



MANHATTAN BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

GATE Plan  
June 2008

MANHATTAN BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# GATE PLAN

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Gifted & Talented Education  
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## GATE Program Design

*The district provides a comprehensive continuum of services and program options responsive to the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted students and based on philosophical, theoretical, and empirical support. [EC Section 52205d and 52206a]*

### 1:1 Philosophy, Goals, and Standards

#### **Philosophy**

The mission of the Manhattan Beach Unified School District's (MBUSD) Gifted and Talented Education Program (GATE) is to provide gifted and talented students differentiated instruction that is commensurate with their abilities. Gifted and talented students pursue their education under the guidance of GATE certificated teachers in an atmosphere that is intellectually and academically rigorous, fosters creativity, and provides emotional support.

A district GATE Advisory Committee representing all stakeholders meets monthly during the school year to assist in program planning and assessment. Stakeholders include educators, community members, and parents. Parent representatives from each of the district schools, an elementary, middle, and high school administrator, a Board of Trustees member, and guests regularly attend monthly meetings. These meetings are facilitated by the Executive Director of Educational Services and the GATE Coordinator.

Starting in March of 2008, a sub-committee of the GATE Advisory Committee began collaborating to write the MBUSD GATE Plan, aligning it with available resources. Teachers, administrators, Board members, and parents on the GATE Advisory Committee reviewed a draft version and provided input. The Board of Trustees approved the plan in June, 2008. The Advisory Committee will review this plan annually to discuss standards, student needs, and program logistics. A pamphlet highlighting key elements of the GATE Plan will be given to parents at GATE informational meetings, and the entire GATE Plan will be accessible on MBUSD GATE website. Additionally, the GATE Plan will be posted in the staff room at each school.

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## **Goals**

The purpose of the GATE program in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) is to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students identified in the intellectual, creative, and high achievement categories and to help them develop into autonomous, lifelong learners. Most GATE program facets provide services in the everyday classroom, eliminating logistical issues. The GATE program is designed to:

- Provide activities that are differentiated in nature and require higher-level, logical, and creative thinking.
- Provide time for students to pursue projects and activities at a more sophisticated level.
- Empower students to use technology and advanced research tools to enhance their learning.
- Give students opportunities to work with their intellectual peers for a portion of their school experience.
- Develop independent study habits and social skills that will enable the students to work productively alone or with others.

## **Standards**

State content standards and district guidelines are used to plan instruction and curriculum that is organized as an integrated, differentiated learning experience within the regular school day.

- GATE students are clustered together to provide opportunities to work with students of similar abilities.
  - GATE teachers incorporate advanced learning opportunities in at least four areas of differentiation: (1) acceleration/pacing, (2) depth, (3) complexity, (4) novelty of curricular tasks.
  - GATE students receive instruction from classroom teachers who are certificated or actively pursuing certification in gifted methodology.
  - The GATE program meets the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted students.
  - The GATE program stimulates creative abilities, develops higher-level thinking processes, and provides opportunities for the gifted to pursue their particular interests.
  - GATE students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of visual and performing arts. At the middle and high schools, multiple levels of art, drama, and choral and instrumental music are available for students.
  - The GATE program offers curriculum that promotes character development and an understanding of morality and ethics.
  - Parents of GATE students participate regularly in the implementation and evaluation of the GATE program and are offered resources to better understand the needs of their gifted child.
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## 1:2 Administrative Groupings and Structures

A comprehensive K-12 program provides GATE services that are an integral part of the school day, emphasizing both cognitive and affective development. Students benefit from teachers representative of all grade levels and several content areas who receive training in meeting the affective needs of gifted learners. GATE students' progress is monitored regularly to ensure growth. The program provides students with time to collaborate with their mental-age peers. Specific examples of a range of GATE administrative groupings and structures follow:

- Enrichment opportunities are available at each school campus, K-12. Some examples include Scholar Quiz (grades 6 – 12), advanced instrumental sectionals (grades 3-12), overnight learning excursions, Math Counts, Science Olympiad, Odyssey of the Mind, and many after school clubs.
- In high school, a wide variety of honors and advanced placement classes are available to any qualified student. For example, in 2007-2008, 18 advanced placement classes were offered ranging from AP studio art to AP physics.
- Courses covering a wide array of special interest areas such as marine science, aviation, aerospace engineering, web page design, women's literature, humor in literature, and video technology are offered to high school students.
- Identified gifted students are brought together to work with their intellectual peers on in-depth projects. Students are offered self-selected assignments, and student self-assessment is encouraged. To illustrate, some fourth grade students are offered the opportunity to select from an extension menu of choices to demonstrate mastery of electricity and magnetism concepts.
- Based upon frequent assessments, students are clustered in flexible groupings and provided with accelerated curriculum and instruction. Acceleration in mathematics is commonplace at all grade levels. For example, Geometry and Algebra II are offered to eighth grade students who demonstrate mastery of grade level standards.
- Beginning in kindergarten, students are grouped according to subject competency through district benchmark assessments and pre/post-testing. Curriculum is accelerated and enriched based on mastery of standards.
- Leadership opportunities are provided to students through cooperative class activities, student government and clubs, community service, and a range of athletic activities.
- Administrative groupings for students include homogeneous, heterogeneous, interest-based, gender-based, and randomly selected clusters.

## 1:3 Program Articulation

Starting with the 2008-2009 school year, the GATE Coordinator will be providing services to clusters of gifted students in the general education classroom via a push-in model. This structure will ensure continuity between the gifted and general education programs.

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The K-12 GATE program involves the school district, the home, and the community. The Executive Director of Educational Services, who is also GATE certificated, oversees the GATE program. Administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and the district's GATE Coordinator implement the overall GATE program. The GATE Coordinator at the elementary and middle schools, a designated vice-principal at the high school, and educational counselors provide more specific support to teachers, students, and parents through newsletters, workshops, informational meetings, and individual conferencing.

Parents are active partners in the district's GATE program. They help to plan and evaluate the program, assist with GATE activities, and attend GATE-sponsored workshops with consultants such as Dr. James Delisle. Community partnerships include Northrop Grumman, The Japanese American National Museum, Universal Music Group, Huntington Library, Hyperion Water and Treatment Plant, and Manhattan Beach Botanical Garden. These community connections allow students to explore state standards in greater depth with experts in the field, providing articulated experiences across subjects and grade levels.

GATE students are provided a comprehensive, structured, and sequenced curriculum at all grade levels. To illustrate:

- Elementary students are clustered with a GATE certificated teacher within their general education classroom. One strategy implemented is an extension menu providing students choices in activities and assignments.
- Middle school students are clustered in their general education science and elective classes. All students experience a weeklong, interdisciplinary study of space science during the annual school-wide Space Week sponsored by Northrop Grumman. The GATE students are clustered in a separate strand for the entire week. Eighth grade students culminate their Space Week with a debate on actual space science issues and are judged by space scientists in the community.
- High school students are offered a broad spectrum of classes to accommodate their needs and interests, including a multitude of honors and AP classes. Courses provided by the local community college for college credit are offered on campus, including Introduction to Drawing and History of Film. Courses provided by the regional occupational center on campus include Video Game Design and Aerospace Engineering.

GATE students at all grade levels benefit from the expertise of multiple consultants as mentioned above, as well as from social/emotional and academic support services provided by counselors, as delineated in 4:1 and 4:2.

## GATE Identification

***The district's identification procedures are equitable, comprehensive, ongoing, and reflect the district's definition of giftedness and current state criteria.*** [EC Section 52202 and CCR; Title 5, Section 3822]

### 2:1 Nomination/Referral Process

All Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) pupils are eligible to be nominated for inclusion in the GATE program regardless of socioeconomic, linguistic or cultural background, and/or disabilities. With parent permission, all third grade students are tested for GATE identification. Parents, teachers, students, and staff are encouraged to nominate any student in fourth grade and above who shows evidence of high-level, logical, or creative thinking regardless of his/her achievement level in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to confer with the GATE Coordinator if there is an indication that the student may be an underachieving gifted student.

The district establishes and implements both traditional and nontraditional instruments and procedures in searching for gifted students. The test of cognitive ability presently used is the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). A nonverbal test, the Matrix Analogies Test (MAT), is given to all non-English speaking students and to other students if recommended by a Student Study Team.

Teachers, administrators, support personnel, and parents are provided with information and training on the characteristics of gifted students to assist in the nomination process. For example, the district has provided teacher in-service and parent meetings featuring speakers David Ghoogasian (2007–2008) and Jim Delisle (2006-2007). Students who are nominated but who do not qualify can be nominated again in the future. Students can be given a test of cognitive ability twice in any three-year period. The district maintains data on nominees and includes it when reassessing students.

The GATE Coordinator provides appropriate training to staff about the characteristics/indicators of gifted students and the nomination process during grade level, departmental, and staff meetings, as well as in meetings with district

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administration. Staff also receives information concerning gifted students, handouts, nomination forms, and timelines for the screening process. The GATE Coordinator sends out informational letters to parents and updates the GATE website with specifics about the GATE screening process, placement, and program.

## 2:2 Assessment/Identification Process

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) recognizes that many students within the district have exceptional cognitive strengths, and every effort is made to identify and meet the needs of these students. Beginning in third grade, parents are given the opportunity to have their children screened for the gifted program using a test of cognitive abilities. Multiple sources are used to determine eligibility, and a data file is established for each nominee.

The identification tools selected are reflective of the district's population. While the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) meets the needs of the majority of the district's population, the Matrix Analogies Test (MAT) is available for the small percentage of students who are identified as English Language Learners. Analysis of the results of GATE screening underscores that diversity of the student body exists in the GATE population. GATE certificated teachers and the GATE Coordinator meet each trimester to discuss student identification, provide input on individual candidates, and make final determinations.

MBUSD uses the following categories to identify gifted and talented students: Intellectual Ability, High Achievement, and Creative Ability. Based on current research and thorough analysis of student data, the criteria for identification in those categories has been updated as recently as 2005. Parents, teachers, and administrators are notified of a student's eligibility for program placement, and individual test scores are mailed home. Appeals may be made through the Student Study Team process.

All transfer students new to the district are offered the opportunity for GATE testing. Existing test scores for gifted and talented identified students transferring into MBUSD will be considered. The GATE Student Study Team at each school site also identifies those students who may be underachieving gifted children and develops an action plan to assist these students in reaching their potential.

## 2:3 Service Options and Placement

Upon qualification for GATE, students and parents are provided information and orientation regarding placement and participation options. Parents must provide written permission prior to student participation in GATE. Once identified, a student remains identified as a gifted student in the district. Services to individuals may vary from year to year as the program evolves. If requested by a parent, the district will provide identification information to a new district or alternative placement.

Before any student is considered for removal from the GATE program, multiple classroom strategies will be employed to address social, emotional, and/or academic

issues. If further need for intervention exists, a Student Study Team meeting is conducted. The GATE Coordinator, parents, and the gifted student discuss the circumstances. Suggested solutions developed by the Student Study Team are implemented and assessed for their effectiveness on an ongoing basis. If the student still has not progressed satisfactorily by a designated follow-up Student Study Team meeting, the team may determine that withdrawal from the GATE program is in the student's and/or the program's best interests.

## GATE Curriculum and Instruction

***Districts develop differentiated curriculum, instructional models, and strategies that are aligned with and extend the state academic content standards and curriculum frameworks. The differentiated curriculum is related to theories, models, and practices from the recognized literature in the field.*** (EC 52206 [a] [b])

### 3:1 Differentiated Curriculum Responsive to Needs, Interests, and Abilities

The scope and sequence for the Manhattan Beach Unified School District's (MBUSD) gifted program is based upon the California academic content standards and curriculum frameworks in language arts, mathematics, history, science, and visual and performing arts in grades K-12. In the general education classroom, teachers use these standards as a framework to guide instructional content and to use a variety of differentiation models to support pedagogy.

After identifying the essential skills and knowledge required to master the content standards, teachers assess students' prior knowledge and mastery using formal assessments and informal observations. Curriculum may be compacted for students who have demonstrated mastery of material and skills or to prevent redundant learning experiences.

Differentiation recognizes that students not only vary in their readiness to learn, but also in their interests and preferred learning styles. MBUSD provides GATE students a differentiated learning experience based upon their specific interests. A few examples from elementary, middle, and high school include Model UN, vocal and instrumental music, drama, musical theater, student government, Scholar Quiz, robotics, video production, broadcast journalism, science fairs, and independent studies. In addition, the GATE Advisory Committee has expressed a strong interest in providing training for staff

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and parents in the Odyssey of the Mind program. The district is supporting an inaugural competitive season for the 2008-2009 school year.

Abstract thinking, big ideas, and inquiry methods are some of the instructional strategies used. Teachers adapt their lessons to accommodate these various preferences and abilities so that the entire range of students in the classroom is engaged in learning and achieves success. Teachers implement a variety of differentiation strategies that focus on depth and complexity to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all learners. Alignment of differentiated curriculum with instructional strategies promotes metacognition, inquiry, self-directed learning, discussion, and debate, among other modes of learning. An example of metacognition in action is during Math Olympiad, when students share their thought processes with each other in arriving at problem solutions.

Curriculum is differentiated through advanced content, process, and authentic and appropriate products based on the Tomlinson model. When fourth grade students are assigned different novels based upon reading levels in their literature circles, for example, the content moves the students beyond grade-level standards.

With flexible, leveled mathematics and English language arts groups at the elementary schools, the learning process is dynamic. Students are assessed on a regular basis and change groups depending on the content and skills being taught. Differentiation strategies that are regularly employed at all grade levels include variation in assessment formats, compacting, tiered activities and products, group investigations, independent learning outcomes, product criteria negotiated jointly by student and teacher, and graduated task and product rubrics.

Capable students are encouraged to take advanced academic content. At the elementary level, gifted students are reading and analyzing novels with advanced content and themes. The district adopted the Saxon Mathematics program that introduces concepts at grade level and above. In both the middle and high schools, students may advance to higher levels of math through placement testing. Students may also study foreign languages such as Spanish, Latin, or French.

The middle school provides three levels of band, three levels of strings, and four different choirs into which students can be placed based on their readiness. At the high school, there are four bands, three string ensembles, a combined orchestra, and four levels of choir. Vocal and instrumental music groups consistently have received unanimous superior ratings at adjudicated festivals.

Students can also perform in Shakespearean plays and musical theater productions. At the high school level, gifted students have access to advanced content in every subject field. In April 2008, students in the high school broadcast journalism class competed in a national competition winning awards in all categories. The high school offers 18 Advanced Placement classes as well as numerous honors courses. After-school programs and clubs offer extensive enrichment to students such as journalism, chess, math enrichment, FIRST LEGO League, FIRST Robotics, and Odyssey of the Mind.

Novelty, the unique and original expression of student learning, is encouraged in all classrooms. Students are given opportunities to demonstrate understanding through extension menus with choices ranging from writing a sequel to a book, creating a newspaper, designing a web page, or creating an animated film. To illustrate a more detailed example, some seventh grade students in a GATE science cluster complete an I-Search project based on Joseph Renzulli's guidelines. They take an idea that captures their curiosity and hunt for facts and concepts firsthand. Students then organize their thoughts using the elements of depth and complexity while concurrently recording their process of discovery. Their research then becomes the foundation for a web page, a video, a book, or some other display of discovery. In addition, students may qualify for acceleration via self-directed learning to a more challenging mathematics, science, social science, foreign language and/or English class if mastery of the state standards in their current grade level is demonstrated.

Students who show readiness may advance through the curriculum at an accelerated pace. Elementary teachers are encouraged to group students according to ability in math and language arts. Beginning in middle school, a comprehensive range of courses in math is available for students. Students are placed in math levels as determined by a standards-based pre-test and teacher recommendation. Advanced learners in the middle school may take an accelerated course in foreign language, geometry, algebra III/IV, or biology at the high school. Uniquely qualified high school students may attend local colleges or universities to continue their studies in a particular subject area.

Within the various content areas, students are encouraged to explore ramifications of scientific discoveries, responsibilities of actions within historical context, and general contributions to society. In recognition of the importance of social consciousness and being responsible and sensitive to others, the differentiation of curriculum facilitates the development of ethical standards and positive self-concept. For example, there is a yearly GATE field trip to The Japanese American National Museum so students can explore sensitive ethical issues of internment during World War II. Eighth grade GATE students participate in debates on the ethics of manned vs. unmanned space flight and space debris during middle school Space Week.

### 3:2 Differentiated Curriculum Structures and Resources

In MBUSD, GATE students are provided a differentiated curriculum that is planned both for groups of gifted learners within a grade level or subject area and for individual gifted learners. Taking into account on-going pre-assessment results along with both group and individual goals, teachers employ a variety of flexible grouping strategies to best deliver curriculum e.g. whole group, homogeneous and heterogeneous groups, interest or modality-based groups, and independent study.

Differentiated curriculum is scheduled on a regular basis and is integral to the school day. Teachers regularly incorporate questioning strategies that address the elements of depth and complexity and the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to encourage higher order thinking skills. Teachers are also trained to employ instructional strategies that recognize and nurture multiple intelligences, encourage

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metacognition, and stimulate creativity in students. To promote inquiry, the Socratic Method, debate protocol, and in-depth discussions are often used in the classroom. At each grade level, teachers facilitate students' transfer of knowledge between content areas as well as their understanding of broader societal issues.

Many of the best practices utilized by the teachers are modeled after the work of Kaplan, Tomlinson, and Renzulli. Kaplan's depth and complexity icons are prominently displayed and corresponding elements are integrated into the curriculum in nearly every classroom. Classroom projects regularly include analysis through themes such as power, change, and perspective. In 2007, the district committed to providing GATE certification training on-site to any interested teacher. The program is offered through a partnership with UC Irvine Extension. The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program incorporates extensive differentiation training for new teachers. Teachers are encouraged to attend and/or present at the annual California Association of the Gifted conference as well as other conferences focusing on meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.

To explore concepts more fully and to supplement independent study opportunities, students are supported by a varied and extensive range of materials and technology. At each school, students are encouraged to use computers and the Internet in computer labs, the library, and the classroom. Each school has an extensive library media center with a trained specialist who can assist students with research. The middle school has wireless laptop carts that teachers can check out and use with smaller groups of students or entire classes. Students at all school sites are able to confer with a broad range of community experts, benefit from the Artist in Residence program, and participate in several extra curricular field trip experiences.

Many on-site specialists are utilized throughout the district to differentiate and enrich curriculum. Science specialists at all elementary sites provide hands-on laboratory enrichment for students based on grade level standards. In addition to providing remediation, reading specialists at some sites also augment English language arts instruction by implementing the inquiry strategies of the Junior Great Books program. Additionally, several sites hold Math Olympiad events, and students participate in statewide mathematics tournaments. At the middle and high schools, students can participate in the academic Scholar Quiz competition as a member of a four-person team.

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## Social and Emotional Development

***Districts establish and implement plans to support the social and emotional development of gifted learners to increase responsibility, self-awareness, and other issues of affective development.*** (EC 52212[a][1])

### 4:1 Ongoing Actions to Meet Affective Needs

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) endeavors to provide a nurturing environment for all students that assists them in reaching their cognitive and affective potential. Teachers strive to create classroom environments where gifted children feel accepted and have opportunities to work collaboratively. To address gifted students' social and emotional development, it is critical that teachers, counselors, and administrators recognize and understand the affective characteristics of giftedness, receive regular training on meeting gifted students' social/emotional needs in the classroom, and know the district and community resources available to assist gifted students and their parents.

Teachers, counselors, parents, and administrators receive ongoing training to address the unique social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students. Recent presenters have included Dr. James Delisle and Mr. David Ghoogasian. Affective traits covered in these sessions include:

- perfectionism
- feelings of isolation from non-gifted classmates
- desire to be accepted by others
- heightened sensitivity to ethical and moral dilemmas

A primary goal of these workshops is to provide techniques which can be incorporated into the classroom or home setting to support students' affective needs.

Teachers and other school personnel understand how to encourage gifted students to take risks and accept failure, set realistic goals and benchmarks, manage stress, communicate with peers and adults, and prioritize tasks. The district's schools employ positive reinforcement programs such as Character Counts and intervention strategy simulations such as Every 15 Minutes to acknowledge and encourage positive character traits in young people. These programs nurture and recognize the qualities of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. In addition, all school sites offer

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community service programs that help students embrace the concept of social responsibility. The People Attaining Complete Equality (PACE) class at the high school promotes tolerance and respect for others. Other aspects of this class include substance abuse prevention and conflict mediation. Students at the middle school have the same counselor for all three years, as do high schoolers for their four years, allowing the opportunity for strong student-counselor bonds to form.

For students having difficulty making and maintaining friends, counseling groups are available. Licensed therapists work on specific peer relationship goals for each student participating in the group. Students who have more severe social/emotional needs may be referred to a site-based Student Study Team and community resources. Trained personnel including the GATE Coordinator, teachers, a school counselor, and a psychologist, as well as parents and the student are invited. At the meeting, the student's specific social/emotional challenges are addressed, and an intervention plan is developed and documented. A case manager is assigned to each student to ensure that the plan is being implemented as written. Referrals to community resources are made when appropriate.

GATE students are clustered in general education classrooms with teachers who have been GATE certificated with an emphasis on social/emotional development. Certification consists of a comprehensive 90-hour program, located at an MBUSD site, offered by UC Irvine Extension. Included in this certification is an emphasis on implementing intervention strategies for underachieving and at-risk gifted youth. These strategies incorporate home, community, and school settings.

All high school students are provided counseling services consistent with their unique strengths at the College and Career Center on the high school campus. Mentoring and pre-college opportunities such as internships at Northrop Grumman and Raleigh Studios are offered. An annual college fair and an online service, Naviance, provide students with access to information on hundreds of colleges and universities around the country. At both the middle and high schools, a Career Expo is held yearly to highlight a variety of career options that students may like to explore.

## 4:2 At-Risk Student Monitoring and Support

MBUSD feels strongly that it is important to provide proactive support for potential at-risk gifted students through staff development and targeted intervention. As part of a district-developed initiative, teachers work in consult with school counselors and administrators to determine internal and external means of support. Instead of excluding students from gifted services when they are experiencing academic and/or other difficulties, intervention strategies are developed to target the issues and challenges specific to the gifted student. A personalized intervention plan is created with benchmarks for evaluating progress toward meeting stated goals.

At the high school, a licensed therapist/credentialed teacher has been designated as the Student Intervention Advisor, the point person to whom students, parents, and staff turn for assistance with substance abuse and other at-risk behaviors. This advisor attends

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community forums on destructive teen behaviors and facilitates workshops to disseminate this information to the middle and high school parents. Announcements regarding these workshops are sent out electronically with hard copies also available in school offices.

General information and support are easily accessible to parents of the gifted via the GATE Coordinator and district website. Referral sites to agencies include:

- Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth
- Summer Institute for the Gifted
- Davidson Institute
- California Association for the Gifted
- National Association for Gifted Children
- GATE Advisory Committee



## Professional Development

***Districts provide professional development opportunities related to gifted education to administrators, teachers, and staff to support and improve educational opportunities for gifted students. (EC 52212[a][1])***

### 5:1 Professional Development Opportunities

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) provides an ongoing professional development program correlated with the defined competencies for teachers of the gifted and the GATE standards. The objective of this staff development is to give teachers the tools to provide advanced learning opportunities to capable students on a regular basis. Teachers are trained to incorporate differentiation strategies such as acceleration, complex instruction, higher level questioning, tiered assignments, elements of depth and complexity, curriculum compacting, and independent study.

The district is coordinating staff development on differentiation for gifted students with other areas of staff development such as the English language learner and special education programs. Teachers are also trained to differentiate via specialized workshops on all newly adopted instructional materials.

Opportunities for staff development related to gifted learners are based upon the varying needs of teachers, students, and the GATE program at each site. District teachers complete an annual survey assessing their training and professional development needs. The data gleaned from the survey is used to assist in creating site and district professional development plans for the following school year. After each district workshop, participants rate its effectiveness and offer suggestions to make improvements for future inservice opportunities.

The district has contracted with experts in the field of gifted and talented education to deliver staff development. Recent examples have included:

- David Ghoogasian on “How the Brain Learns” and “Emotional Intelligence”
  - Dr. James Delisle on “Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted”
  - Jon Pearson on “Creative Thinking”
  - Kim Thoman on “Depth and Complexity” and “Differentiation of Instruction”
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MBUSD encourages teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff to focus on gifted education for professional growth hours, voluntary staff development, and credential renewal. Each fall, teachers are provided with information that outlines the district-sponsored staff development opportunities available throughout the coming school year. Included in these options are sessions on gifted and talented pedagogy. In addition to on-site staff development, teachers are encouraged to attend the California Association of the Gifted conference as well as local workshops with experts such as Roger Taylor and Mary Kay Law.

In preparation for the 2008-2009 transition from a pull-out to a cluster grouping model, MBUSD began offering an on-site GATE certificate program through UC Irvine Extension. The program is comprised of five courses that include:

- Differentiation of Instruction
- Learning Styles
- How the Brain Learns
- Critical Thinking
- Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted

Teachers at all grade levels are encouraged to undertake GATE certification training. Upon completion of the nine-unit program, teachers receive a certificate from UC Irvine Extension. Certificated teachers are eligible to be assigned to the GATE clusters in grades four through eight, or use the knowledge gained in their general education classes in grades K-12.

Once GATE certificated, teachers have the option of being reimbursed by the district for the entire tuition cost, or they may use the units toward professional growth hours for salary advancement. This policy has encouraged both novice and veteran teachers to undertake GATE certification. Since summer 2007, over 25 teachers have completed this training, ensuring that all GATE clusters will be taught by GATE certificated teachers in 2008-2009. This certification process continues to gain momentum, providing increasing expertise in GATE pedagogy.

Should teachers wish to pursue alternative means of GATE certification, they may select another program which is comparable in quality and scope, with prior approval from the Executive Director of Educational Services.

## 5:2 Role-Specific Training

MBUSD provides an on-site formal GATE certificate program described in section 5:1 above. Teachers of the GATE clusters have completed or are in the process of completing this program.

The Executive Director of Educational Services and the GATE Coordinator both oversee all aspects of gifted education in MBUSD. Current personnel in these positions, Carolyn Seaton and Alyse McDonald, respectively, have demonstrated experience and knowledge of gifted education and are recognized as GATE specialists. Carolyn Seaton has

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presented numerous local workshops in California and has conducted local and state level staff development in Texas.

Throughout the school year, as described above in 5:1, the district provides GATE training for not only teachers, but also administrators, counselors, and support staff. For example, Dr. James Delisle presented a session to district administrators specifically relating to their roles and responsibilities to support the gifted students at their school sites. In addition, all district stakeholders, including parents, were represented at David Ghoogasian's presentation on emotional intelligence.

Perhaps the most meaningful staff development occurs when an expert teacher mentors a colleague. All teachers are given the opportunity for release time to observe mentor teachers who have had training in gifted methodology. These mentors model differentiation within the classroom and provide support as needed. Through the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program, experienced teachers are paired with beginning teachers and mentor them throughout their first two years. They attend workshops, plan, and problem-solve together. Specific workshops on differentiation are an integral part of the BTSA program.

To ensure staff development follow-up, the GATE Coordinator will attend grade level and departmental meetings, staff meetings, and provide on-site consultation for teachers. Furthermore, district-wide meetings of GATE cluster teachers by grade level or by subject are regularly scheduled to facilitate collaboration.

Beginning in 2008-2009, the GATE Coordinator will support gifted students and their teachers through a push-in model at each of the districts' five elementary schools and at the middle school. She will collaborate on a weekly basis with the GATE certificated teachers to differentiate standards-based curriculum. The GATE Coordinator will also model lessons on differentiated instruction to GATE clusters in the general education classroom.

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## Parent and Community Involvement

***The district provides procedures to ensure consistent participation of parents and community members in the planning and evaluation of programs for gifted students (EC 52205 f)***

### 6:1 Communication

Communication with parents is an essential component of the GATE program. The Manhattan Beach Unified School District's (MBUSD) criteria and procedures for identifying gifted and talented students and the learning opportunities available to them are explained via letters sent to the homes of every third grade student and to fourth through eighth grade students new to the district. This information is also available on the district website and translations are offered as applicable. Parents of newly identified GATE students are invited to attend an orientation meeting, and all GATE parents receive regular updates regarding the program and additional opportunities for gifted students. Mailings, email, and the district GATE website provide multiple means for communication.

It is critical for all stakeholders to have access to the district's GATE Plan, which was developed jointly by both district staff and parents from the GATE Plan subcommittee. This plan is available on the district website, and hard copies are available at each school site.

The achievements of gifted students are shared with parents through a variety of methods. During Space Week at the middle school, for example, parents are invited to observe culminating products of the students' efforts during a Model United Nations style of debate. Parents also attend student exhibits and performances at elementary, middle, and high schools. In addition to art shows and concerts, middle school students perform three Shakespearean works and one musical every year to which the public is invited.

The district solicits evaluations of the GATE program annually from parents, students, and staff. Each stakeholder group is asked via mail and email to complete an online

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survey that has been developed by the GATE Advisory Committee. Hard copies of the surveys are also available. A subcommittee of the GATE Advisory Committee, including parents, analyzes the survey results. Data gleaned from the survey is shared at a fall committee meeting, posted on the district's website, and addressed in school newsletters to parents.

In MBUSD, core and differentiated curriculum are supplemented through many resources. The GATE program is fortunate to have parents in diverse professions who participate in activities with GATE students. Past examples include:

- A middle school parent organized and coached a Math Counts team.
- Medical professionals lent their expertise to students during a fetal pig dissection.
- Under the guidance of a music business executive, students wrote lyrics and recorded a song in a professional music studio.
- A parent led students in a simulation that required creating and marketing a product within a fictitious business model.
- A Roundhouse Aquarium marine biologist taught the students about the importance of light and color in the ocean and how they affect the entire Earth.

Community and business partnerships continue to support instruction of GATE students. PTAs and the Manhattan Beach Education Foundation provide funds to support many district services that benefit GATE students, including comprehensive vocal and instrumental music programs, counselors at both the middle and high schools, and scholarships to ensure all gifted students are able to attend learning opportunities. Community partnerships are encouraged in the GATE program. Presently the students are learning from various experts from Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Challenger Space Center, San Clemente Ocean Institute, UCLA Extension, USC, as well as the partnerships listed in section 1:3.

## 6:2 GATE Advisory Committee

Parent representatives from each of the five elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school serve on the GATE Advisory Committee along with district staff and a member of the Board of Trustees. The GATE Advisory Committee meets monthly and ad hoc committees meet on an as needed basis. The district GATE Plan was developed and signed by both district staff and parents from the GATE Plan subcommittee.

Every effort is made to include individuals reflecting the demographics of the student population. Meeting times and locations are flexible to accommodate the needs of parents. The advisory committee created the GATE philosophy, goals, standards, and student identification and program evaluation criteria. At the suggestion of the GATE Advisory Committee, pilot programs have been implemented. For example, in 2008, gifted sixth grade students were clustered for the first time during the educational portion of their weeklong outdoor science school. Examination of the annual GATE survey results led the GATE Advisory Committee to propose a weeklong interdisciplinary school-wide experience known as Space Week, in which middle school GATE students

are clustered. At the high school, a pilot program is being created to identify and counsel underachieving GATE students.

The district GATE Coordinator collaborates with the GATE Advisory Committee to provide parent education opportunities related to gifted education and staff development. For example, teachers and parents have attended professional development opportunities. Titles included “Depth and Complexity,” “Emotional Intelligence,” and “How the Brain Learns.” Before the district began a partnership with the UC Irvine Extension to offer GATE certification to general education teachers, UC Irvine Extension representatives presented program content and logistics to the GATE Advisory Committee. Parents and community, including GATE Advisory Committee members, are regularly informed of current research and literature in gifted education. For example, parents are invited to attend gifted conferences and receive articles from *Gifted Education Communicator*.

As previously highlighted in sections 1:3 and 6:1, the district GATE Coordinator and the GATE Advisory Committee solicit community support for gifted education from many sources. These partnerships have become increasingly important for supporting GATE education as state funding changes.



## Program Assessment

*The district establishes formal and informal evaluation methods and instruments that assess the gifted program and the performance of gifted students. Results of the data collected, including state standardized tests, are used to study the value and impact of the services provided and to improve the program and gifted student performance. (EC 52212 [a][1])*

### 7:1 GATE Program and Student Assessment

#### **Program Evaluation**

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) has a very active GATE Advisory Committee comprised of both district and parent resources. Parents representing all schools, administrators from elementary, middle, and high school levels, the district's Executive Director of Educational Services, and the district GATE Coordinator meet monthly and perform multiple roles in the GATE program. Several of the committee members including district staff have a background in gifted education.

Among the most critical of these roles is the assessment of program effectiveness through GATE surveys, meetings, and data evaluation. In grades four through eight, students, parents, teachers, and administrators are surveyed regarding the effectiveness of the goals and standards of the GATE program via a formal, annual online survey. The GATE Advisory Committee has developed three parallel stakeholder surveys for students, parents, and teachers based on the state GATE standards. This structure allows for effective comparison of the data among the three groups. Survey responses are analyzed by a subcommittee of the GATE Advisory Committee. Results are shared with the GATE Advisory Committee, district administrators, and the GATE Coordinator. The GATE Advisory Committee and district administrators use these evaluations to make program modifications.

#### **Student Evaluation**

A clear description of student performance expectations at each grade level exists on the district website. GATE students are expected to meet or exceed state standards. In

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addition, students are evaluated based on content, process, and product objectives. Through differentiated instruction, students acquire extended knowledge and insight into the content covered by the regular curriculum. Students' individual progress is monitored through evaluation of logical and creative thinking, personal and social skills, and performance on specific GATE assignments. Assessment tools such as rubrics and self-evaluation are also used to evaluate performance-based objectives.

The district regularly monitors the progress of GATE students. Disaggregated reports of STAR results are sent to principals each year. The principals and GATE Coordinator analyze the results to identify strengths and areas of concern in GATE students. This information is used to identify students at-risk for underachievement and for classroom cluster groupings.

Furthermore, the Executive Director of Educational Services provides principals and teachers with a spreadsheet identifying high performing students on standardized tests. Teachers use this information as well as data collected from other achievement tests, portfolios, informal observations, and performance-based measures using rubrics to identify students who need enriched and accelerated content. Principals coordinate with classroom teachers, counselors, and specialists to provide students with appropriate enrichment, remediation, and general educational support.

Informal assessments help shape the district's GATE services. To illustrate, collaboration time is built into the elementary teachers' weekly schedules, enabling each grade level to meet as a professional learning community. The primary purpose of these meetings is to discuss individual students' needs in order to differentiate curriculum. Each trimester, teachers use this collaboration time to analyze formative and summative benchmark assessments in language arts and mathematics. As an example of informal assessment at the high school level, district staff analyzes disaggregated results of the Advanced Placement Tests to determine whether gifted students are reaching their potential.

Formative and summative program assessment is used on a continuing and systematic basis through examination of multiple measures. Both strengths and weaknesses of the program are addressed by the GATE Advisory Committee and the district administration. Outcomes from this type of evaluation have resulted in the following programmatic adjustments:

- At the elementary level, schools are now grouping students based upon ability in math and language arts.
- Middle school GATE students are clustered in science classes with a GATE certificated teacher.
- Underachieving GATE students at the high school will receive a series of individual college and career counseling sessions.
- The annual survey for program assessment is now available both online and in hard copy form to facilitate a greater percentage of stakeholder feedback.

In a presentation to the Board of Trustees, recommendations such as these are included in an annual update regarding the GATE program.



## Budget

***District budgets for gifted programs support and provide for all the components of the district's GATE program and meet the related standards. (EC 52209, 52212 [a][1], [2], [3])***

### 8:1 District GATE Budget

The Manhattan Beach Unified School District (MBUSD) is committed to providing comprehensive, high quality GATE services for the district's gifted and talented students. The district is comprised of five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school within three square miles. In recent years, approximately ten percent of the student body has been identified as gifted and talented. State GATE funds allow for a .6 full time equivalent district GATE Coordinator. The responsibilities of this coordinator include student identification, district coordination, parent communication, direct services to students through a push-in model, and support to general education GATE cluster teachers. The GATE Advisory Committee has carefully considered the job duties of the GATE Coordinator position to ensure that the full scope of responsibilities can be accomplished using the human and monetary resources available.

The state funding for GATE services supplements, but does not supplant, district funds spent on gifted learners. State GATE funds are spread among elementary, middle and high schools and support:

- a portion of the salary of the part-time GATE Coordinator
- professional development for teachers, administrators, and counselors
- GATE certification for teachers
- GATE parent education
- GATE student identification
- GATE instructional materials
- staff attendance at GATE conferences

The district encourages fiscal collaboration across categorical programs to enable gifted students to benefit from multiple funding sources beyond GATE funds. Some of the categorical programs that benefit gifted students include:

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- Advanced Placement – supports 18 AP classes
- Arts and Music Block Grant – affords a variety of levels of instrumental and vocal music as well as visual and media arts
- Middle and High School Supplemental School Counseling – provides counseling services for at-risk students
- Title II – Improving Teacher Quality – funds allow for a breadth of staff development opportunities, including pedagogy that benefits gifted learners such as depth and complexity, differentiation, and emotional intelligence
- Professional Development Block Grant – same as above
- School and Library Improvement Block Grant – supports school library media centers at all seven school sites

The district's general fund supports GATE students through a variety of structures and programs, including:

- dynamic groupings of primary and intermediate students based on mastery of skills and concepts in language arts and mathematics
- clustering of GATE students in science, mathematics, and electives at the middle school
- a variety of electives at both the middle school and high school including journalism, video production, drama, and multiple levels of vocal and instrumental music including strings/combined orchestra.

In the past several years, MBUSD has allocated and spent all state GATE funds on services for gifted students. However, if there were any excess GATE monies, they would be carried over in GATE accounts for the following school year. In accordance with statutory requirements for allowable expenditures, the district charges no more than 3% of the GATE categorical funds to indirect costs.