

Wenatchee School District Enrichment Program



Talent Pool Parent Handbook

“Talents are potentialities. They need nurturing.”

Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi,
Speaking at the Conference of the World
Council for Gifted and Talented
Children, July 1997.

Wenatchee School District Enrichment Program Mission:

To find and nurture talent in students by providing and supporting opportunities for them to pursue their interests at an appropriate pace and level of complexity and regular opportunities to spend time with students of similar abilities.

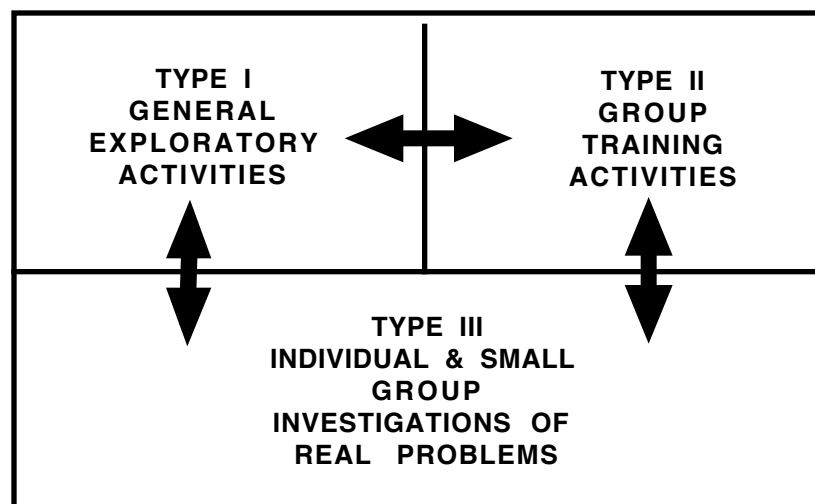
Basic Ideas Behind the Wenatchee School District Enrichment Program:

- **Every** child has the right to an appropriate and enriched education.
- Talent should be sought and nurtured in **all** children.
- Enrichment opportunities should be available in a variety of talent areas. Emphasis should be on talent development.
- There are students who demonstrate unusual talent and capabilities who are in need of special provisions within and in addition to the regular curriculum.
- These students need curriculum that is appropriately different in pace and complexity, and regular opportunities to spend time with students of similar abilities.

What are “enrichment activities”?

Enrichment activities are designed to stimulate student interest and give students the tools they'll need to increase their knowledge and understanding of a topic. With these tools, students may choose to do an in-depth investigation resulting in a solution or product they've created. Enrichment activities can be divided into three “types” or categories:

ENRICHMENT TRIAD MODEL



Type I Enrichment: Consists of general exploratory activities that are designed to expose students to topics, events, books, people, etc. not ordinarily covered in the regular curriculum. Noon enrichment is a series of Type I activities held regularly in most buildings. Attendance is based on student interest in the topic.

Type II Enrichment: The focus is on process skills in an area of talent or interest. Talent groups might include math, drama, science, art, writing, etc.

Type III Enrichment: Recommended as the mainstay of programs for advanced ability students and consists of activities in which students become actual investigators of real problems or topics by using appropriate methods of inquiry. Type III enrichment is characterized by (1) identification of a general area in which advanced level work will be done, (2) focusing upon a specific question or problem, (3) use of multiple advanced level resources, (4) acquisition of raw data using appropriate methodological techniques, (5) development of a polished piece of work and (6) sharing of products and findings with appropriate audiences. Each year the Newsroom students participate in an average of two Type III projects.

Talent Pool: 4th and 5th grade students whose demonstrated abilities or potential for highly capable behavior based on criteria established by the Washington Administrative Code qualify them for special provisions within, and in addition to, the regular curriculum. Parents may refer their children for consideration in the Talent Pool by filling out a Parent Referral form available in the school office. Referrals must be received prior to the following dates: **November 25** for consideration in the spring Talent Pool and **May 25 or September 25** for consideration in the fall Talent Pool. The following data is collected in the spring of the 3rd grade year and students are notified in the fall as 4th graders:

- a. Evidence that the student scores in the top ten percent in cognitive ability as demonstrated by a standardized ability test;
- b. Evidence that the student scores in the top five percent in one or more specific academic achievement area; and/or
- c. Evidence that the student demonstrates behavioral characteristics for exceptional creativity.

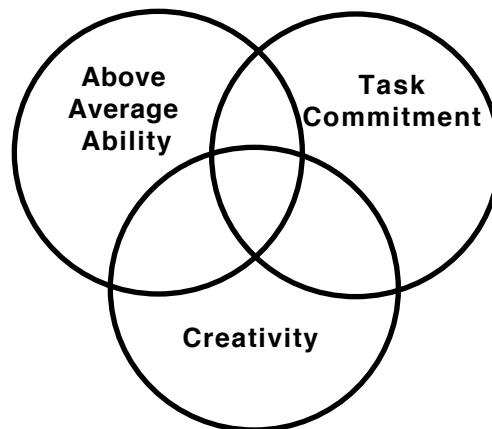
Students identified as part of the Talent Pool are served in Newsroom, Studio and/or Talent Groups.

A Definition of “Gifted Behavior”

“Gifted behavior consists of behaviors that reflect an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits---these clusters being above average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Individuals capable of developing gifted behavior are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. Persons who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs.”

Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli,
The Schoolwide Enrichment Model

WHAT MAKES GIFTEDNESS?



Characteristics Parents May Observe:

The following may be evident in behaviors beyond what is typical for your child's age group:

Intellectual Characteristics:

- Asks many questions
- Tries to solve problems and figure things out
- Has many ideas and a lot to say
- Likes to make new things/and or tell stories
- Amuses himself or herself
- Solves problems in more than one way
- Likes to pretend
- Can stay focused on a task for a long period of time
- Passion for learning; can learn quickly
- Has area of special interest; collect things
- Knows about things of which other children are unaware

Personality Characteristics:

- Need to understand and to know
- Perfectionism
- Need for precision/logic
- Intensity
- Perseverance
- Acute self-awareness
- Challenges authority or adult opinions
- Nonconformity
- Tendency towards introversion
- Sensitivity/empathy
- Strong moral concern; keen sense of justice
- Is sometimes bossy and may not always show interest in helping others
- Displays a sense of humor; makes others laugh

Sources: *Gifted and Talented Children in the Classroom*, E. Paul Torrance & Dorothy A. Sisk, Creative Education Foundation Press, 1997; *"The Journey to Achievement"* presentation to Wenatchee School District by Dr. Patricia Schuler, Creative Insights, 1999.

Suggestions for Parents of Gifted Children

1. Expose the child to music, art objects, and reading. Provide a variety of materials.
2. Be sensitive to the child's moods, degrees of well-being and allow for lapses in performance levels without being critical.
3. Encourage your child's sense of playfulness and the ridiculous as well as interest in innovation and inventiveness.
4. Broaden the child's personal, social, physical and learning environment through activities which take into account physical, social, and intellectual development. Let the child set the pace.
5. Encourage the development of self-help skills, acceptance of responsibility, and the ability to follow through on activities.
6. Be attentive to the development of good listening and communication skills.
7. Encourage your child's sensitivity to and empathy for the needs of others.
8. Assist and encourage your child's special interests to the degree the family is compatible doing so, including such sacrifices as are willingly made.

9. Encourage your child to be self-reliant and resourceful.
10. Encourage the development of the child's natural bent for moral, ethical behavior and for community service.

From: Munger, A. (1990). The parent's role in counseling the gifted: The balance between home and school. In J. VanTassel-Baska (Ed.). *A Practical Guide to Counseling the Gifted in a School Setting* (pp.57-65).

Academic Needs of Highly Capable Students:

- A faster-paced curriculum with less repetition
- A vehicle for covering the traditional curriculum in a shorter time period
- Provision to compact the curriculum
- More abstract, complex, and in-depth content within a subject area
- Experience of learning in an environment that is "student-centered"
- Opportunities to learn and apply a variety of problem solving strategies
- Opportunities to learn and practice research skills
- Provision to work independently
- Opportunities to interact with adult professionals

From: *The Gifted Program Handbook*, J.S. Sorenson (1988)

“What educators and psychologists recognize as giftedness in children is really potential giftedness, which denotes promise rather than fulfillment and probabilities rather than certainties about future accomplishments.

How high these probabilities are in any given case depends on the match between a child's budding talents and the kinds of nurturance provided.”

A. Harry Passow

Wenatchee School District Mission Statement

The Wenatchee School District will:

Personally know and encourage students as individual learners and recognize their academic, citizenship and co-curricular accomplishments;

Assist students to learn and apply essential skills and values to be contributing community citizens with a global perspective;

Challenge student to continually stretch and grow while working with family and community as active partners...”My Child, Your Child, Our Children”.

Wenatchee School District Enrichment Terms and Definitions:

Curriculum Compacting: Mastery of required curriculum is demonstrated at a faster pace in order to create classroom time to work on enrichment. The enrichment specialist may provide supportive materials and supervision/monitoring of student work.

Differentiating Curriculum: Strategies designed to accommodate the various needs of learners in a classroom are employed. Examples include learning centers, tiered assignments, and curriculum compacting.

Enrichment: Experiences or activities that are above or beyond the “regular curriculum.” Challenging classes or activities that not all students could, should or would want to do.

Enrichment Teaching Specialist: Person providing the leadership in planning, developing and providing services in an enrichment program.

Grouping by Readiness: Grouping within a skill area. May be within the classroom, grade-level, cross grade-level. Most commonly done in language arts and math. May include both acceleration and enrichment.

Independent Study: Student contracts to complete specific work or project with supervision and monitoring. The enrichment specialist may help to plan and/or supervise.

Junior Great Books Discussion Groups: The Junior Great Books program focuses on the interpretation of the meaning of specific literature. A classroom teacher may read the selections to the whole class followed by a second reading and in-depth discussion by small groups. The classroom teacher, enrichment specialist, or trained parent volunteer may lead the discussions.

Newsroom: An environment that facilitates self-directed learning projects for Talent Pool students and teacher-referred 4th and 5th grade students.

Parent Nomination: Involves giving parents the opportunity to nominate their own child for participation in the Talent Pool. Parent nomination forms are available at each school and at the enrichment office. Parent nominations are part of the information considered by the Multidisciplinary Selection Team.

Pull-out: Students leave the regular classroom to attend Newsroom, Studio or Talent Groups based on a need for additional challenge in that area, i.e., math, language arts or self-directed study.

Push-in: The enrichment teaching specialist comes into classrooms by teacher invitation for a whole class or small group enrichment activity.

Studio: An inquiry-based environment that supports students in math/science activities or visual/spatial skills.

Schoolwide Enrichment (SE) Team: A group of staff and parents who help to organize the enrichment effort for the school.

Schoolwide Enrichment Model: Developed by Dr. Joseph Renzulli, this model is designed to meet the needs of traditionally defined gifted students as well as to enrich the lives of all students within a given school or district. Key features of this program include: various levels and types of enrichment services; involvement of classroom teacher, parents and administrators; procedures for curriculum compacting; and Enrichment Teams.

Talent Groups: Teachers refer students to Talent Groups based on the student's demonstration of talent in the particular area being served such as mathematical talent, verbal/linguistic talent, or visual/spatial skills. These classes may change several times during the year and may be offered at any grade level. The following criteria are used to help teachers identify students:

- a. Consistent, advanced ability in the subject area, i.e., math, reading, writing, art, etc.
- b. Finishes work at a faster pace than most students (in this area)
- c. Works at a greater level of complexity than most students (in this area)
- d. Motivated or self-directed in topics of interest.

Goals and Objectives For Talent Pool Students:

Leadership Skills:

Listening, appropriate risk-taking, collaboration, compromise, problem solving, organization, creative and abstract thinking, networking, vision and goal setting, sense of community, responsibility, self-directed learning, motivation, task commitment, seeking and offering feedback.

Research Skills:

Ability to formulate important questions, use a wide variety of sources to find answers, understand and use appropriate tools to gather and interpret data, ability to determine the validity and importance of information gathered.

Communication Skills:

Organization of ideas, listening and observation skills, self evaluation of effectiveness of communication, ability to communicate clearly to a range of audiences for different purposes, develop content and ideas, use effective delivery when presenting ideas, use effective language and style, able to select and/or construct effective visual aids to support presentations.

Expectations of Students:

Task Commitment

- Perseverance and concentration
- Participation and acceptance of challenge
- Engagement in classroom tasks
- Pattern of consistent effort

Academic Ability

- Mastery of basic skills
- Understand abstract ideas and grasp concepts quickly
- Knowledge to solve problems

Student Productivity

- High quality work
- Follow-through and completion of assignments on time
- Desire to excel
- Pride in work
- Creativity and originality

Behavior

- Feels success, satisfaction in the program
- Respects right of others to learn
- Behavior conducive to group involvement
- Appropriately matched to the structure of the learning environment

Expectations of Teachers of Talent Pool Students:

You can expect:

- A professional teacher with background and training in gifted education.
- Well-developed curriculum based on research findings on best practices for highly capable students.
- Clear expectations for students with teacher and student evaluation of performance.
- A letter to be sent home at the beginning and end of each Talent Group and/or Newsroom unit.
- Willingness to collaborate with parents and classroom teachers to help to make school a positive and growing experience for your child.
- A teacher who cares about your child's academic growth and emotional well being.
- A teacher who welcomes your input and communication and is available for conferences by appointment.

Not to be Expected From Teachers of Talent Pool Students:

- Personal communication--With approximately 250 students participating in Talent Groups and Newsroom each week, it's impossible for the Enrichment Teacher to communicate with each parent (although she'd like to!) **Please always feel free to contact her with any questions or concerns!**
- Mandatory participation for your student--The Schoolwide Enrichment Model is built on the premise that student interests and commitment should be taken into consideration in their enrichment options. Just like adults, sometimes children feel over-loaded or just plain uninterested in a particular enrichment unit of study. Although the enrichment teacher will encourage your child to develop his/her talents, participation is always optional. At the beginning of each new unit of study a letter will be sent home asking for your signature. After discussing the Talent Group or Newsroom unit, please indicate your child's desire to participate. A child identified as part of the Talent Pool will be invited to participate in at least one group at all times during the year. For example, if your child is particularly strong in math, he or she may be served through a math Talent Group and/or Studio, while a student with very strong verbal linguistic skill and talent may be served through Newsroom. A student demonstrating high ability in more than one talent area may also be served through multiple groups. **However, once a child has made a commitment to a particular unit, it is expected that he or she will finish that unit and meet the expectations of the unit which will be discussed at the first class meeting.** Parents will receive notification, either by phone or letter, informing them if their child is not involved in enrichment.

Ways Parents Can Support Talent Pool Students:

- Be sure to help us with our communication goals by signing and returning any forms sent home. Watch for yellow paper or an enrichment folder to come home.
- Ask about enrichment experiences! On your child's day(s) for enrichment ask about written information or materials needed.
- Contact the enrichment teacher with any questions or concerns.
- Return the noon enrichment volunteer form to share your talents, interests, and expertise with a group of interested students.
- Listen to student's ideas and what they plan to do. Ask lots of questions. Avoid giving solutions. Allow them to make mistakes and let them figure out how to resolve them.
- Model the "fun" of learning!

Ways to Support Your Child's Talents

based on Karen Roger's book,
Re-Forming Gifted Education

1. Provide advanced learning opportunities, regardless of your child's age, in the specific area(s) in which your child's talents and interests lie

- Follow their interests (not necessarily your interests)
- Don't try to do too much at once but focus on one thing at a time
- Balance physical activities with intellectual challenges

2. Provide opportunities for socialization with others of like ability or interests

- Enrichment classes at school
- Saturday or Summer School enrichment

3. Provide opportunities for socialization with a mix of adults and children of varying abilities and ages

- Build a sense of "community" through clubs or church activities
- Summer camps or classes (scholarships are usually available)

4. Find ways for your child to understand his/her own identity and uniqueness

- Provide large blocks of time for your child to work alone or with you on the development of his/her talents and interests
- Allow your child to discuss moral and ethical dilemmas
- Ask "what if" questions
- Provide books, especially biographies, that depict people who overcame great difficulties or moral dilemmas

5. Provide you child with some of the "classics" of literature, philosophy, art, music and theater

- Public library
- Museums
- Art displays, art shops
- Music and drama productions

6. Provide a variety of experiences that build fine-motor skills, dexterity, and spatial visualization

- Learn a musical instrument
- Keyboarding and computer skills
- Chess, legos, origami
- Learn to use a compass and map
- Take apart old machines, motors, appliances, computers
- Art: drawing, painting, sculpture

7. Provide experiences that require memorization and improving the ability to remember

- Use gimmicks to remember information
- Learn poems or speeches
- Drama

8. Help your child learn to communicate precisely and expressively

- Spend less time watching TV and more time listening to the radio or books on tape
- Get involved in a book club or Junior Great Books
- Debate
- Drama

9. Teach your child a variety of problem-solving strategies that will help in social, real world, and academic situations

- Destination Imagination, Knowledge Bowl, Math Counts, and other competitions
- Solving mysteries and riddles
- Play strategy games
- Humor, puns, creativity
- Encourage curiosity, fantasy
- Give your child responsibilities and chores
- It's OK to make mistakes (avoid perfectionism)
- Set goals, meet deadlines, become a self-directed learner

10. Help your child feel comfortable in and knowledgeable about the world

- Family trips
- Camping
- Historic places
- Explore geography and other cultures through books and videos
- Discuss current events

Parent Resources

For more information on Gifted Children contact:

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
1707 L Street, N.W., Suite 550
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 785-4268
www.nagc.org

Northwest Gifted Child Association (NWGCA)
P. O. Box 1226
Bellevue, WA 98009
1-800-864-2073

Washington Association of Educators of Talented and Gifted (WAETAG)
P.O. Box 870
Coupeville, WA 98239
www.waetag.net

Washington Coalition for Gifted Education
P. O. Box 870
Coupeville, WA 98239
bpoyneer@earthlink.net

Hoagies Gifted Education Page
www.hoagiesgifted.org/

Gifted Development Center, Dr. Linda Silverman
www.gifteddevelopment.com

Wenatchee School District Enrichment Office
Enrichment Library at district office, 235 Sunset Ave., Wenatchee
Enrichment News, available bi-monthly at home.wsd.wednet.edu (Enrichment link)

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