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## **FOREWORD**

The San Diego Unified School District began its program for highly gifted students in 1951 based upon student need. By the end of the decade, it had become clear that different groups of gifted students had special needs. A 1957-1959 "Study of First Order Gifted Children" concluded that highly gifted students had special needs that could best be met in a Seminar program. Such a program would feature small numbers of students to ensure close student-to-teacher social-emotional relationships, curricular flexibility which permits more individual responsibility in determining courses of study, and more learning exercises aimed at employing the individual student's high abilities. The entire community might become the classroom as teachers used the cultural and intellectual resources available in San Diego.

Although the first elementary Seminar program was established in 1960, it wasn't until 1966-67 that the program expanded to junior and senior high schools. Since that time, the effectiveness of the program has been validated by research studies, parent and student support, and individual testimonials.

The Seminar program has grown steadily, and for the 2007-2008 school year, will operate at 65 schools which are geographically distributed throughout the district: 29 at the elementary school level (K-6), 21 at the middle school level (6-9), and 17 at the senior high school level (9-12). In addition, the Special Education and the Gifted and Talented Education departments have implemented two Seminar programs for students who qualify for both Special Education and GATE services, and four alternative education sites are served by an itinerant Seminar teacher. The GATE Seminar program exemplifies the San Diego Unified School District's commitment to excellence for all students regardless of the uniqueness of their educational needs and cultural backgrounds.

Marcia DiJiosia, Interim GATE Program Manager

## OVERVIEW

Each Seminar site involves teachers, parents, administrators, and students in planning the Seminar program. The active involvement of these people produces different program formats, which, in turn, meet the needs of the different Seminar-site populations.

Seminar instructors are carefully selected; they are highly qualified professionals who have demonstrated their competence in working with the gifted for a minimum of three years in a GATE Cluster setting. They possess a degree, specialist credential, and/or district certification in gifted education. Moreover, Seminar teachers participate in ongoing professional development opportunities designed to enhance their teaching performance.

The California State Department of Education requires by law that each GATE program “be planned and organized as an integrated, differentiated learning experience within the regular school day.” Replacing a previous requirement that GATE activities comprise a certain number of minutes per week, AB2313 emphasizes that GATE curriculum must be part of the regular school core curriculum. The Seminar program has historically adhered to just such a model. The district guidelines for Seminar classes specify these objectives as well as meeting all eight GATE legislative standards, including attention to the social and emotional needs of GATE learners. The actual Seminar format at each school in the district is subject to differences dependent upon the facilities and equipment provided, the time periods allocated to the operation of the Seminar, and the interests and values of the students and tutorial advisors involved; therefore, certain variations occur within each Seminar center’s offerings and experiences.

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**DEFINITION OF SEMINAR STUDENT AND SEMINAR PROGRAM**  
**Adopted by the San Diego Board of Education**  
**on February 24, 1998**

Children who test three standard deviations above the mean are atypical and often asynchronous learners who require programs significantly differentiated from the more typical GATE Cluster programs in order to feel comfortable with themselves and their differences and to develop their exceptional potential.

The Seminar program is intended to serve varied profiles as presented by students who need extraordinarily high-level, advanced, and challenging curricular activities; those with extremely high-tested ability but low school achievement; and those who are divergent thinkers and "march to a different drummer." Because these students represent a heterogeneous group with a wider range of abilities than those represented in the GATE Cluster class populations, the learning program must be designed for and adapted to individual differences.

Just as GATE Cluster curriculum and instruction must be differentiated from the regular core and AP core curricular offerings, the Seminar curriculum and instruction must be differentiated from that of the GATE Cluster in content, process, and product. Content must be differentiated in terms of the levels of acceleration, novelty, depth, and complexity, focusing to an even higher degree on generalizations and essential questions. A greater percentage of classroom processes and interactions revolve around interplay and exchange of ideas, with students defending their thinking and looking at their own and others' thinking critically. Students spend more time in pursuit of their own passions and interests with a greater emphasis on independent study and long-term projects.

Learning and intellectual exploration are accomplished in an environment purposefully designed by teachers knowledgeable about the psycho-social as well as intellectual development of students who, because of their often uneven development, may be many ages simultaneously. The environment must be one in which students feel they

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“fit,” are safe to express their ideas without stigma, and encounter no ceilings to limit their reach. At the same time, students must acquire the necessary skills and knowledge in a manner and at a pace which support their inquiry and investigation. These may be quite different for each individual.

The Seminar provides a learning program which incorporates both core curriculum and advanced, enriched learning opportunities reflecting the interests and creativity of the students. By doing so, the program aims to encourage intellectual development as well as growth of self-identity, exciting students to extend their learning beyond the classroom and beyond their school years.

### **RATIONALE AND PURPOSE FOR THE SEMINAR PROGRAM FORMAT**

Because of the characteristics and needs of highly gifted learners, the Seminar format exists to enable teachers to do the following:

- modify curriculum to allow time for highly gifted students to pursue individual interests, incorporating student-designed standards of accountability;
- provide opportunities for creative expression through varied techniques including multiple product options, exhibitions in a variety of modalities, and investigation of problems allowing for multiple solutions;
- help students generate hypotheses for answers in a variety of ways which provide them with strategies for lifelong learning and self evaluation and which nurture their intrinsic motivation;
- encourage an interplay and exchange of ideas using strategies which force students to support or defend ideas as well as analyze issues critically;

- facilitate positive social and emotional outcomes, help students feel comfortable with themselves, and foster an environment in which students are safe to express their ideas without stigma and in which students can maximize their individual potential;
- create an environment in which students' expression of their boundless energy and intensity, intellectual playfulness, imagination, and spirited disagreement are encouraged;
- facilitate mastery of the core subjects at a pace and using a delivery system that supports the unique learning styles of Seminar students and which holds students accountable for meeting core subject standards;
- provide an academically rigorous program which promotes scholarship and which operates at an accelerated pace;
- encourage the ability to view knowledge both in an interdisciplinary way and across grade levels by focusing to an even higher degree on essential questions in order to facilitate learning that makes knowledge more relevant to the underlying themes of humanity; and design activities and an environment which promote self-motivation, initiative, and leadership skills.

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**NOW THAT YOUR STUDENT HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR THE SEMINAR PROGRAM...**

(Adopted as School Board Policy on August 7, 2007)

- Students no longer must follow an application process through the GATE office.
- The high school feeder pattern will dictate the school(s) at which the student will be eligible to attend.  
(See pages 19 to 21 in the booklet)
- It is important for the parent to contact the desired school site in order to let them know of the impending enrollment of the student even if the child already attends the school.
- Seminar class size is to remain at a 20:1 ratio.
- Each high school feeder pattern of schools has been guaranteed a vertical Seminar program, spanning grades 3-12. Establishment of additional sites ensures that every child who qualifies for Seminar has the opportunity to attend a Seminar program in his/her residential area.
- If a student wishes to seek placement at a school outside of his or her high school feeder pattern, that student must apply through the Enrollment Options office (619-725-5672). Students currently placed in a Seminar program outside of their residential feeder pattern are "grandfathered" into the feeder they have been attending.

## **Transportation**

Transportation to a Seminar site is not provided by the district. However, students participating in the integration and magnet programs may qualify for district transportation. Open GATE provides limited transportation.

For additional information, contact the Enrollment Options office. (619) 725-5672

### **Choice**

Because Seminar identified students attend the school(s) within their residential feeder pattern, any interest in other school sites require that an application be made through the Choice office—Enrollment Options.

Parents are encouraged to file a Choice application for the siblings of Seminar students. Some priority will be given for enrolling in the school at which the Seminar sibling is accepted. This year applications are due by January 31, 2008. Every effort will be made to assist in the placement of Seminar students and their siblings after the application date. Please note that some schools are always impacted by numbers of local students and cannot accommodate additional students.

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**STANDARDS FOR GATE SEMINAR CENTERS  
SITE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

1. All Seminar teachers must have GATE certification and a minimum of three years of GATE Cluster experience.
2. The Seminar program services must be an integral part of the school day.
3. Seminar classes are not to exceed twenty (20) students per Seminar teacher. Written request from the site principal to the GATE Program Manager for a waiver (no more than 22) must take place prior to any exception.
4. Seminar programs will meet or exceed the standards for Curriculum and Instruction required by Education Code Section 52200(c) of California State GATE legislation (1978 updated 2000).
5. Seminar programs will provide differentiated curriculum, responsive to the needs, interests, and abilities of gifted students.
6. Seminar programs are to provide alternative learning environments in which gifted and talented pupils can acquire skills and understanding at advanced ideological and creative levels commensurate with their potential.
7. Seminar programs include elements that help gifted and talented pupils develop sensitivity and responsibility to others.
8. Seminar programs will provide elements that help the gifted and talented develop constructive ethical standards.

9. Seminar programs provide ways to assist gifted and talented pupils to develop self-generating problem-solving abilities in order to expand their awareness of choices for making satisfying contributions to their environments.
10. Seminar programs include elements that help gifted and talented pupils develop realistic, healthy self-concepts.
11. Individual site Seminar programs are to be based on GATE best practices as expressed in the 2005 GATE Handbook, which should be available at each GATE school site.
12. All Seminar classes and programs are to be qualitatively differentiated from AP, advanced, honors, and GATE Cluster classes, especially in the degree of individualization and rigor.
13. The requirements for student admission to site Seminars must adhere to the School Board policy set forth on August 7, 2007, stating that students from a high school residence area have access to their neighborhood school site.
14. Each Seminar site must submit an annual written description of the site's Seminar program. Descriptions are collected and published for use by parents. **Parents must be notified six months in advance of significant changes in site Seminar curriculum and/or design.**
15. Seminar teachers will participate in ongoing professional development opportunities that further their skills.

### **SELF-FUNDED SITE SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS**

Site self-funded Seminar programs must adhere to all program and student admission requirements in the School Board policy of August 7, 2007, and must have at least (10) Seminar qualified students to initiate a Seminar. Any school considering self-funding must accept that there may never be sufficient budget for converting to district-funded positions. If a school is interested in starting a self-funded Seminar, they must first submit a letter of request to the GATE central office that includes the following information:

1. the number of prospective available Seminar identified students in the high school boundary area;
2. the names of GATE certified teachers on the staff who have had a minimum of three years of successful GATE Cluster experience;
3. school staff, site governance committee, parent, and site administrator approval;
4. commitment to a long term program without district funding;
5. space availability on site to house the program;
6. impact on surrounding Seminars in the same attendance area;
7. program description also to be submitted to the GATE office and distributed by the GATE office;
8. commitment to maintain the program for three years or more.

**The GATE Program Manager and the GATE Program Governance Team (PGT) will review the request and approve or disapprove the installation of a self-funded site Seminar program.**

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## SEMINAR TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the GATE Seminar teacher to

1. have GATE certification and at least three (3) years of successful teaching experience in a GATE Cluster classroom,
2. serve on the site admissions and placement committee, keeping in mind the requirement that residential students must be appropriately served,
3. share, along with the site team, in the design of the Seminar program to conform to the definition of Seminar as adopted by the Board of Education on February 24, 1998, and later updated on August 7, 2007,
4. design classroom programs that are qualitatively differentiated from AP, advanced, IB, Honors, and GATE Cluster classes, with a high degree of individualization on a level commensurate with the capacities of the Seminar students,
5. select appropriate books, materials, technology, and equipment for classroom use,
6. provide a Seminar program which is based on the California GATE Standards and best practices as expressed in the GATE Handbook available at each GATE school site,
7. hold individual conferences with Seminar students' parents, as needed,

8. be willing to innovate and to use the resources available within the community to enrich the educational opportunities of the students in the program,
9. be responsible for helping the students develop interpersonal relationships, organization, and study skills that are necessary for the students to achieve their full potential,
10. coordinate the activities of the students with other staff to ensure maximum opportunities for personal development,
11. hold regular planning sessions with team members to review the school's progress toward program goals,
12. expand professional competence through participation in professional development activities provided by the GATE office and/or self-selected professional growth activities, and
13. be an advocate outside of the program for gifted education, attend professional conferences and be visible within the community as a representative of the Seminar program and gifted education.

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## **GATE CENTRAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES**

The GATE office will

1. provide meaningful continuing education that is qualitatively differentiated for Seminar teachers to meet the needs of district students,
2. maintain a current listing of Seminar students and their placement,
3. maintain a current listing of Seminar and Cluster teachers including Cluster teachers who are interested in teaching Seminar,
4. annually publish a Seminar booklet, as well as, current school program descriptions for distribution,
5. oversee the student testing and identification process,
6. provide ongoing, quality review of the site GATE Cluster and Seminar programs, and
7. conduct periodic evaluations of student outcomes to assess Seminar program benefits and to identify areas for improvement for program planning.

## **How to Use the Site Program Descriptions**

Included in your packet of information is the description of the Seminar site or sites available within your student's high school residence pattern. Each description offers the following:

### **Basic Information**

At the top of the page is the school name, location, and telephone number. There is also the name of the Seminar contact person at the site. Ask to speak with the GATE team leader if that teacher is not available. Seminar is a highly specialized program and frequently the details about how the program works are not well known by secretaries or other site personnel. The person listed should be able to answer questions about program structure, subject matter, approach and enrollment.

### **School Structure**

The information below the contact information shows how the Seminar program is organized at each specific school site, e.g. the configuration of grades in each elementary Seminar class or whether a block of Seminar classes is required at the secondary level. In addition, the listing of the teacher names, subjects taught, and the stated emphasis at each grade level may be indicated.

An \* before a teacher's name specifies that the teacher is GATE certified and has at least three years experience as a GATE teacher. The initials NBCT following a teacher's name indicate that the teacher is a National Board Certified Teacher.

Finally, for secondary schools and some elementary schools there is a box devoted to the school environment. Most schools have strengths not readily seen by the public, but well known to the staff and often to the parents and community. Such strengths sometimes make a difference when parents are looking into their child's placement, especially when looking ahead to the middle and high school years. We have tried to tap the "insider's knowledge" by asking the Seminar faculty to identify what GATE students would consider to be the strongest academic programs at the school and what extracurricular programs Seminar students at their school find most engaging. If the school is a magnet school, the focus is also listed.

### **Indicators of Differentiation**

Further down the page you will find sections describing curriculum modifications offered\*, opportunities for student choice and creative expression, and unique activities and approaches presented.

For the most complete and comprehensive information, make arrangements to visit the Seminar program at the school site. This will allow you and your child to enjoy the full flavor of what the school has to offer.

\*Please find descriptions of curricular strategies in the GATE Program booklet.

## NOTIFICATION TIMELINE

Please notify the Seminar site of your child's intent to participate in the Seminar Program by the date listed below.

<b><u>GRADE LEVEL</u></b>	<b><u>DEADLINE</u></b>
High School	February 8, 2008
Middle School	February 22, 2008
Elementary School	May 9, 2008

Contact information for each site is listed on the program description received with this booklet. Additional sources can be found on [www.sandi.net](http://www.sandi.net) under "Our Schools."

For purposes of understanding where Seminars are conducted in your high school attendance area, use the chart below and the map provided.

### SEMINAR HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS

<b>High School Attendance Area</b>	<b>Seminar 6-8</b>	<b>Seminar 3-5</b>
CLAIREMONT	Marston	Bay Park
CRAWFORD	Mann	Oak Park
HENRY	Lewis	Hearst Marvin
HOOVER	Wilson	Franklin
KEARNY	Montgomery Taft	Jones

**SEMINAR HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS**

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LA JOLLA	Muirlands	La Jolla
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LINCOLN	Knox K-8	Balboa Knox K-8 Johnson
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MADISON	Kroc	Hawthorne K-6
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MIRA MESA	Challenger Wangenheim	Ericson
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MISSION BAY	Pacific Beach	Pacific Beach
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MORSE	Bell	Boone Encanto Zamorano

## SEMINAR HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS

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POINT LOMA

Correia 7-8  
Dana 5-6

Loma Portal  
Silver Gate  
Sunset View

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SAN DIEGO

Grant 6-8  
Roosevelt

Grant K-5  
McKinley  
Perkins

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SCRIPPS RANCH

Marshall

Dingeman  
Miramar Ranch

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SERRA

De Portola  
Farb

Miller  
Tierrasanta

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UNIVERSITY CITY

Standley

Spreckels

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