

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS  
Office of School Site Support

STAFF RESPONSE TO THE  
GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION (GATE) CLUSTER ADVISORY TASK FORCE  
AND PROGRAM GOVERNANCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

August 9, 2005 (*First Reading*)

Introductory Statement

This document brings forward staff responses to recommendations proposed by the GATE Cluster Advisory Task Force and the Program Governance Team, provides clarifying points for Board consideration, identifies areas of staff agreement as well as those of concern, and summarizes recommendations for Board action.

Background

On May 24, 2005, the GATE Cluster Advisory Task Force recommendations were presented to the Board of Education. On that date, the Board directed district staff to conduct an analysis and prepare a response to the proposed recommendations.

The GATE Cluster Advisory Task Force presented recommendations in the following areas:

1. Articulating the GATE programs within high school feeder patterns;
2. Providing for administrator, counselor, and teacher professional development;
3. Modifying Cluster program design and procedures;
4. Modifying GATE identification procedures;
5. Increasing GATE department staffing, when funds become available;
6. Providing two portables for GATE professional development, when funds become available.

A summary of the Task Force recommendations and staff response follows.

<b>GATE Cluster Advisory Task Force Recommendations</b>
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***1-A. To articulate a continuum of GATE services within each feeder pattern, schools with GATE programs will provide professional development opportunities for feeder pattern vertical teams***

Staff Analysis

“Vertical teaming” is a term that refers to opportunities for the schools with GATE programs in a high school feeder pattern (elementary, middle level and senior high in the same geographic boundaries) to communicate about the GATE models they offer, share resources, participate in professional development together and plan common enrichment activities. The Task Force recommendation does not provide specific suggestions as to how schools might use their time together, nor does it provide sources of funding for substitutes or teacher hourly pay.

**Recommendation:** Staff agrees with the Task Force recommendation to provide professional development for vertical teams. To support this recommendation, the GATE Department will develop a resource packet for feeder patterns that includes the following:

- Suggested funding sources that schools can use to cover the cost of substitutes (if teaming occurs during instructional time) or hourly teacher pay (if teaming occurs outside of the teachers' regular workday).
- Summaries of the needs assessments conducted by each feeder pattern during the Task Force review, which can serve as reminders of the priorities they identified to strengthen their GATE programs.
- A menu of suggested purposes for teaming days, including possible agendas.
- A menu of professional development experiences the GATE Department is prepared to offer to schools, such as "differentiated instruction," on one or more of their teaming days, with contact information to initiate a request for this support.

***2-B. The GATE Department will provide mandatory professional development for administrators and counselors of schools with GATE programs at the Administrators Professional Development Conference.***

#### Staff Analysis

Task Force members identified the need for mandatory professional development that would increase the knowledge and skills of site administrators and counselors who work with gifted learners. Staff agrees there is a need to provide site administrators with information and strategies to support teachers in providing quality, differentiated instruction to GATE students .

**Recommendation:** Staff concurs with this Task Force recommendation. The GATE Department will work with the subject matter curriculum directors of the Instruction & Curriculum Division and with the program manager for the Counseling & Guidance Department of the Student Services Division to develop outlines for at least two sessions. Topics such as "Differentiating Instruction" and "Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners" will be developed collaboratively with the departments referenced above. Sessions will be offered to administrators and counselors at all schools during the 2005-06 school year.

***2-C. The GATE Department will coordinate and fund registration fees for teachers, counselors and administrators to participate in appropriate GATE local conferences and workshops, as district GATE funding permits.***

#### Staff Analysis

The GATE Department has a long history of using GATE funds to encourage and support the registration of school site staff at various GATE conferences. The GATE budget for 2005-06 includes an allocation of approximately \$31,000 for registration fees for local Advanced Placement conferences.

Recommendation: Staff concurs with this Task Force recommendation. To ensure equity of participation by staff members in all feeder patterns, the GATE Department will establish a professional development allocation for each feeder pattern, based on the number of identified GATE students in that pattern. The GATE Department will be responsible for maintaining contact with the principals from each feeder pattern to ensure that they are aware of this opportunity and that they encourage their teachers and counselors to take advantage of it. Funds not expended by the end of the fiscal year will not carry over into the next year, creating an incentive for the GATE Department staff to fulfill this recommendation.

***2-D. The GATE Department will provide to K-2 teachers a voluntary professional development program, Nurturing Gifted Potential in the Early Grades.***

Staff Analysis

While there is controversy about assessing young children in order to identify them as gifted, there is general agreement that building teacher expertise about instructional practice that nurtures gifted potential can benefit all children. The Task Force recommendations do not include specifics about the duration of the professional development, the research base that will serve as its foundation or the setting for the professional development.

Recommendation: Staff concurs with this Task Force recommendation. The GATE Department staff will collaborate with the subject matter curriculum directors to develop a Discover course<sup>1</sup> that addresses this concept. GATE Department staff will facilitate the professional development, to occur over the course of several sessions. The focus will be on ways that teachers of grades K, 1 and 2 can infuse GATE strategies into instruction that is aligned with the content area curriculum maps. Teachers will have the option of earning district credit for salary advancement or having their fee paid by the GATE Department, using the funds set aside for their feeder patterns for local conferences (see Recommendation 2-C). In the future, the GATE Department will work closely with the Student Services Division to develop a parallel course for teachers in the Child Development Centers and State Pre-Schools.

***3-E. The GATE Department will develop a self-assessment rubric to support and guide the design of school sites' Cluster Program Summaries and Accountability Plans.***

Staff Analysis

Development of a rubric will provide needed support and guidance to school sites and will result in greater consistency in the quality of Program Summaries and Accountability Plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Discover is a catalog of voluntary professional development opportunities offered to classified and certificated district staff. Fees are nominal and teachers may elect to earn credit toward advancement on the district salary schedule.

Recommendation: Staff concurs with this Task Force recommendation. The GATE Department will develop the self-assessment rubric and distribute it when information is provided to schools regarding the design and due date for their Program Summaries and Accountability Plans.

***3-F. At the opening of the school year, the GATE Department will provide a budget allocation to school sites equal to one-half of their projected allocation. The full allocation will be released after the fourth Friday in September, when GATE enrollment is confirmed, and upon receipt of the schools' Program Summaries and Accountability Plans, which are due on or before November 1.***

#### Staff Analysis

Schools offering GATE programs are accountable to adhere to district policy and to meet State GATE program requirements, which include submission of an annual program summary and accountability plan. Currently, schools receive their GATE funding at the opening of the school year. The requirement that schools submit their plan prior to receiving funds could disadvantage students and the schools' GATE programs.

Recommendation: Staff does not concur and recommends that all GATE funds be allocated to schools at the opening of the school year, consistent with past practice. If schools need assistance in completing the Program Summary and Accountability Plan by the deadline of November 1, the GATE Department staff will provide needed support.

***3-G. The GATE Department will post schools' Program Summaries and Accountability Plans online at the district GATE Web site.***

#### Staff Analysis

The GATE Department Web site contains useful information for staff and parents. Posting the GATE Program Summaries will support vertical teaming through better flow of information among school sites, and will provide models to assist other schools in the development of their summaries. It will also support the district's plan to provide important information to parents in multiple ways and will assist parents in becoming more informed about their children's education.

Recommendation: Staff concurs with this Task Force recommendation. GATE Department staff will support schools in the timely completion of their Program Summaries and will post them on the GATE Web site for improved public access.

***3-H. The GATE program model descriptions will be modified to include the four core subject areas and a professional development plan (supported by a portion of the GATE Department budget). The professional development plan will be described in the GATE summary.***

#### Staff Analysis

Staff believes that schools need the flexibility to choose from multiple models to design programs that best meet the needs of their students.

The need to strengthen instruction in GATE classes, however, was a persistent theme in all feeder patterns during the Task Force process. While this recommendation includes a wide range of possible professional development opportunities that can be incorporated into a school's Program Summary, it does not impose topics or set a required amount of time. This provides flexibility to school sites to meet the requirement and be consistent with the needs of their staffs, students and current design of professional development.

Recommendation: Staff concurs that modifications to the program model descriptions should include professional development plans and core curriculum areas (as specified in AB 2313, the district is not obligated to require a specific number of subject areas).

***3-I. Model C, the Collaborative Cluster, will be eliminated as a GATE program model.***

Staff Analysis

Model C was implemented in 2004-2005 by six elementary schools: Paradise Hills, Whitman, Carson, Cubberley, Sequoia and Toler. California GATE State Standard M3.2 states, "The differentiated curriculum is scheduled on a regular basis and is integral to the school day." It does not state that it must be the entire day, nor even what portion of the day. It also does not call out the number of subjects that must be included in the GATE program (see Recommendation 3-H) a student receives.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that Model C be left intact, not eliminated, in order to afford schools the flexibility to design the GATE program that best meets their needs

***4-J: Modify and align the criteria for Cluster Identification High Achievement, Specific Academic and GATE Retesting.***

Staff Analysis

Currently, scores on the CAT-6 are used as one of several criteria that qualify a student for GATE identification or eligibility for retesting after 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The California STAR Program no longer includes CAT-6 in all grades in elementary school, so scores will not be available for identification purposes and an alternative is needed. The GATE Department is already working with the Standards, Assessment and Accountability Division to determine equivalent performance on the California Standards Tests (CST) that will qualify a student for GATE identification or eligibility for retesting.

Recommendation: Staff concurs with the decision to align the criteria for GATE identification and retesting with the CST rather than CAT-6.

***4-K. The GATE Department will consolidate present testing/retesting opportunities for grades “4 or 5” to grade 5 only.***

Staff Analysis

Approximately 11 years ago elementary schools were given the opportunity to decide if students would be tested for GATE eligibility in grades 2 and 4 or in grades 2 and 5. Typically, but not in 100% of the cases, schools with exit grade 5 selected grade 4 for testing, and schools with exit grade 6 selected grade 5 for testing. Once the grade level was selected, schools were expected to permanently maintain the testing pattern.

The Task Force made this recommendation as a result of information shared by several GATE psychologists. They reported that retesting in 5<sup>th</sup> grade appears to result in more Seminar certifications than retesting in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The recommendation to put all schools on a cycle of testing in grades 2 and 5 will impact K-5 schools that have been testing at grades 2 and 4. While staff at those schools may be able to recognize gifted characteristics in some of their 4<sup>th</sup> graders and may place them in GATE classes for 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the schools will not receive GATE funding for them. If an unidentified, but gifted, 4<sup>th</sup> grader is overlooked, that child may go unserved during the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. In addition, elementary students in the Point Loma feeder pattern who are eligible for retesting, for either Cluster or Seminar, will be not be retested in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, as they are now, and may not be placed in 5<sup>th</sup> grade GATE classes at Dana.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that GATE testing of elementary students occur at grades 2 and 5, with one exception. The staff and GATE DAC representatives from the elementary schools that feed into Dana, which is the only group of district schools with exit grade 4, should be given the opportunity to dialogue with the GATE Department on this recommendation. This will provide the school community the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons, and to determine if an exception to the recommendation, retesting at 4<sup>th</sup> rather than 5<sup>th</sup> grade, is in the best interest of their students. This feeder pattern is called out specifically because this transition is an important milestone and appropriate placement of students when changing schools is critical. GATE Department staff will be responsible for scheduling and facilitating the meetings, but the consensus of the school community should determine the final decision.

***5-L. The district will restore one GATE senior psychologist to the 2003-2004 levels of 11 month contract status.***

Staff Analysis

The district supports the concept of all programs being staffed at levels that meet the needs of students, schools and the employees themselves. However, other central office employees, whose work years were also reduced in 2004, have not had their work year restored to previous levels.

Recommendation: Staff does not concur with this Task Force recommendation. Instead, staff recommends that the GATE Department continue to meet its obligations for GATE testing and administrative duties in the same manner it did in 2004-2005, through extra time compensation for time worked by the senior psychologist.

***5-M. When funds become available, the district will provide one additional GATE psychologist and two additional GATE resource teachers at a cost of approximately \$218,000.***

Staff Analysis

The need for more professional development was a clear priority for the schools that participated in the Task Force. The district recognizes that improvement of instruction comes through quality professional development, however, specific recommendations were not made regarding the purpose, structure or facilitators of the professional development. In addition, district staff is still in the process of determining how to meet the budgetary demands of the 2005-2006 school year.

Recommendation: Staff does not concur with this Task Force recommendation for 2005-2006. The need to operate in a fiscally responsible manner precludes implementation of this recommendation. Staff recommends instead that the GATE Department conduct an analysis of the schedules, roles and responsibilities of current psychologists and resource teachers to determine ways to meet the Task Force's expectation for improved professional development within the constraints of current staffing allocations and calendars.

***6-N. When funds become available, the district will provide sufficient facilities to meet the GATE Department's obligations to GATE students, parents, teachers, administrators, GATE psychologists, and resource teachers.***

Staff Analysis

The GATE Department is currently housed in two portable buildings on the campus of Madison High School. The portables provide workstations and storage space for a program manager, two clerical support personnel, three resource teachers, six full-time psychologists and one part-time psychologist. The GATE Department relies on the use of the cafeteria, auditorium and another bungalow at Madison and the library at Marston Middle School to conduct its professional development and community meetings. The lack of space has resulted in the purchase of a storage container for historical files that need to be maintained, but are not accessed on a daily basis. The request for two bungalows will improve the working efficiency of the department and its employees and is reasonable, given the size of the GATE staff and the number of confidential files that need to be maintained for students who are currently enrolled. The GATE program manager, the principal at Madison High School and the district's facilities manager have identified relocatable buildings (originally for temporary use necessitated by Prop MM work) that are currently on the Madison campus as a potential solution to the problem of the GATE Department's inadequate work space. The district's facilities department has determined that the relocatable buildings on the Madison campus can remain at the school on a permanent basis.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the GATE Department move into the relocatable buildings on a permanent basis. The relocatables will require certification by the Division of the State Architect, which is estimated to cost \$100,000. This amount, which is \$100,000 less than the cost of moving two bungalows onto the site, can be funded by the State Facilities Fund.

### Facilities Implications

There is one facilities implication associated with recommendation 6-N. It involves transferring the use of two relocatables currently at Madison High School to the GATE Department on a permanent basis.

### Budget Implications

The recommendations in this report are primarily cost neutral. There is one budget implication associated with recommendation 6-N. Pending Board approval, approximately \$100,000 will be needed for site certification of two relocatables by the Division of the State Architect. Potential funding sources are developers' fees and the State Facilities Fund.

### Public Support and Engagement Implications

Pending Board approval of recommendation 3-G, parents and community members will have access to more information about GATE programs and models at district schools.

Pending Board approval of certain recommendations, parents and community members will need to be informed of any changes in grade levels designated for GATE testing and retesting. In addition, the Point Loma community will have the opportunity to discuss and decide whether 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade is best for their students.

### Policy Implications

The recommendations contained in this report are consistent with district policies F-2550 and F-8800.

### Recommendations

- The GATE Department will develop a resource packet that supports vertical teams in their professional development planning.
- The GATE Department will collaborate with other district departments to plan professional development for site administrators and counselors.
- The GATE Department will allocate funds for schools in each feeder pattern to participate in appropriate GATE conferences.
- The GATE Department will work with other district departments to plan professional development in nurturing gifted potential in the early grades.
- The GATE Department will develop a self-assessment rubric that supports schools in writing their program summaries and accountability plans.
- The Budget Department will release GATE funds to schools at the opening of the school year.
- The GATE Department will post schools' GATE summaries and plans on the GATE web site.

- Schools will include a professional development component in their GATE program summaries.
- The choice of GATE program models will remain intact.
- The GATE Department will work with the Standards, Assessment and Accountability Division to align GATE identification and retesting with CST rather than CAT-6,
- Testing for GATE identification and retesting will occur district wide at grades 2 & 5, with one exception. The decision will be made by Point Loma schools after the GATE Department facilitates discussion among stakeholders in that community.
- The GATE senior psychologist position will continue as 10 months.
- The number of GATE staff will remain at 2004-2005 levels.
- The GATE Department will expand its office space into two relocatables at Madison High School.

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## **GATE PROGRAM MODELS 2004-2005**

The GATE Cluster program is described in more detail in District Procedures 4235 and 4236.

### **Model T (formerly Model A): Traditional Cluster**

The traditional cluster model provides that 50 to 100 percent of the students are to be GATE identified. The remaining openings are to be filled with those students who score in the upper 10 percent on either the norm-referenced standardized test administered by the district or CST (high achieving) or on the Raven (high ability) or other district-accepted intelligence test. This model provides for a full day cluster class at the elementary level; multiple-period/core curriculum classes in grade 6 and middle school; and designated courses in middle and high school.

### **Model D (formerly Model B): Diversity Cluster**

The diversity cluster model provides that 25% or more of the students in a class are identified as GATE. The remaining openings are to be filled by students reflecting the diversity of the school and, where appropriate, are to include students in the AVID Program. This model provides for a full day cluster class at the elementary level; multiple-period/core curriculum classes in grade 6, middle school; and designated courses in middle and high school.

### **Model C: Collaborative Cluster**

The collaborative cluster model provides for grade level and cross-grade level teaming in which smaller clusters of students are regrouped for at least one core subject per day, creating a cluster of 25 percent or more GATE identified students in one classroom. The remaining openings are to be filled by students who would benefit from accelerated instruction (e.g., AVID) and reflect the diversity of the school populations.

### **Model IGP (formerly Model D): Individualized GATE Plan**

The IGP model is designed for schools with very small populations where grouping could be counterproductive. An IGP "Individualized Accountability Plan" is created for each GATE-identified student and placed on file in both the site office and GATE office along with the Program Summary.