, and so has re-visited the recommendations for exemplary programs for gifted education in public schools. The National Association for Gifted Children has also recently published their Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards, which are considered Best Practices for Gifted Education. In light of this and the fact that the Gifted program in D15 has not undergone a complete review for close to 12 years, and taking into account the board directive to review out-of-level math placement, district administrators initiated the review.

### ***The Gifted Program***

Attendees discussed the focus of the committee and identified the common needs/purpose/mission of the Gifted Program Committee: identification, developing challenging curriculum, finding Best Practices, providing enrichment and broadening the program, developing better communication. The committee was given a copy of the matrix used to test into the Gifted program. The current matrix uses ITBS and CoGat testing with no input from teachers or writing evaluations. This matrix will be reviewed, and may be updated this year to include MAP testing. Currently, tests are given in February of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade year, over a two week period, in Best Practices order. The top 5% of children are placed in self-contained gifted classrooms throughout the district (the cut-off score changes from year-to-year to include the top 5% of students tested locally). If your child is not eligible for the gifted program, CoGat test scores are not sent home, but are available upon request. It is also possible to qualify for the program during non-testing years or when moving in from out of district. Usually instigated by a teacher, administrator or parent, this process involves following the Gifted Identification Process Flowchart. The Jr. High program has self-contained gifted classes for language arts, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted is automatically rolled over into that. However, all sixth graders are placed into the appropriate seventh grade math class based on test results included on the math placement matrix.

### ***Plus/Delta for the Gifted Program***

Attendees discussed and developed a Plus/Delta sheet (“Pros” vs. “Cons”) of the Gifted program, as it exists currently. In addition, the district Leadership Team (including all principals, cabinet members and program directors), assistant principals, administrative facilitators, the Curriculum Advisory Committee and all gifted teachers also contributed to the Plus/Delta evaluation. The Plus side included: having a common matrix, self-contained classes, critical thinking, grouping with peers challenges and helps with behavior issues, looping. The Delta side included: changing schools, impact on class sizes at Jr. High, integrating into non-home-school, transportation issues, no services for K-2 gifted, score that qualifies changes yearly, split from elem. to jr. high to high school (4 schools in K-8 career), learning gaps from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade gifted, hard to

identify late bloomers, inconsistency in K-2 preparation for gifted, opportunities not available to kids that don't make cut into gifted, don't have gifted teachers in all schools, need more mentoring/networking among gifted teachers, lack of consistency regarding available opportunities for K-2 curriculum acceleration.

### ***Homework***

Committee homework includes reading material in folders, checking out references and other resources, and brainstorming ideas to improve identified delta concerns. Dept. of Instruction homework includes collecting data on what % of kids from gifted actually place into accelerated classes in High School, checking HS districts to see what they are looking for, collecting longitudinal data on what score it takes to qualify every year, finding sample matrices, looking at progression of kids that opted out of gifted (but that qualified), look at other program models (what other schools are doing).

### ***Future Work***

Ideas suggested by the committee for future work include: developing a parent network to keep kids involved with home schools, doing a focus group with high school kids to get feedback about their experience in the gifted program (plus/delta), share information about history of gifted program, have representatives from alternative programs come to speak, looking at Best Practices, assessing the label "Gifted".

The next meetings are scheduled for Dec 12<sup>th</sup> and Jan 16<sup>th</sup>, with the two meeting times each day (4-5:30pm and 6:30-8pm). Parents and other stakeholders are still welcome to attend, even if you missed the first meeting. Just RSVP to Pam Seick (847-963-3106) or [seickp@ccsd15.net](mailto:seickp@ccsd15.net).