The Governing Board of each school district shall develop a scope and sequence for the identification process of and curriculum modifications for gifted pupils to ensure that gifted pupils receive special education commensurate with their academic abilities and potentials.

(ARS 15-770)
Introduction

Experience has shown that setting high expectations for students improves academic achievement. Students excel when challenged.
(Arizona Academic Standards 2000)

The mission of the Arizona Department of Education and of this school district is to nurture academic excellence and improve student achievement among all students. To this end, the Legislature of the State of Arizona has established this mandate for students who are gifted:

The governing board of each school district shall provide special education to gifted pupils identified as provided in A.R.S. 15-770. Special education for gifted pupils shall only include expanding academic course offerings and supplemental services as may be required to provide an educational program, which is commensurate with the academic abilities and potentials of the gifted pupil.
(A.R.S. 15-764.C.)

The Governing Board of each school district shall develop a scope and sequence for the identification process of and curriculum modifications for gifted pupils to ensure that gifted pupils receive special education commensurate with their academic abilities and potentials.
(A.R.S. 15-770)

The Mesa Unified School District is committed to special education for gifted students to help them develop their extraordinary abilities and recognizes that gifted students in this district have unique values, needs, and talents. The program for gifted students is designed to aid in the optimum development of their intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and to honor the diversity among the identified gifted students through the provision of varied placement options and differentiated and more challenging curriculum.

The Arizona Academic Standards 2000 form the foundation of curriculum for all district programs. Modifications made in the curriculum for gifted students will ensure that students have mastered the standards and will provide extension for students to meet or exceed the standards at the highest level.
Definition of Giftedness and Population Description

Students with exceptional abilities and talents are found in all cultural and linguistic groups, in all economic levels, in all geographic areas of the state, in all domains of intelligence and in groups of individuals who also have disabilities. The official definition of “gifted child” is found in Arizona Revised Statute § 15-761.71.

“Gifted child” means a child who is of lawful school age, who due to superior intellect or advanced learning ability, or both, is not afforded an opportunity for otherwise attainable progress and development in regular classroom instruction and who needs special instruction, or special ancillary services, or both, to achieve at levels commensurate with his intellect and ability.”
(A.R.S. 15-761.7)

Although each gifted student is unique, gifted students do have some characteristics in common. They usually are swift and efficient learners, may make intuitive leaps, quickly sense patterns in information, ask themselves questions about perceived patterns in order to understand them, and form connections among stored concepts and related bits of new information to modify their existing knowledge base. In their area of interest, they are able to construct clear mental maps that organize concepts efficiently; they are able to think flexibly about new possibilities, and they thrive on questions and problems that have a wide range of possible answers instead of those that have one correct answer.

Gifted students develop asynchronously. This means that they are intellectually advanced in one or more areas, yet may have difficulties or be very average in other areas. Their motor skills may or may not match those of other same age children. The same is true for social skills. In addition, social skills may be advanced. Young gifted children progress through development milestones more rapidly, and sometimes prefer to associate with older children or adults who are more likely to understand their vocabulary and the complexity of their ideas.

One important point is that gifted students of the same age are not alike. There are differences between moderately gifted, highly gifted, and profoundly gifted students that may require as much curriculum differentiation within the group as is necessary between moderately gifted students and their non-gifted peers. Program modifications for gifted students must be sufficiently varied and flexible that these students can be provided challenging learning experiences and appropriate resources.

In Mesa Unified School District, 16.9% of students have been identified as gifted. Students are identified through multifaceted procedures, including assessment with an appropriate state-approved test.
PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

If we desire to educate each child to his or her fullest potential, then we must provide programs, which will challenge our most capable students. Mesa Unified School District’s Extended Learning Program is committed to serving the special needs of intellectually gifted students with educational opportunities that are qualitatively different. This program is based on the belief that the special needs of these students require a curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking and creative problem solving.

Program Goals

The Mesa Unified School District seeks to identify and serve all qualified students through the Extended Learning Program. The goals are to:

- Comprehend and apply the Creative Problem Solving Process
- Utilize critical thinking in the learning process
- Integrate technology with the learning process
- Analyze, interpret and apply mathematical concepts
- Analyze, interpret and extend abstract concepts
- Apply the scientific method to investigate questions
- Demonstrate the ability to use the shared inquiry method
- Locate, interpret, summarize, organize, evaluate and report information
- Develop effective written and oral communication skills
- Develop a high level, working vocabulary
- Utilize and interpret literature and its various components
- Develop positive leadership skills
- Assume responsibility for choices and decisions
- Develop healthy relationships with peers and adults
- Develop self-direction and a positive self-image based on self respect, self understanding and self confidence
Screening, Identification and Placement K-12

Early identification is essential for the intellectual and emotional health of gifted children because it enables early intervention. Consequently, the governing board of Mesa Unified School District has adopted a multifaceted approach to screening and identification of gifted learners.

ELEMENTARY - GRADES K-2

Requests for testing will be referred to the ELP Director by any one of the following: a parent, classroom teacher, principal, school psychologist, resource teacher, or by himself/herself. A copy of any supporting data will be mailed or faxed to the ELP Director. After reviewing the information, the CogAT and/or any other state approved test will be administered by the Director or designated staff member.

Students may be cluster grouped with materials provided to the classroom teacher, moved to a grade level higher, or moved to a subject matter group at a higher grade level. Services are determined based on testing, teacher, principal, parent and ELP Director observations and recommendations. Multiple processes can be used as well as placement in the pull-out program.

ELEMENTARY 3-6 PULLOUT

Procedures for Referral

Any one of the following may nominate a student for the Extended Learning Program (pullout):

A parent, a classroom teacher, the principal, the school psychologist, the resource teacher, or by himself/herself, by requesting participation in the program.

Procedures for the Selection of Students for Testing

1. Any scores, grades and writing samples may be used as a basis for establishing a pool of students for ELP testing. Available information will be attached to the referral form from the classroom teacher, parent or other referees.

2. Upon the initial nomination for the testing of a student, the ELP Referral Form will be completed by the person making the referral.

3. Students who have been recommended will be eligible to take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT).

4. Students will be tested by the ELP teacher with a Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). A Permission to Test form must be returned by the parent before testing.
5. Services will be provided based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSROOM SERVICE</th>
<th>PULLOUT SERVICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-97th percentile on any area of the CogAT</td>
<td>-128 Otis Lennon/96th percentile on one area of the CogAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-97th percentile on two areas of the CogAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-125 Otis Lennon/96th percentile on 2 or areas of the CogAT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Services will include one day per week pull out plus the following:
   - materials to encourage higher level thinking
   - grade skipping
   - subject matter at a higher level
   - cluster grouping

**Procedures for Further Testing**

1. Students who do not qualify on the CogAT may be considered for further evaluation with psychological testing by contacting the ELP Director.

2. Appeals may be made to the ELP director by parents, ELP teacher, classroom teacher, principal or child.

3. If the decision is made to continue with psychological testing, the parents will complete a Parent Request for School Psychological Services and Information Sheet. These forms will be returned to the ELP Director.

4. Referrals for psychological evaluations will be forwarded to a psychologist.

5. Students will be eligible for placement in the pullout service with a score of 128 in any area. A parent conference with the ELP Director and psychologist may be held to discuss the testing.

6. A student who does not qualify on any of the above, but does show a need for extra services in a specific area, will be referred to the classroom teacher for individualized or group instruction. The ELP teacher and the ELP Director will serve as resources to the classroom teacher by providing materials and assistance in meeting the needs of the student.

**Procedures for Exceptionalities**

Students who do not qualify on the psychological testing but have noted exceptionalities may be considered for further testing using a test from the State adopted list or other tests and portfolio information from the classroom teacher. (e.g. Learning Disabled, ELL).
JUNIOR HIGH ELP 7-9

1. All present ELP 6th graders desiring admittance to seventh grade ELP classes will submit an application to the elementary ELP teacher. This form will include test scores on the CogAT and Otis Lennon, parent and student signature.

2. All ELP sixth-graders will be placed in the junior high ELP classes if an application has been turned in to the director of ELP and the test scores in either the Verbal or Nonverbal are at the 97th percentile required on a state approved test.

3. Those sixth-graders not in ELP currently who desire admittance to the junior high ELP classes may submit an application to the ELP Director. This form will include all test scores available, parent and student signature.

4. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) will be used as the placement test for students entering junior high ELP in the fall. This test is on the approved state list. This testing will be administered at the junior high.

   Students will be placed in the ELP English/Social Studies classes with a 97th percentile on either the Verbal or Nonverbal Section of the CogAT, Otis Lennon or other psychological tests. A 97th percentile on the Quantitative section of the CogAT may be used for placement in accelerated math classes. A district test will also be used to determine the level of service in Math (Accelerated Math, Algebra I or II).

5. Verbal or Nonverbal scores on other state approved tests would also be considered.

6. Other placements are at the discretion of the principal and staff at each junior high.

Procedure for Appeal:

1. If the student does not qualify and an appeal is made, the psychologist and the counselor at the junior high will review the scoring results to determine if further testing is needed. Students who score 128 on the psychological testing in any area will be placed in the junior high Extended Learning Program.

2. If the appeal is denied by the school counselor and psychologist, then the denial may be appealed to the ELP Director.

Procedure for Exceptionalities

Students who do not qualify on psychological testing but have noted exceptionalities may be considered for further screening using a test from the State adopted list or other tests and portfolio information from the classroom teacher (e.g. Learning Disabled, ELL).
Procedures for Referral

Students not already identified as gifted may be nominated for testing by any of the following:

A parent, a classroom teacher, the principal, the school psychologist, the resource teacher, or by himself/herself, by requesting participation in the program through the high school counselor.

Procedures for Screening and Services

1. Upon initial referral the counselor will consider school grades, other scores and teacher/parent input.

2. Testing will be provided by the high school counselor or by the ELP office. Testing will occur as needed.

3. Upon receipt of testing information, the high school counselor will meet with the student/parents to determine appropriate services.

4. Students scoring at the 97th percentile on either verbal, quantitative, or non-verbal will be provided appropriate services.

5. Other placements are at the discretion of the principal and staff at each high school.

6. Any student already identified as gifted wishing to continue in Advanced Placement, IB or Honors classes will meet with their assigned counselor and the appropriate teacher(s).

Procedures for Appeal

Appeals are to be made to the Director of the Extended Learning Program for further testing as needed.
ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL:

- **Director**
  - **Resource K-2:** In-class assistance; i.e., materials, cluster groups, counseling, subject matter skipping, grade skipping
  - **Resource K-6:** Specific area ability grouping, cluster grouping, grade skipping by subject as determined by classroom teacher/parents/and gifted specialist for identified students
  - **Resource Pullout:** 1 day a week in addition to in-class service  
  Elementary students bused to some schools to allow approximately 60 students per teacher.
  - **Specified Classes:** English, Social Studies, Math and Science for identified gifted 7-9, daily
  - **Honors and Accelerated Classes:** 7-9, daily
  - **Honors and Advanced Placement Classes:** 9-12, daily
  - **Concurrent Enrollment – Rio Salado:** 10-12, daily
  - **International Baccalaureate** 10-12, daily

DIFFERENTIATION:

**Elementary:** Emphasis placed on critical and creative problem solving skills, research skills, and self-development skills. The material is accelerated and contains more abstract and complex content. Student development of thinking is in the higher levels using Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.

**Junior High:** The emphasis is the same as in elementary school but with specific subject acceleration focused in English, Social Studies, Math and Science.

**High School:** The emphasis is the same as in the junior high in classes specified as Advanced Placement, Honors Classes and International Baccalaureate.
ACCOUNTABILITY OF PERSONNEL:

All personnel are evaluated according to district procedures by the principal and/or the Director of the Extended Learning Program. A growth plan may be developed as needed based on the evaluations. An overall plan for the year is required by the Director from each elementary ELP teacher. These are kept on file in the district office.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Parent:  
- Each elementary school has its own parent group

Inservice:  
- Workshops and conferences are supported by district and gifted monies
- District Professional Growth provides inservice in stress management, study skills development, creative problem solving, critical problem solving, future problem solving, and subject matter assistance through the Science, Social Studies, Math, Music and Art Resource Personnel

Other District Support:

- Psychologists assigned to test all students as needed
- Research and Evaluation assists in student program evaluation as well as the purchasing of all testing materials
- Transportation busses students to elementary schools and provides vans and buses for field trips
- Guidance provides support as needed at the Junior High and Senior High
STUDENT EVALUATION:

Elementary
- Teacher & student evaluation of products (i.e., notebooks, inventions, science experiments, research materials, writing assignments, portfolios), active in-class participation, student self-evaluation, individual conferencing and district test scores
- ELP student report form is used twice a year
- Self-evaluation is conducted at the conclusion of each day
- Parent conferences are held as needed but specifically on district specified conference dates
- Monitoring of AIMS, Terra Nova and other tests used in the regular classroom
- Conferences with regular classroom teachers regarding student progress

Jr. High/Sr. High:
- Weighted grades: 5=A rather than 4=A - quarterly grading
- Student self-evaluation of products
- Teacher evaluation of student products and portfolios
- Parent conferences held as needed
- Monitoring of required district testing (AIMS, Terra Nova, CRT’s, and DIBELs)

PROGRAM EVALUATION:

- Monitoring of required district tests
- Monitoring of subtests on the AIMS, Terra Nova, DIBELS and Standards Masters
- Parent and student surveys regarding classes, attitudes and suggestions for changes are completed at the end of each year
- Quality Service survey conducted yearly
- Longitudinal study
Parent Involvement in Gifted Child Education

The Governing Board and Administration of Mesa Unified School District have adopted the following procedures to promote cooperation between parents of gifted children and district staff.

As specified in Arizona Department of Education Rule 7-2-406.3.a, parent or legal guardians of students shall be provided the following information:

Definition of a Gifted Child

“Gifted child” means a child who is of lawful school age, who due to superior intellect or advanced learning ability, or both, is not afforded an opportunity for otherwise attainable progress and development in regular classroom instruction and who needs special instruction or special ancillary services, or both, to achieve at levels commensurate with his intellect and ability.” (A.R.S. § 15-764-C)

Services Mandated for Gifted Students by the State of Arizona

The governing board of each school district shall provide special education to gifted pupils identified as provided in section 15-770. Special education for gifted pupils shall only include expanding academic course offerings and supplemental services as may be required to provide an educational program which is commensurate with the academic abilities and potentials of the gifted pupil. (A.R.S. § 15-764-C)

Services Available from the Mesa Unified School District

This scope and sequence will be available at each school in Mesa Unified School District, and on the Web. On request, a duplicate of those pages related to program options and testing services will be supplied to parents or guardians.

Written Criteria of Mesa Unified School District for Referral, Screening, Selection, and Placement

Copies of referral and nomination forms will be available at all district schools, district offices and on the Web. These forms will be provided to all parents or guardians upon request for gifted students. The process of referral, screening, selection and placement is described in this scope and sequence.

Forms and letters will be available in English; translation services or translated print materials will be made available for parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English.
Testing Procedures

Before administering tests to students who are suspected of being gifted, students will be given routine vision and hearing screening exams. Mesa Unified School district will administer one or more state-approved tests periodically and at no less than three regular intervals throughout the year. Notice of testing dates shall be placed on the school calendar. Notices/reminders also will be placed on the district school web site.

As a part of the nomination/referral form, parents will be given an opportunity to grant or withhold permission for testing. Nomination/referral forms and information letters to parents will be published in English; translation services or translated print materials will be made available for parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English.

Notification of Testing Results

Mesa Unified School District will send letters to parents or guardians of tested students, at their address of record, within 30 days after the scheduled test date, to report test results. Letters will be written in the home language of record for those individuals who do not speak English.

If a parent or legal guardian requests an explanation of test results, the Mesa Unified School District Director will set up an appointment or phone conference to explain test results.

Notification of Placement

A letter, in the home language of record, will be sent to parents or legal guardians of all tested students to notify them of the placement decision made by the Mesa school District Committee. A description of the services recommended for the student will be provided. Parents or guardians will be given the opportunity to grant or withhold permission for placement in the recommended program. At the request of parent or legal guardian, an appointment will be set up with a member of the professional staff who is able to provide further information.