



**WAUWATOSA**  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
• Your Educational Community •

# Gifted and Talented Program



## Guide for Parents

*United with the parents and the community, the Wauwatosa School District delivers an outstanding education that equips and inspires our students to conquer their challenges now and in the future.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Wauwatosa School District believes that all students have unique gifts and talents, the ability to learn and achieve, and opportunities for optimal development. We believe that gifted and talented students possess measurable, qualitatively different characteristics in one or more of five areas: general intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, artistic ability and academic aptitude.

Wisconsin State Statutes define gifted and talented students as, “Pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities.” (from s.118.35(1), Wis. Stats.)

## BELIEFS

Several beliefs form the basis of Wauwatosa’s Gifted and Talented Program:

- Identification of giftedness should be early, ongoing and continuous.
- Appropriate programming for gifted and talented students is a responsibility shared by classroom teachers, specialists, support staff, administrators, parents and students.
- A program for gifted students must consistently provide challenge to develop students’ potential.
- Gifted and talented students learn in an environment where their gifts and abilities are valued and nurtured.
- Gifted and talented children have unique and varied cognitive and affective abilities and needs which may require unconventional and non-traditional approaches and/or scheduling.
- Gifted and talented students may require a differentiated curriculum and/or a variety of program options within and outside the classroom to meet their unique intellectual, social, and emotional needs.
- Communication between the parent and school staff regarding the gifted child’s learning needs is essential.
- Parents and teachers of gifted children may benefit from additional education and support.






## IDENTIFICATION AREAS

The five areas of identification are:

1. General Intellectual Ability (GIA) (high level of overall intelligence)
2. Specific Academic Ability (SAA) (excels in one or more academic subjects)
3. Creativity (has original, varied, and/or unusual ideas and solutions)
4. Leadership (demonstrates an unusual ability to relate to and motivate other people ability to take charge)
5. Artistic (Visual/Music) (intuitive sense of artistic or musical concepts)

# Descriptions of Gifted & Talented Identification Areas

Giftedness is multidimensional. Students may be capable of superior performance or potential in one or more of the following areas.

	<p><b>General Intellectual Ability (GIA)</b>  <b>Demonstrated excellence in most academic areas</b>            Intellectually gifted children exhibit early and rapid development of language ability, strong powers of reasoning and advanced ability in critical thinking and problem solving in multiple areas. They may manipulate information in divergent ways when challenged by complex issues. Typically these children are noted for being several years beyond their peers in their cognitive ability.</p>
	<p><b>Specific Academic Area (SAA)</b>  <b>Exceptional ability and performance in a single academic area</b>            Academically able students have unusual/advanced ability or capability in reading or math. These students often make connections within a discipline that transcends the obvious. They quickly grasp relationships among facts, and see facts as parts of a more complex whole.</p>
	<p><b>Creativity</b>  <b>Exceptional ability to use divergent and unconventional thinking in arriving at creative and unusual ideas or solutions to problems</b>            Creativity may cross all areas (academic, arts, leadership). Highly creative students tend to develop original ideas and products. They may express their creativity in oral, written, or nonverbal expression. They are flexible and original in their thinking, tending to reject one-answer solutions. These children tend to possess strong visualization. Frequently these individuals are strongly independent and often resist conformity. Creativity is characterized by originality of thought, human behavior, and product.</p>
	<p><b>Artistic (Visual/Music)</b>  <b>Ability to create or perform in music in a way that suggests exceptional talent or an ability to paint, sculpt, photograph or arrange media in a way that suggests exceptional talent</b>            Students can demonstrate unusual adeptness or skill in the fields of music or visual arts. Since this is a performance-based talent, identification centers around nominations, portfolios and expert assessment.</p>
	<p><b>Leadership</b>  <b>Exceptional ability to relate to and motivate others</b>            Leadership comes in many forms and may be positive or negative. Individuals gifted in leadership usually have the ability to convince people to act or not act in specific ways. Leaders are often self-confident and comfortable with their peers. They express themselves well and frequently are charming and charismatic. It is important to recognize that leadership traits may manifest into different leadership styles, depending upon environment and personality of the individual. Observable characteristics may include influencing peers, being sought out by others to accomplish a task, addressing a need, holding high expectations for self and others, demonstrating or delegating responsibility, and internalizing concepts of right and wrong.</p>

## IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The purpose of identification is to make those persons responsible for a student's education aware of the student's capabilities so that the best match can be made of capabilities to programming. Identification is an ongoing and continuous process to develop awareness of student capabilities and needs. All students are considered for identification in kindergarten through 12th grade although identification primarily occurs during the elementary years.

The Wauwatosa School District uses multiple criteria, in accordance with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, to identify highly capable students in five areas. Multiple criteria used for identification of gifted and talented students may include standardized test scores, individualized testing, parent/guardian nominations, teacher nominations, and district assessments.

Initial referrals for Gifted and Talented Programming usually come from the classroom teacher who has in-depth knowledge and understanding of a student's abilities. Principals, other educational staff, or parents may refer students for identification using the Parent or Teacher Nomination Forms. The decision to refer a student for identification may be based on pre-screeners such as scores from the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) or the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

We look at measures of performance, aptitude, and achievement. When gathering information to inform decisions about students' need for challenge beyond the regular curriculum, we consider standardized tests (objective, norm-referenced tests of academic or intellectual skill), performance data, certain selected grade-level classroom assessments, and nomination forms (rating scales and narrative information from teachers and parents).

While no test is infallible, cognitive measures are widely accepted as a strong predictor of a child's academic ability. Combined with other test scores, day to day performance, and anecdotal information from teachers and parents, this broad range of information can provide specific insight into a child's academic and intellectual need.

## GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMMING

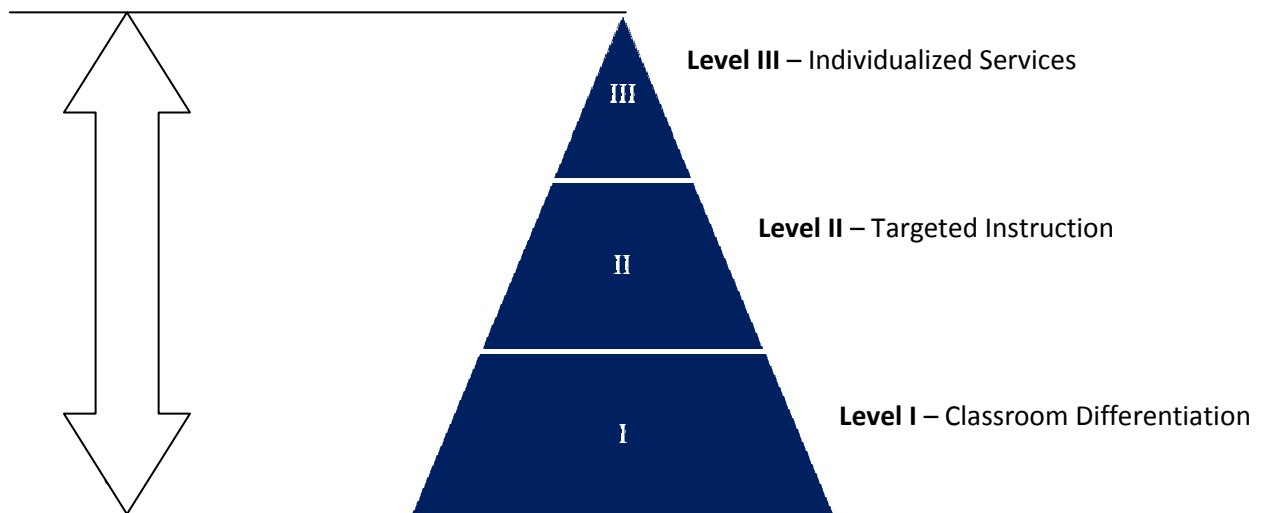
Ideally, student's academic needs are met in the place where they spend most of their time. For most students, this is in the classroom with their classroom, subject area, music, art, band, orchestra or drama teachers. Teachers differentiate instruction by providing students with a variety of opportunities and options for success. Differentiated instruction is not a curriculum or a program. It is a process that enables teachers to improve student learning by matching students' learning characteristics to district standards and benchmarks. This process requires teachers to anticipate and acknowledge the differences in students' readiness, interests, and learning style. Teachers can then effectively engage students in meaningful and challenging work.

A Differentiated Education Plan (elementary) or a Gifted and Talented Middle School Programming Model Checklist is created and implemented for identified students. The plan is jointly developed by classroom teachers and District Teacher Leaders and reviewed on a yearly basis. The review includes current performance data and recent assessment and observational data.

Through 5th grade, exceptional needs are largely met through a variety of classroom differentiation opportunities. In middle and high school, exceptional needs are met through differentiation as well as student placement and scheduling. Students should work with their school counselor to ensure a sequence of courses (including options in Advanced English Language Arts [grades 7-10], Accelerated Mathematics Courses [grades 6-11], AP courses and independent studies) that are most aligned to the student's interests and needs.

Even with effective differentiation, some students require additional opportunity and greater challenge. For these students, the District Teacher Leader, School Counselor, Content Area Leaders and/or principal will assist classroom teachers in identifying resources and programming options to meet students' demonstrated needs.

The following model demonstrates the different levels of intervention which may be used to address individual needs.



### **Classroom Differentiation — Level I**

The majority of students needing gifted and talented services will have their learning needs met through services in the regular classroom by the classroom teacher. The base of the Gifted and Talented Programming Model represents these students. Differentiation includes instructional strategies that an educator uses to meet student learning needs. These strategies include but are not limited to the use of flexible grouping, tiered assignments, pre-assessment, modified assignments, independent projects, extensions, and enrichment.

### **Targeted Instruction — Level II**

Level II represents a smaller number of students whose needs become more unique and services become more specialized. In addition to Level I services, the classroom teacher collaborates with the District Teacher Leader, specialists, and grade level colleagues to plan learning activities to meet the student's demonstrated need. Academic venues/competitions, special programming, guidance, subject level acceleration, grade level acceleration, or independent projects may be used to meet student learning needs.

### **Individualized Services — Level III**

The top of the pyramid represents a very small number of students. These services are for students whose needs for academic and intellectual challenge transcend the grade level curriculum by so much that it is unlikely that even with effective differentiation at that grade level they will be adequately challenged. Instructional strategies and services for students with highly exceptional needs include all services at Levels I and Level II plus the possibility of grade level acceleration, radical acceleration, distance learning options, or post secondary options. Grade acceleration is a significant decision that requires the collaborative efforts of teachers, the District Teacher Leader, the school counselor, administration, the school psychologist and parents.

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Parent input is essential for meeting each student's needs and helping each student reach higher levels of accomplishment. The following set of questions and answers is designed to answer some frequently asked questions about the gifted and talented program.

#### ***Who do I talk to if I think my child is gifted or talented in any area(s) and has not been identified?***

Parents should initially contact the classroom teacher with questions regarding G/T identification, differentiation and next steps. At the elementary level, the teacher will then consult with the District Teacher Leader when appropriate, and at the middle school level the designated school counselor will be contacted. If additional assessments are warranted, parents will be contacted for permission. The District Teacher Leader or school counselor will assess and identify gifted and talented programming needs. At all levels, the results of the testing regarding formal identification will be communicated to parents through a meeting, phone call or letter. Differentiation will then be provided within the classroom and should be communicated by the classroom teacher.

#### ***When should I talk to the classroom teacher?***

It is never too early or too late to contact your child's teacher about your child's educational needs. While conference time may be convenient, you may also call, e-mail, or ask your child's teacher for a meeting at other times during the year.

#### ***How will I know if my child is identified for gifted/talented programming?***

Parents will be notified by letter when students have been formally identified for gifted/talented programming.

#### ***How will I know what services my child will receive?***

A Differentiated Education Plan (elementary) or a Gifted and Talented Middle School Programming Model Checklist is created and implemented for identified students. The plan is jointly developed by classroom teachers and District Teacher Leaders and reviewed on a yearly basis. At the elementary level, this plan is often shared with parents at the first Parent/Teacher Conference. At the middle school level, the plan is mailed home at the end of the each semester.

***What does it mean to differentiate instruction?***

Students come to school with varying levels of readiness to learn, different ways in which they learn best, and a wide range of interests. Differentiating instruction means that a teacher recognizes those academic differences and modifies classroom instruction in order to help each child reach his or her academic potential.

***How will I know if my child is receiving differentiated opportunities?***

Differentiation is designed to occur in all subjects and at all grade levels throughout the entire school year. In many cases, a child may not be aware that adaptations have been made to meet his or her needs, but parents are encouraged to ask their child and/or their child's teacher about assignments, groupings, projects, and opportunities that occur in his or her classes.

***Who do I talk to if I have questions about Gifted/Talented programming? Who is the point of contact for a parent about different issues regarding gifted/talented identification and programming?***

At the elementary level, the points of contact (in order) are your child's classroom teacher, the school's District Teacher Leader, and the principal. At the middle school and high school, the first point of contact is the classroom teacher. Further points of contact at the middle and high school levels include the District Teacher Leader (gifted and talented student programming) and the school counselor (gifted and talented identification). If a parent has further questions, s/he may contact the district's Gifted and Talented Education Coordinator.

***How will I receive on-going information about my student's progress and programming opportunities?***

Communication among parents, students, and teachers is essential for parents to learn about programming opportunities. Parents should ask the teacher if they are unsure of the differentiated opportunities being provided to their child.

***How can I best prepare for conferences—to make sure I get information on my child's needs—beyond hearing, "S/he's doing fine"?***

When possible, it's always best to have an ongoing relationship with your child's teacher. Feel free to write a brief letter or email that introduces your child and describes his or her perceived needs to the teacher before the school year begins. At your child's conference, share what your child enjoys about school and share your insights about your child. Present yourself as a supportive parent who recognizes the teacher's efforts to meet all students' needs. If possible, remember to offer to help the teacher in some way. The following questions for teachers may help you obtain more in-depth information about your child.

1. What do you see as my child's strengths and weaknesses?
2. If my child already has a solid grasp of the subject matter in a class, what additional opportunities are available? Does s/he take advantage of the opportunities?
3. If my child has a great deal of prior knowledge in a unit/theme, is there a way s/he can be given other options to broaden his/her knowledge base or move ahead into more complex subject matter? (curriculum compacting, contracting, etc.)

#### 4. How can I help my child at home?

##### ***How do I find out what opportunities there are throughout the school year for my child?***

Information sheets listing extracurricular activities and clubs are generally available at schools during registration prior to the start of the school year. The Wauwatosa School District also supports a wide range of activities for all students such as spelling bees, academic competitions (reading, writing, math, etc.), Forensics, Destination Imagination, clubs, and other competitions. Students are encouraged to explore and develop their interests. These activities come to students through many avenues including parents, teachers, schools, or the district. Families are also encouraged to explore activities offered by outside organizations such as the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth.

##### ***Where can I find additional information?***

##### **Wauwatosa School District Website ([www.wauwatosa.k12.wi.us](http://www.wauwatosa.k12.wi.us))**

The link to the Gifted and Talented webpage is found as follows: Administrative Departments > Student Learning > Gifted and Talented or <http://tinyurl.com/2uxv3pr>

##### **Wauwatosa School District Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee**

This district committee meets periodically throughout the school year to provide guidance and support for the district gifted and talented program. The committee is composed of parents, teachers, school counselors, District Teacher Leaders, and administrators. For more information about this committee, you may contact the Office of Student Learning at (414) 773-1036.

##### **Wauwatosa School District Gifted & Talented Parent Network**

The purpose of the Gifted & Talented Parent Network is to provide a forum in which parents can receive and share information about services and activities for gifted & Talented and other high-achieving students and to ensure that parents have an organized voice in the district. **All** parents in the school district are welcome to attend.

##### **CESA #1 PAGE (Parent Advocates for Gifted Education)**

The Wauwatosa School District maintains a membership in CESA #1 PAGE, a group of parents and educators in Southeast Wisconsin working together to share information about Gifted and Talented education and provide programs and resources to parents and students. Information about PAGE programs are distributed to parents of Gifted and Talented students throughout the year. PAGE has also provided more than 100 books on Gifted and Talented education which are available through the Wauwatosa Public Library and the inter-library loan system. See the Gifted and Talented page on the Wauwatosa School District website for a link to the list of book titles available.

##### **Other Websites**

Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted (WATG): [www.watg.org](http://www.watg.org)

Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY): [www.wcaty.org](http://www.wcaty.org)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: [www.dpi.state.wi.us](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us)

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC): [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

Northwestern University Center for Talent Development (home of the Midwest Academic Talent Search): [www.ctd.northwestern.edu/mats/index.html](http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/mats/index.html)

The Davidson Institute: [www.davidsongifted.org](http://www.davidsongifted.org)

Hoagies Gifted: [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG): <http://sengifted.org/>

## Wauwatosa School District Contacts

### District Teacher Leaders:

School	DTL Name	Contact Information
East	Pat Gilbert	773-3204 gilberpa@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Eisenhower	Sharon Kiernan	773-1138 kiernash@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Jefferson	Mary Butkus	773-1280 butkusma@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Lincoln	Lisa O'Malley	773-1367 omalleli@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Longfellow	Leann Neese	773-2551 neesele@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Madison	Tracy Eccles	773-1400 ecclestr@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
McKinley	Tracy Loechler	773-1568 loechltr@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Roosevelt	Sharon Kiernan	773-1633 kiernash@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Underwood	Lisa O'Malley	773-1367 omalleli@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Washington	Mary Butkus	773-1876 butkusma@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
West	Pat Gilbert	773-3204 gilberpa@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Whitman	Leann Neese	773-2551 neesele@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Wilson	Tracy Loechler	773-1568 loechltr@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us

### School Counselors:

School	Counselor Name	Contact Information
East	Amy Harrington	773-2028 harrinam@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Longfellow	Sue Ennis	773-2427 ennissu@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
West	Brian Hoffman	773-3027 hoffmabr@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us
Whitman	Don Devine	773-2627 devinedo@wauwatosa.k12.wi.us

### Student Learning:

Jeanne Paulus, Gifted and Talented Education Coordinator  
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William Anderson, Supervisor of Student Learning  
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