The mission of Mesa Public Schools is to develop a highly educated and productive community,
one student at a time.

Our Vision: Unprecedented Excellence in Education

Italic text denotes Arizona Department of Education questions driving the Gifted and Talented Scope and Sequence
Bold text denotes Mesa Public Schools' response to the Arizona Department of Education required elements
Plain text denotes Mesa Public Schools' guidelines and procedures
Underline text denotes book titles
Pending Mesa Public Schools Governing Board Approval April 2016
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Program Design

**Definition of Gifted:** What is your district’s definition of a gifted student and gifted education?

Arizona Revised Statute §15-779 defines a gifted child as "any child of lawful school age who displays superior intellect, advanced learning ability or both and who needs special instruction and services to reach appropriate levels of achievement."

Mesa Public Schools’ Gifted and Talented Department is committed to providing appropriate services for students who require differentiated educational services beyond those normally provided by our regular school program. Opportunities for depth and acceleration are offered to meet both affective and cognitive needs of the gifted and talented students. Students are screened through multiple criteria and identified for service if verbal, quantitative, or non-verbal scores are 97th percentile or above on state-approved tests.

**Philosophy/Goals:** What are the philosophy and goals of your gifted program?

**Mission Statement:**
To develop open-minded critical and creative thinking in order to solve rigorous, authentic challenges.

Gifted and talented students will develop the following:
- Critical Thinking Skills – thinking that is disciplined, clear, logical, and supported by evidence
- Creative Thinking Skills – thinking that generates many varied, amplified, and unique ideas using a variety of strategies and techniques
- Investigative Skills – thinking that is curious, resulting in student-generated questions that are relevant to complex issues and solutions
- Self-development Skills – the ability to organize, direct, and be responsible for one’s own learning; to develop cooperative skills in order to work effectively with others; to develop an understanding and positive attitude about oneself, one’s abilities, and one’s learning

**Service Delivery:** How do you group and deliver services to your students?

The elementary program centers around teaching students to enhance their critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, and problem-solving skills. In the elementary program, services are delivered through two types of models, resource pull-out and itinerant. Differentiated classroom curriculum is also supported by both pull-out and itinerant teachers through content enrichment.
Grades K-2
Classroom Enrichment:

Identified K-2 students attaining a 97th percentile or above in the verbal, quantitative or nonverbal portion of the Cognitive Abilities Test are given enrichment activities in the area of strength delivered through the regular classroom. Several meetings occur between the classroom and gifted teacher in order to locate, discuss, and decide on possible resources. After the regular classroom teacher implements specific enrichment tasks, the conversations continue between the classroom and gifted teacher in order to refine the thinking process support for the student.

Grades 3-6
Pull-out Model:

Mesa’s primary service model is a one day pull-out program for identified students. In this resource pull-out program, class instruction focuses on developing problem-solving skills. By working with tools to develop and enhance creative and critical thinking, students will be able to tackle increasingly more complex, authentic problems or challenges. Students learn problem-solving strategies, including Creative Problem Solving and the engineering design process. Typically, students participate in a long-term investigation each year that culminates in the application of learned/researched information.

Itinerant Model:

Mesa has initiated an itinerant service model for several specific schools during the 2015-16 school year. Students at these schools are serviced through both a pull-out model for a portion of the day as well as a push-in model in the regular classroom, where enrichment strategies and materials are modeled and implemented. The Gifted and Talented Department recognizes a pattern in the current identification process at these school sites, resulting in low student numbers and demographically underrepresented populations. By teaching on each campus weekly, itinerant staff members are able to diagnose and respond to cultural needs more readily. The presence of the itinerant teacher, as well as the modifications made to identification criteria, strengthen the ability more clearly to identify atypical high ability students in need of challenge on these campuses, provide support for implementing such challenge, and as a result, improve the identification of underrepresented populations for gifted service. The initial steps in the itinerant identification process are more observational and anecdotal in nature, resulting in a more holistic approach to identification of these students.
Differentiation Support:

Gifted and talented teachers also build “bridges” of differentiation into the regular classroom for students that score in the top 10% on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). This extension of services is implemented by the classroom teacher with support from the gifted resource teacher. Enrichment activities, chosen for the student’s strength areas, incorporate changes in content, process, environment, or product, creating opportunities for deeper learning.

During the school years 2011-2015, a service plan that documented differentiation in the regular classroom, titled the Education Service Plan (ESP) existed for students who scored at the 97th percentile on the CogAT in only one area. The intent of the ESP was to focus on students with strengths in the classroom as well as in the pull-out service day. Beginning in 2016, the modified criteria now includes those students with one subtest score at the 97th percentile in the pull-out and itinerant service models.

Flexible Grouping:

Individual elementary schools may choose to provide enrichment to identified students through the structure of RTI, response to intervention, with a daily enrichment time block. Additionally, some schools group students with one specific classroom teacher who attends training on specific materials or strategies that push the thinking of students.

Acceleration:

- Content acceleration is determined when a student has proven mastery of objectives prior to learning a specific chapter or unit of skills or when grade levels implement the use of ability grouping. School leadership teams determine the most effective enrichment system available at each grade level. District resources are available for classroom teachers to extend skills in English language arts and mathematics, as well as general thinking process activities that support all subject areas.

- Virtual acceleration in course placement occurs when a student’s scores indicate mastery of grade level skills that are one year ahead of standard age expectations delivered virtually through VAward. Virtual acceleration occurs most readily in mathematics and most often in sixth grade through virtually enhanced coursework.

- Grade acceleration takes place through a defined process that begins with the classroom teacher, school leadership and district personnel dialoguing around multiple perspectives of the student’s current progress and future needs. Observing the specific student during classroom learning, assessing the student in the area of concern, meeting with educators involved, holding a data review discussion and meeting with the student and parents are all important aspects of this process.
International Baccalaureate:

International Baccalaureate offers a continuum of internationally sanctioned education. The program encourages both personal and academic achievement, challenging students to excel in their studies and in their personal development. IB is offered at two elementary school sites through parental choice options, at Summit Academy in K-6th grades and at Mesa Academy of Advanced Studies in 4th-8th grades. Students who choose this opportunity learn in the regular classroom with teachers who have received IB training and created units following the IB criteria.

Grades 7-8

In junior high, gifted services are delivered through concurrent enrollment in the core subject areas of honors science/math and honors English language arts/social studies. These classes focus on higher-level thinking skills while integrating interdisciplinary curriculum. All of the concurrently enrolled classes are taught by teachers who are gifted endorsed or working toward gifted endorsement who collaborate to create cohesive units of study.

Content acceleration is also available to students who desire to personalize learning through district online programs such as the Mesa Distance Learning Program or the VAcademy for virtual math. Course acceleration prior to the standard age norms requires summative assessments be taken to determine if the student has mastered the prerequisite skills for the requested course. Mastery of skills is documented through the district office, and a student, parent and district personnel meeting takes place to communicate the results and recommendations for the student.

International Baccalaureate:

This program is also offered to 7th and 8th graders through choice on two campuses, Mesa Academy of Advanced Studies and Summit Academy.

Grades 9-12

In high school, Mesa Public Schools offers many different options for an enriched and/or accelerated curriculum which vary by school site. These options are open to students who elect to participate in the programs.

- Honors coursework
- Advanced Placement (AP) courses
- International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Dual enrollment programs
- Advanced STEM programs
- Challenge testing
**Arizona State Standards:** How do you integrate your program standards with state standards at each grade level?

The gifted resource teachers work in tandem with the teachers of record to determine mastery of skills. In mathematics and English language arts, gifted resource teachers review performance level descriptors of the standards in order to facilitate students’ moving into the highly proficient levels. AzMERIT results are also used as benchmarks for teachers to begin instruction. Pre-assessment or unit assessment helps identify differentiation needs. Curriculum mapping and resource designation per grade level determine standards and content enrichment to be implemented.

**Parental Involvement:** How do you involve parents in your program?

- Curriculum evenings held by gifted resource teachers each fall
- Parent conferences with gifted teachers in October and January
- District-wide parent evening and student showcase each spring
- Mesa Supports of Gifted and Talented (MSGT), a parent organization available to all interested families with speakers, links, resources and meeting schedule advertised on the parent website at [http://www.msgt.org/](http://www.msgt.org/)
- Webpages maintained by each gifted teacher as well as the Gifted and Talented Department
- District, local, and state opportunities: Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, Arizona State University Barrett Summer Scholars, Camp Invention, academic leagues, or other programs geared for gifted and talented students

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Identification

Referral: How does your referral process involve parents and staff?

Grade 2
Universal Screening:
All Mesa students in second grade will be given an initial screening assessment by the classroom teacher during the fall semester, beginning 2016. District-wide reporting on all students allows for a broader analysis of probable student candidates. Students that the data indicates would best be served by gifted and talented curriculum will be given the opportunity to practice activities in small groups and take future assessments for identification.

Grades K – 8
Open Referrals:
During any point in the school year a teacher or parent may have indicators that a student is in need of a more challenging approach to the academic needs of the student. A parent request to meet with the classroom teacher on the strengths of the student and the academic areas of concern will focus differentiation efforts. Contacting the gifted resource teacher who services the elementary school or the counselor on the junior high campus will begin the referral process. Test dates and referral information are shared through individual site methods. School newsletters, gifted resource teachers, and the school websites advertise specific information and/or forms that parents and teachers have available to them on their neighborhood campus.

All grade levels
Underrepresented Populations:
Working in collaboration with the English Language Acquisition Department, multiple reports are generated each fall and spring that highlight English language learners who have tested proficient on the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment, AZELLA. The information reported to the Gifted and Talented Department indicates students who have gained proficiency in English as a second language with exceptionally rapid accuracy. This information serves as a baseline each semester for gifted referrals, and contact is made with either the classroom teacher or the families of these students to determine next steps. The report titles are as follows:

- Initially Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) fall, AZELLA proficient scores on first attempt
- Re-assess Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) spring, AZELLA proficient scores in one year or less
Grades K-12
Transfer Students:
Each school campus has a multiple step process to determine student service needs. The front office staff explains the information or documents that best share student history with district personnel. If a transferring student was already receiving gifted service in the previous district, those official school records can be requested to be sent to the district office. Review and placement occur as soon as official district information has been processed.

Grades K-6
In-service:
During the first semester of each school year, the elementary gifted resource teachers educate the staff in their buildings about the referral process. The in-service is tailored to the needs of each site but generally follows a district provided presentation. Topics include characteristics of gifted children, common misunderstandings of gifted and talented students, referral process steps, and suggestions for differentiation.

Identification Process: What is your process for identification of K-12 gifted students?

Criteria:
Gifted services are provided to students who score at the 97th percentile or above on the verbal, quantitative, or nonverbal sub-test of Arizona Department of Education state approved tests. Mesa uses qualifying criteria that include multiple metrics in order to make informed decisions. Historically, the qualifying criteria in Mesa Public Schools has been 97th percentile in two subtest areas. During the school years of 2011-2015, a new service named the Education Service Plan (ESP) began documenting differentiation in the regular classroom for students who scored at the 97th percentile in only one area. Beginning in 2016, the criteria shifts to maximize student potential with students who score a 97th percentile in a single area. Student placement now occurs with one 97th percentile and placement occurs with additional pieces of evidence that are reviewed by looking at multi-faceted evidence. This broader and deeper analysis of indicators allows Mesa Public Schools to cast a wider net, supporting all types of learners.

Testing Process:
Testing is offered at all sites three times a year. Specific school dates vary; however, elementary schools generally follow an August, November and May timeline. Junior high testing schedules can be found through the site counseling department or school websites. Parents or teachers have the opportunity to fill out a Screening Request form and a Characteristics Checklist on a specific student, after which the records will be reviewed. If initial data indicates a need, then the parent will be asked to sign a Parent Permission to Test form and a testing date will be assigned.
Underrepresented Populations: How does your process address the variety of student environmental backgrounds?

In order to address the diverse population of Mesa Public Schools, an itinerant delivery service model has been implemented to focus on the needs of adept students in underrepresented schools. Identified schools have students working with a gifted endorsed teacher one day a week on campus with a school goal of becoming more skilled in identifying atypical students. The screening process is a multi-criteria procedure used to maximize the pool of students to be evaluated for gifted service. Screening tools such as Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children (WISC), and gifted characteristics surveys are used to ensure underserved populations are afforded an opportunity to access gifted services.

Data sources for atypical students:
- AZELLA scoring proficient in one year or less
- CogAT data aligned to the top 3% of each specific site
- Additional stats-approved test data
- Anecdotal observation data
- AzMERIT
- District assessments
- Classroom level achievement data
- Student work samples

Testing Instruments: What data points do you use and why did you choose these?

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) – state board approved test list
- Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT) – state board approved test list
- Gifted Characteristics Survey – classroom academic, motivation, creative attributes
- Formative observational data – classroom performance in thinking skills
- Naglieri test – non-verbal indicator
- WISC – individual performance setting

Communication: How do you inform parents and staff about referral and identification processes?

Website: The Gifted and Talented Department communicates through our elementary site-based staff, the junior high counselors, high school student advisors, and our district website. Gifted resource teachers are in contact with grade level teachers throughout the school year and can answer questions at any time. Parent conferences in both fall and spring serve as touch points for both parents and staff to converse about students’ needs with the gifted resource teacher. During the first quarter of each school year gifted resource teachers share a PowerPoint presentation during a staff meeting about characteristics and the referral process for all students. Parents of all sixth graders are invited to share in the Step Up parent evening event for registration in junior high
programming, during which honors teachers and students explain programming options. The parents of any student tested receive a descriptive letter explaining the results and subsequent services.

**Universal Screening:** second grade (beginning fall 2016)

**Elementary Parent Evenings:** elementary campuses in the fall/district-wide in the spring

**Junior High Registration Evenings:** January-February

**Website:** [http://www.mpsaz.org/gtp/](http://www.mpsaz.org/gtp/)

**Appeal Process: How do you handle an appeal from a decision?**

An appeal for an elementary placement decision is made by contacting either the gifted resource teacher or the district office of the Gifted and Talented Program. Dialogue around the needs of the student, the current classroom environment and the results of the testing will take place. If further or additional testing is deemed necessary, it will be completed by gifted staff and results shared with the parent as soon as possible.

An appeal for a junior high placement decision begins with the school counselor and is referred to the gifted and talented team which is made up of honors teachers, the Title I specialist, the counselor, and/or the administrator. The team meets on a specified date to discuss a series of questions and data points listed on a data review form found under teacher resources on the gifted website. The appeal takes a closer look through a specific analysis of student strengths and classroom skills that still may need to be challenged. The step by step process follows:

- Appeal document completed
- Teacher data meeting
- Parent meeting
- Solution and review date set
Curriculum and Instruction

**Differentiation:** How do you differentiate instruction? What curricular materials do you use?

**Grades K-2**

**Differentiation:**

Upon teacher or parent request for support, department staff conduct classroom observations. A conference with the teacher and student is then held to help determine academic levels and needs of the student. Resources are then provided to the classroom teacher in the way of materials and differentiation strategies, as well as suggestions for extending the regular classroom curriculum and utilizing enrichment materials that accompany the district curriculum. Testing may take place following the above interventions, if deemed appropriate.

**Grades K-2**

**Curricular Materials:**
The following resources are not an exhaustive list. Select samples are shared below in order to give a general perspective.

- MPS Think Time Lessons
- Marcy Cook math materials
- Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS)
- Wonder Stories
- First Time Analogies
- Analogies for Beginners
- Math Analogies
- Daily Math Problem Solving series
- Groundworks Algebraic Thinking
- Enrichment materials that accompany district resources

**Grades 3-6**

**Differentiation:**

Gifted teachers collaborate with classroom teachers to develop plans for addressing the needs of students in their identified area(s) of strength. Students with high abilities need enrichment resources in the areas of math and English language arts. Classroom teachers use flexible grouping, extension workbooks, and online resources to provide curricular differentiation. Both
the classroom teacher and the gifted resource teacher work in tandem to develop the program best suited for challenging the identified student throughout the week.

The following resources are not an exhaustive list. Select samples are shared below in order to give a general perspective.

- MPS Think Time Lessons (beginning fall 2016)
- My Math online math enrichment resources
- Zacarro math series
- District reading toolkit resources
- Analogies enrichment resources

**Grades 3-6**

**Curricular Materials:**
The following resources are not an exhaustive list. Select samples are shared below in order to give a general perspective.

**Critical Thinking Skills** (Questioning, Point of View, Inferences, Implications)

*Jacob’s Ladder*

*Junior Great Books series*

**Inductive/Deductive Reasoning Process**

*Logic Anyone*

*Perplexors*

*Connections*

*Thinking Through Analogies*

Analogies and syllogism enrichment resources
Mathematical Problem Solving

*Weight Logic*

*First Algebraic Experiences*

*The 10 Things All Future Mathematicians Must Know*

Math Olympiad program

*Creative Thinking Skills* (Fluency, Flexibility, Elaboration, Originality)

*I Believe in Unicorns*

*Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*

*Creative Problem Solving*

*Primarily Problem Solving*

*Practice Problems for Creative Problem Solving*

*Future Problem Solving Readings, Research and Resources*

*Design Challenge Units*

Endangered Animals, Bridges & Structures, Biomimicry, SCRATCH programming

**Grades 7-8**

**Differentiation:**

Junior high students are placed in concurrent honors courses that match their strength areas. These honors courses are taught by endorsed staff or staff working towards their gifted endorsement. Quarterly honors team trainings are scheduled each year in order to review student work products, develop common formative assessments and refine interdisciplinary curricular units. Collaborative work time and training in differentiated resources provide strategies to implement depth in learning tasks that are developed with gifted students in mind. Content specialists join gifted specialists in this quarterly professional development in order to provide content connections and focus teachers on enrichment resources that support teachers in expecting highly proficient work outcomes from students.
Grades 7-8
Materials:
- Problem Based Learning units – Royal Fireworks Press
- Daily Analogies – Great Source
- Vocabulary Builders – Michael Clay Thompson
- National History Day / Project Citizen
- History Alive / Document Based Questions
- 3 Act Math
- NCTM (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics) Illuminations
- Engage New York toolkits
- NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) Science Engineering Fair
- STEM unit design

Grades 9-12
Differentiation:
Many choice programs are available to students:
- College Dual Enrollment
- MPS Honors coursework
- Advanced Honors designation
- Advanced STEM designation
- Mesa Distance Learning MDLP website
- Advanced Placement including AP Capstone Red Mountain Capstone
- International Baccalaureate coursework Westwood IB Program

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### Grades 9-12

#### Curricular Coursework

**Advanced Placement**

- AR 82 AP Art History
- AR 80 AP Studio Art
- CB 40 AP Computer Science  
  **AP Computer Science Principles (2016-17)**
- CP 20W AP Capstone Seminar
- CP 21W AP Capstone Research (2016-17)
- EN 70 AP English Language & Composition
- EN 71 AP English Literature & Composition
- MA 50 AP Calculus AB
- MA 51 AP Calculus BC
- MA 52 AP Statistics
- MU 33 AP Music Theory
- SC 46 AP Biology
- SC 77 AP Chemistry
- SC 52 AP Environmental Science
- SC 79 AP Physics I
- SC 80 AP Physics II
- SC 92 AP Physics C
- SS 67 AP Human Geography
- SS 50 AP World History
- SS 64 AP European History
- SS 39 AP United States History
- SS 52 AP United States Government and Politics
- SS 56 AP Comparative Government
- SS 87 AP Macroeconomics
- SS 86 AP Microeconomics
- SS 79 AP Psychology
- WL 15 AP Chinese Language & Culture
- WL 25 AP Spanish Language & Culture
- WL 26 AP Spanish Literature & Culture
- WL 45 AP French Language & Culture
- WL 35 AP German Language & Culture

**International Baccalaureate**

- EN 66 and EN 69 IB Literature and  
  Performance Standard Level I & II
- EN 91 IB English Higher Level I
- EN 92 IB English Higher Level II
- MA 91 & 92 IB Mathematics Standard  
  Level I & II
- MA 93 & 94 IB Math Studies Standard  
  Level I & II
- MA 96 IB Mathematics Higher Level I
- MA 98 IB Higher Mathematics Level II
- MU 97 IB Music Perspectives Standard Level
- PE 45 IB Middle Years PE
- SC 34 IB MYP Biology
- SC 35 IB Biology Standard Level
- SC 93 & SC 94 IB Biology Higher  
  Level I & II
- SC 95 IB Chemistry Standard Level
- SC 96 & SC 97 IB Physics Higher  
  Level I & II
- SS 26 IB MYP World History/Geography
- SS 36 IB MYP Honors American History
- SS 84 IB Political Thought Standard Level
- SS 85 IB Business Management Higher  
  Level I
- SS 88 IB Economics Standard Level
- SS 89 IB Psychology Standard Level
- SS 90 IB Economics I Higher Level
- SS 91 IB Economics II Higher Level
- SS 92 & SS 93 IB History of the Americas  
  I & II
- SS 95 IB Theory of Knowledge
- SS 97 IB Psychology Higher Level I
- SS 98 IB Psychology Higher Level II
- WL 27 IB Spanish Higher Level II
- WL 90 IB Spanish Standard Level
- WL 91 IB French Standard Level
- WL 92 IB Mandarin Chinese Standard Level I
- WL 93 IB Mandarin Chinese Standard  
  Level II
- WL 94 IB Spanish Higher Level I

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Honors Courses
EN 27 Honors Freshman English
EN 35 Honors Sophomore English
EN 58 Honors American History & Literature
MA 32 Honors Geometry
MA 41 Honors Algebra II
MA 45 Honors Precalculus
MU 85 Honors Band
SC 45 Honors Biology
SC 72 Honors Chemistry
SS 28 Honors World History/Geography
SS 32 Honors American History & Literature
Social and Emotional Development

Affective Needs: How do you provide for the unique affective needs of your gifted students?

Grades K-6

Identified student needs in social and emotional development are handled most often in the gifted classroom through weekly discussions or writing tasks. Topics of interaction center on such items as excitability, anxiety or perfectionism and are part of the curricular expectations within the context of the day in both pull-out and itinerant service models. Learning tasks are designed to use cooperative learning techniques that require both extroverts and introverts to stretch for interpersonal growth. Small group counseling sessions are also available on an as-needed basis. The elementary gifted resource teachers initiate multiple ongoing processes with classroom teachers, school leaders, parents, and students regarding affective information and support:

- Fall gifted characteristics in-service
- Specific socio-emotional curricular resources
- Gifted 101 PD for Title I and teacher leaders
- Website resources around challenges of the gifted student

Grades 7-8

The junior high gifted students’ needs in social and emotional development are the responsibility of the gifted core teacher team, which consists of 7th and 8th grade honors teachers in English language arts, math, social studies, and science. Counselors meet with Gifted and Talented Department specialists twice a year to discuss students’ academic and affective needs. Websites and specific book titles are available to counselors and parents through our Mesa Public Schools Gifted and Talented Department website. Honors teachers and counselors meet monthly to discuss specific curricular or affective needs of students and to plan for parent communication.

- Step Up evening – student and parent open house event providing a platform to answer questions, discuss concerns and prepare for the expectations of the honors coursework registration options.

- Honors Coursework Professional Learning Communities – teachers meet monthly to communicate and to support gifted students; PLC meetings identify needs for student-to-teacher or student-to-parent meetings. During these discussions a teacher assists in brainstorming solutions and resources that support a personal issue or management of a student affective goal.
Grades 9-12

High school student advisors capitalize on college and career opportunities that will expose individuals to next steps in higher education, which include technical school, community college, military academies and university planning. Often times student advisors meet with honors students to encourage, motivate and assist in making decisions about the future. It is not uncommon for honors students to overcommit themselves, and individual conversations need to occur around making choices or time management strategies. Supports include the following:

- Individual student advisement
- PSAT test preparation
- Education & Career Action Plans (ECAPs)
- Student assistance programs
- Annual college fair

At Risk Gifted Students: How do you monitor and provide assistance to at risk gifted students?

Student advisors meet with students on an individual basis each grading period in order to set goals and keep parents informed of current academic progress. At risk students may not be aware of specific scholarships that are available; therefore, these meetings keep at risk students on a successful scholarship seeking timeline and/or meet specific at risk needs.

- Scholarship support for low socioeconomic/high ability students
  - Dorrance Scholarship
  - Questbridge Scholarship
  - Wood Scholarship
- Small group counseling focused on at risk topics
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college readiness program for first generation college students

Parents: What specific orientation activities do you provide for parents and teachers regarding students' affective needs?

The Gifted and Talented Department has multiple informational contact points available for parents:

- District-wide new student parent informational evening in the spring
- On-site parent curriculum evening in the fall
- Parent resource books for check out

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• Mesa Supporters of Gifted and Talented (MSGT) parent support group
• Choose Advanced Placement – freshman parent evening in January
• Website links
Program Assessment

Program Effectiveness: What data sources do you use to assess program effectiveness?

Multiple types of data are reviewed in order to maintain a growth mindset in program delivery. Assessment of teacher instructional practices, review of curricular materials, communication of service model effectiveness and reports on numbers of students identified occur as an iterative process.

- **Student success monitoring** – International Baccalaureate diplomas, Advanced Placement exam results, Dual Enrollment participation, honors coursework student grade point average (GPA) review, National Merit winners, and scholarships awarded to gifted students
- **Identification and equity monitoring** – statistical analysis of gifted student demographics, course enrollment and ethnicity to achieve balance in access and quality of gifted services

Department Assessment: How do you use both norm and criterion referenced test data in your evaluation process?

Mesa Public Schools adheres to a sound assessment plan that is developed through strategic leadership and systematic assessment. The Gifted and Talented Department’s program is evaluated through community committees, district, and department surveys:

- Program evaluation review – outside facilitator (spring 2013)
- Annual Quality Service Survey – given to peer educators within Mesa Public Schools
- Annual Department Goal Setting aligned with District Strategic Initiatives
- Classroom grade comparison to CogAT assessment

Assessment: How do you use informal measures to gather data?

On a yearly basis, the specialists work individually and in small groups with teachers and parents in order to make progress toward goals and incorporate the perceptions of key stakeholders:

- Site visits – observations, elementary and junior high
- Principal/Leadership interfacing
- PLC’s (Professional Learning Communities)
- Elementary gifted report card review
- Individual staff interviews
- Student Survey Feedback (beginning spring 2016)
- Parent Survey Feedback (beginning spring 2017)
**Key Indicators:** What are the key indicators that your program is positively affecting students?

- Attendance records
- Program dropout rate
- Students creating community connections
- Site enrichment growth in use of textbook and online resources
- Advanced Placement testing results
- International Baccalaureate diplomas
- Capstone or other specialized diplomas and designations

**Performance Standards:** What performance standards do you have for all gifted students?

- AzMERIT proficient or highly proficient
- Common formative assessments aligned to highly proficient learning descriptors in both English language arts and mathematics
**Professional Development**

**Gifted Staff Trainings:** How do you provide opportunities for gifted teachers to receive specialized training regarding working with gifted students?

Educators who have the primary responsibility for teaching identified students have ongoing required staff trainings offered through Mesa Public Schools Professional Development system. Each year gifted teachers attend various combinations of the trainings listed below:

**Nuts and Bolts Introduction:** This professional development opportunity focuses on first quarter implementation of gifted strategies through interdisciplinary unit design. Trainings during the year will reflect this set of expectations for thinking. This venue is the jumping off point for articulation between gifted and talented staff members and a mindset for the new academic year.

**Teachers New to Gifted Training:** This training addresses the main components and processes of the gifted curriculum as well as provides training in testing, enrichment activities, communication with parents and teachers, assessment, and responsibilities of a gifted teacher.

**Elementary Gifted and Talented Staff Training:** Teachers work collaboratively twice a month to address challenges and to determine best practices for implementing the in-service content and expectations of the department. This training provides ongoing in-service and support to gifted teachers regarding program curriculum, testing, classroom teacher support, parent support, and other issues related to the job of elementary teacher of the gifted.

**Junior High Gifted Staff:** Quarterly professional development with Gifted and Talented Department specialists is the platform for all junior high teachers working toward endorsement. Honors teachers work collaboratively on questioning, assessment, and gifted strategies as well as interact in cross-curricular teams to develop interdisciplinary units that have higher-level thinking skills embedded throughout.

**Conferences:** Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented (AAGT) – annual conference
National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) – depending on location

**Refinement:** Instructors of gifted and talented courses are asked to reflect on the system feedback that is submitted by teachers at the conclusion of each class. The instructors also meet with each other or with the director to refine the coursework and teacher needs at the end of each school year.
Endorsement Coursework: Do teachers who have primary responsibility of teaching gifted learners have or work towards endorsement?

Mesa Public Schools began offering district endorsement coursework beginning 2011. Historically, teachers interested in learning more about giftedness took it upon themselves to research various online resources or attend university courses that generalize student trends in gifted education. Mesa Public Schools observed a need to capitalize on achievement of gifted students by building capacity in these skills of our own educators. The Gifted and Talented Department designed a series of classes using MPS common language and student achievement needs resulting in a tailor-made course for MPS students. The classes are embedded with teacher tasks to implement in classrooms and then receive feedback from endorsed teachers during a reflective process. Mesa Public Schools now delivers full endorsement coursework with customized curriculum to any teacher who completes this process. To date, 193 teachers have taken advantage of the personalized opportunities described below:

**Foundations A** (32 seat hours = 2 salary credits): This course is the first in the series of three, centered around current topics in gifted education. The course introduces teachers to the characteristics of high ability students, the identification process in Mesa Public Schools as well as taking a closer look at under-identified students and brain-based research and how to apply these in classrooms using Arizona standards.

**Foundations B** (32 seat hours = 2 salary credits): This course is the second in the series of three. The course introduces teachers to differentiation strategies to practice implementing for specific enrichment tasks. This course presents multiple intelligences, pre-assessment, formative assessment choice boards, and quality questioning while incorporating brain-based research specific of the gifted learner.

**Foundations C** (32 seat hours = 2 salary credits): This course is the third in the series of three on gifted education. The course continues to add to each teacher’s instructional tool kit with the implementation of creative and critical thinking skills as a method to increase depth of knowledge in the classroom. “Foundation for Critical Thinking” vocabulary and the problem-solving cycle are shared as an iterative process for learning. The course further explores how technology and resources support the needs of the gifted student.

**Foundations D** (48 seat hours = 3 salary credits): The work in this course begins by considering conceptual learning and the development of a backward designed unit, while keeping the high ability learner in mind. Differentiation beyond the current classroom instruction and environment is a necessity. The target audience of students for whom teachers will need to prepare is derived from the answer to PLC (Professional Learning Community) question #4, "What do we do with the students who already know it?" Arizona standards will be dissected and connected to thinking skills with which gifted and talented students must be challenged through the unit that is developed.

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Pending Mesa Public Schools Governing Board Approval April 2016
Endorsement Certification:

- **Provisional Endorsement:** Provisional process document (Option B)
- **Full Endorsement:** Full process document (Option A)
- **Highly Qualified Notebook:** The Gifted and Talented Department works in tandem with the Human Resources Department for documentation supporting endorsement. The GT Department holds a notebook of certificated staff and those “working towards” endorsement, as documented in our professional development accountability system.

**General Education Coursework:** How do you regularly provide opportunities for regular classroom teachers?

As part of our support to district-wide differentiation and enrichment, the Gifted and Talented Department offers classroom teachers, Title I and Professional Development Specialists several opportunities for professional learning:

**Increasing Rigor and Expectations for Common Core Through Questioning** (12 hr. class):
This course provides strategies and tips for increasing the degree of students’ cognitive output through increased participation and active engagement. This twelve hour course covers numerous strategies including open and closed questioning, ways to stretch or extend current questions, strategies for teaching students to generate their own questions and student discussion formats. Teachers will be given time to work on developing higher-level questions for their curriculum and opportunities to collaborate with others.

**Increasing Student Thinking Through Higher Level Questioning** (12 hr. class):
In this class teachers explore previously presented questioning and engagement concepts and strategies in more depth, as well as learn additional ways to increase rigor and student engagement through higher-level questions, discussion, and student-generated questions. This is an interactive, collaborative, activity-based class. Teachers discuss various strategies and possible applications for their classrooms, implement the strategies, and then engage in reflective discussions. They also create higher-level text-based questions for a selected lesson/text that will be submitted and shared with others. This class is for teachers who seriously want to deepen their understanding and use of higher-level questioning and thinking strategies. Teachers are to come ready to participate, share, problem solve, and generate questions, ideas, and solutions.

**Using Analogies to Develop Student Thinking** (1 1/2 hr. in-service):
This course addresses the how and why of implementing analogies into the classroom. Analogies are an extremely powerful way to get students thinking, analyzing, comparing, and evaluating and can be transferred to all subject areas. Teachers will practice a strategy and graphic format for helping students learn to recognize, explain, and justify the relationship within each analogy.
Teachers will model the very discussion that makes the use of analogies so beneficial. Differentiation possibilities will also be addressed and suggested resources will be shared.

**Making Sense of Word Problems Using a Problem of the Day (POD) Chart** (1 hr. in-service): In this course teachers work through a process for helping students analyze and solve math word problems using a POD (Problem of the Day) Chart. Using the POD chart and process, students represent the problem using pictures/symbols/graphics and math equations, as well as words. A component for checking encourages students to look at alternative methods, strategies, and entry points to confirm and justify their answers. In addition to increasing students’ conceptual awareness, the chart easily leads to multiple differentiation possibilities once students are familiar with the process.

**Support Staff Training:** How have trainings targeted the needs of administrators, counselors, psychologists, and support staff?

Each year multiple venues are provided for support staff to gain new information on gifted students and processes.

- **Administrators:** A gifted specialist provides general training and shares site-based data reports from the identified students on each campus during registration time in the junior high system. This information is shared both whole group during administrative meetings and individually with principals each year.

- **Counselors:** Counselors are invited to come together each fall and spring to discuss student data and testing protocols to prepare for course registration. They are also included in a spring training day to interact with teachers, centering on parent interactions and upcoming students.

- **Content Specialists:** On an as-needed basis, the Gifted and Talented Department presents information or materials to content specialists, Title 1 Specialists and Professional Development Specialists to be shared through on-campus in-services.

  *Think Time Lessons K-2* (beginning 2015)
  *Think Time Lessons 3-5* (beginning 2016)
**Feedback Process:** What did the participants say about class effectiveness?

Mesa Public Schools requires an electronic survey to be completed on any class offered through professional development. This feedback is reviewed by the instructors. On an annual basis the district reviews the Gifted and Talented Department and its services through a Quality Service Survey. Additionally, informal site visits and conversations assist the leadership team in determining which professional development is working or having positive impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anecdotal Evaluation Examples</th>
<th>“Really thorough presentation with a ton of useful information! This is really one of the most important topics that I’ve ever attended for development. Excellent class and she made sure we had resources we could use in our classrooms. Great Class!!!”</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This class was very helpful and informative. I will use these materials in my classroom!”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I will use this material to understand how to ask better questions and use wait time and other techniques to affect student engagement and achievement.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I thoroughly enjoyed this course. These questioning strategies will not only enhance my teaching, but also assist my students in developing into higher-level thinkers and higher-level learners.”</td>
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Community Involvement

**Program Philosophy:** How do you make your program philosophy and recruitment procedures available to all parents?

**Recruitment:** As new students enter into our various service models, several opportunities are available for both the student and the parents. Each fall, Mesa holds curriculum evenings specific to gifted information on individual school campuses. In the spring, Mesa Public Schools hosts a district-wide parent experience to which parents of all qualified students are invited, including those recently identified through spring testing. Parent-teacher conferences with the gifted teachers occur by grade level in either the fall or the spring, giving families an opportunity to visit the classroom and interact in a dialogue with the gifted teacher. The district website has many resource links for both parents and students as well as basic information on identification. In addition, each gifted teacher updates a specific site webpage for students to use or for others to view project samples and to receive information.

**Scope & Sequence Access:** How do you provide access to your Scope and Sequence for all parents?

The current adopted scope and sequence is housed at the district office in the Gifted and Talented Department and found online on the department webpage, [www.mpsaz.org/gtp](http://www.mpsaz.org/gtp), beginning 2016.

**Parent Advisory:** How do you incorporate parents into a support or advisory group?

The parent organization for Mesa Public Schools is titled Mesa Supporters of the Gifted and Talented, MSGT.

- Invitation – open to all via flyer and/or web links given during spring/fall parent evenings
- Regular meeting schedule – contact MSGT [http://www.msgt.org/](http://www.msgt.org/)
- Opportunities – fluid in nature but general listing found online at [http://www.msgt.org/](http://www.msgt.org/)

**Program Evaluation:** How do you involve the gifted community in the evaluation of our program?

**Program evaluation: (2013)** - Mesa Public Schools held a Program Review involving a deep cross-section of people whose insights were used to drive future gifted programming. The committee drew upon background information provided by Curriculum and Instruction staff members. Three questions were addressed:

- What practices are going well and need to continue?
- What practices should be considered for discontinuance?
- What new practices should be considered?
Answers evolved into recommendations that built upon the strengths of current practices and highlighted opportunities that could enhance the educational experiences of gifted and talented students. An in-depth dialogue took place over three sessions and among various stakeholders including school board members, superintendency, building administrators, gifted teachers, parents of gifted students and community members at large. An outside facilitator led the meetings and shared the results in a document with information in multiple categories: identification, diverse learner needs, service delivery, professional development, articulation/communication, accountability and parent involvement.

**Quality service:** District Quality Service Surveys are completed by staff members each year in the spring. The results are communicated through the department specialist to the gifted staff members. Ratings are completed on a scale of 1 to 5 in multiple areas. Both the celebrations of the department and the refinements necessary to meet the needs of the students are shared. Goals are set from these ratings and from superintendency initiatives for the upcoming school year.

**Site council invitations:** The gifted staff welcomes interaction with site councils and parents of the sites each teacher serves. The dates and processes are handled at the campus level and do vary.

**Year-end presentations:** The district-wide spring parent education evening has a component of student presentations. Many gifted and regular classroom teachers share student products in varied venues from online pod casts to classroom engineering days to school presentations. Gifted students are involved in various academic competitions which both teachers and parents may attend.

**Year-end survey:** The Gifted and Talented Department, with support from Research and Evaluation, sends out a parent survey to identified fourth and sixth grade students' parents for specific input on programming, student activities and quality of services, beginning 2017.
Budgeting

*Gifted Services are financed by district funds, pursuant to A.R.S. ≈ 15-779.*
To what extent does district support funding of your gifted program?

**State Funding for Gifted Education:** no longer funded:
- Capital expenditures: 0%
- Direct student services: 0%
- Professional development: 0%
- District coordinator: 0%
- Administrative support: 0%
- Testing materials: 0%

**District Funding:** What percentage of your maintenance and operations allocation is used for Gifted support?

- Administrative allocations = .023%
  - Assistant Superintendent – Curriculum and Instruction – .07
  - Total district administrator contracts - 309

- Teacher allocations = 8%
  - Elementary Gifted: 20 full time employee contracts serving 50 schools
  - Junior High Gifted: 72 full time employee contracts serving 9 schools
  - International Baccalaureate (IB):
    - Primary Years Program - 29
    - Middle Years Program - 16
    - Diploma Years - 12
  - Advanced Placement (AP): 115 full time employee contracts
  - Total full time certified teacher contracts – 3576

- Specialist salaries and benefits: 3 full time employee contracts

- Facilities appropriately equipped: as per individual sites

- Testing materials 2015 = 10%
  - Gifted and Talented assessments = $32,000
  - Total district testing = $312,681

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**Supplemental Allocation:** What percentage of your supplemental allocation is used for Gifted support?

Curriculum materials = 9%
- Consumable supplies = $9043.16
- Instructional materials (6643) = $1294.13
- Curriculum materials (6644) = $10,951.89
- Academic memberships and fees = $327.00

Total Gifted and Talented Supplemental = $21,615
Total District Supplemental = $224,000

**Personnel:** What is the structure of your gifted education staff?

**Structure:**
- Elementary: resource teachers, gifted endorsed one grade level a day per week:
  - grade 3rd-6th teachers 21

- Junior High: teachers of record working on endorsement
  - grade 7th teachers 36 (1 per core content area)
  - grade 8th teachers 36 (1 per core content area)

- High School: teachers of record service high ability students through choice:
  - program Advanced Placement teachers 115
  - program IB Primary Years Program teachers 29
  - program IB Middle Years Program teachers 16
  - program IB Diploma Program teachers 12

**Identified students:** What is the ratio of teaching staff to the number of identified gifted students?

- Elementary: 68/1 identified students per teacher
- Junior High: 12/1 identified students per teacher
- High School: 60/1 identified students per teacher