



Prepare • Empower • Inspire

New Brunswick Public Schools

Gifted and Talented Program



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Vision

The New Brunswick Public School District has designed a new G&T program that will allow students to demonstrate skills in self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communications. This will be evidenced by the development of innovative performance-based tasks which utilize and develop higher-level thinking skills.

This model is researched-based and uses evidence-centered design to stimulate active learning inquiry, critical thinking skills, and creativity to engage learners in constructing meaning. Students with gifts and talents in Language arts and Math as well as Visual Arts, Music, and Dance will be provided with enrichment and acceleration to challenge and further develop their specific gifts and talents as well as respond to their unique needs.

The New Brunswick School District believes that these students should have a comprehensive articulated educational program, designed to maximize their unique abilities and to enhance personal and social growth. The program will address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students in order to foster healthy development and lifelong learning.

Philosophy:

The New Brunswick School District recognizes that there are students who require differentiated programs and services beyond the core curriculum because of their exceptional abilities in one or more of the following areas:

- Intellectual ability across domains
- Specific aptitudes in **Mathematics**
- **English Language Arts**
- **Science**, and related technical skills associated with the **STEM** disciplines
- The **Visual** and **Performing Arts**.

These students also possess differential cognitive and affective characteristics that require educational responses geared to their needs such as:

- **Curiosity**
- **Creativity**
- **Thoughtfulness**
- **Inquiry**
- **Problem-Solving**

A more individualized educational program is required to serve the range of needs our students possess as many of them come from underrepresented groups that include diverse ethnic backgrounds, learning and physical disabilities, and non-native English speakers.

Learning environments for the G&T students will provide student-centered learning and safe risk-taking in order to enhance student potential for creative production in their area(s) of passion.



Goals

The goals are based on data received from three focus groups in New Brunswick:

- Develop critical thinking and reasoning skills
- Develop creative thinking skills in an environment that supports innovation
- Develop an understanding of key interdisciplinary concepts, issues and themes that define our world
- Develop metacognitive skills and processes that foster independent learning habits
- Develop interpersonal skills that enhance collaboration with others

Rationale

The rationale for developing the program is nested in the following district needs:

- Address the unique needs of a diverse population
- Challenge top students in curriculum and instruction areas
- Provide a pipeline for high school advanced programs, especially Advanced Placement (AP), theme schools, and dual enrollment with community colleges.
- Provide a clear scope and sequence of curriculum opportunities in each area of learning that would prepare top students for success in college and beyond.

In depth analysis of New Brunswick Public schools reveals the need for a more comprehensive articulated emphasis on rigor at early stages of development in all aspects of the curriculum core.

Emphasizing the new Common Core, this program will help to strengthen professional programming throughout the district by providing resources available to classroom teachers regarding differentiation for gifted and talented, as well as, twice exceptional students in the classroom.

Data

10% of New Brunswick's populations of students are currently eligible for gifted and talented services.

This conclusion is based on research conducted by Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, consultant from The College of William and Mary during the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

Elementary students whom are eligible for gifted and talented services in each school;

Schools	McKinley	Lincoln	Lord Stirling	Livingston	Paul Robeson	Redshaw	Roosevelt	Woodrow Wilson
Students in Gr. 5	73	98	102	57	69	98	131	43
Eligible for G&T	7 - 8	9 - 10	10 - 11	5 - 6	6 - 7	9 - 10	13 - 14	4 - 5

Who are these students?

In the context of New Brunswick Public Schools, the definition of giftedness must include **students, who exhibit high potential as well as those identified as gifted**, ensuring that the top 10% of each major group, especially those from bilingual backgrounds, receive services for talent development.

New Brunswick Grade Level Comparison

Table 1 shows the pattern of scores in math and language arts across Grades 3-8 and the High School Proficiency Assessment scores for Grade 11. The trend data show **a pattern of low numbers of students at the advanced level in language arts across all grade levels** tested, from 0% at Grade 6 to 4.8% at Grade 11. By comparison, the math data appear to be stronger in respect to students scoring at the advanced level, with a range across grade levels from 3.4% in Grade 7 to 13.5% in Grade 5.

Table 1

Pattern of Data for Advanced Proficiency by Subject and Grade Level on NJASK and HSPA

Subject	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade	6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade	11 th Grade HSPA
Math	80 (11.4%)	56 (9%)	79 (13.5%)	25 (4.6%)	17 (3.4%)	35 (7.2%)	23 (7.8%)
Language Arts	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.3%)	2 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (0.8%)	7 (1.4%)	14 (4.8%)

Table 2 – Statewide Comparison Table on NJASK

Subject Area	NB Advanced Proficient		State Advanced Proficient		NB Scale Score Mean	State Scale Score Mean
	#	%	#	%		
Language Arts (Gr. 3)	1	0.1%	3,695	3.6%	186.8	205.7
Math (Gr. 3)	80	11.4%	37,768	37.1%	201.5	230
Science (Gr. 4)	106	17%	40,056	44.6%	218	241.4
Language Arts (Gr. 4)	2	0.3%	66,083	6.6%	183.6	204.8
Math (Gr. 5)	79	13.5%	38,193	37.4%	213.2	234.7
Language Arts (Gr. 6)	0	0.0%	_____	6.1%	185.1	208.7
Math (Gr. 6)	25	4.6%	33,105	32.2%	194	228.4

Statewide Comparison

When we examine these data in respect to statewide comparisons, the picture emerges of a low-performing district at the top. While only .1% of New Brunswick 3rd graders scored at the Advanced Proficiency level in ELA, 3.6% of students did so state-wide. While 11% of New Brunswick students scored advanced proficient in math, 37.1% did so statewide, suggesting that **three times as many students are scoring at advanced levels in the state** (see Table 2).

Conclusion

District data clearly suggest that **few students are performing at advanced levels** on any tests of relevance, whether it be NJPASS at Grades 1 and 2 or NJASK at grades 3-8 or on PSAT, SAT or AP tests in high school. Moreover, the numbers of students performing at advanced levels in language arts is miniscule. Compared with state-wide performance, **top students are underrepresented in New Brunswick by a factor of three.**

This testing profile suggests the need for a gifted program that can develop the academic talents of New Brunswick students across the span of school years, beginning at school entry and continuing to graduation.

Evidence suggests that top students are currently not sufficiently challenged in their curriculum and instruction experiences in heterogeneous settings. This would include the core areas of the curriculum and the non-core areas of the arts.

Supervisors, teachers, and principals within New Brunswick suggest the **need for advanced learning and elevated opportunities for thinking, problem-solving and research opportunities at all levels for these students.**

Regulations & Requirements

New Jersey Administrative Code N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1(a)5

mandates that New Brunswick Public schools identify and provide educational services for gifted and talented students.

“District boards of education shall be responsible for identifying gifted and talented students and shall provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.”

Definition of Giftedness - NJAC 6A:8-3.1

“Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.”

The Marland Definition

“Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by a regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.” (Sidney Marland, former US Commissioner of Education)

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any one of the following inter-related areas:

- General intellectual ability
- Specific academic aptitude
- Creative or productive thinking
- Critical thinking
- Leadership ability
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Intrinsically motivated
- Problem-Solving

According to NJ Dept. of Education:

- Meeting the needs of gifted students is **not an extra-curricular activity or club** but a requirement for all New Jersey public schools.
- It should **not be assumed that students with disabilities cannot participate in gifted and talented programs** as students may possess learning disabilities as well as gifts and talents in specific areas.
- Local school districts **must use a variety of differentiated measures** to identify students and compare them to their chronological peers in the district.
- All public school districts must have a board-approved gifted and talented identification process and **provide services for identified students** enrolled in the grade(s) of that school district.

Understanding the Characteristics of Gifted Learners

A bright child . . .	A gifted learner . . .
knows the answer	asks the questions
is interested	is highly curious
is attentive	is mentally and physically involved
has good ideas	has wild, silly ideas
works hard	plays around, yet tests well
answers the questions	discusses in detail; elaborates
is in the top group	is beyond the top group
listens with interest	shows strong feelings and opinions
learns with ease	already knows
needs only 6–8 repetitions for mastery	needs only 1–2 repetitions for mastery
understands ideas	constructs abstractions
enjoys peers	prefers adults
grasps meanings	draws inferences
completes assignments	initiates projects
is receptive	is intense
copies accurately	creates new designs
enjoys school	enjoys learning
absorbs information	manipulates information
is a technician	is an inventor
is a good memorizer	is a good guesser
enjoys a straightforward, sequential presentation	thrives on complexity
is alert	is keenly observant
is pleased with his or her own learning	is highly self-critical

This chart was adapted from *Challenge*, Modern Curriculum Press (1989).

Program Outline

Gifted

Qualities of the Academically Gifted and Talented

English Language Arts:

- Reads and explores complex texts, both literature and informational, that are above grade level
- Active role in literature circles and genuine conversations
- Continuous and consistent Essential Questions
- Research projects for students based on their interests
- Accelerated Instruction
- Creative Production
- Problem-solving
- Project-based learning
- Authentic Performance Assessments
- Student selected project-based assessments based on their own learning style that still directly connects to the objectives taught.
- Continuous connection and learning experiences with reading and writing (hand-in hand)
- Conceptual units that incorporates multiple content areas
- Sharing and displaying their final products

Mathematics:

- Demonstrates mathematical thinking and makes world connections using this knowledge
- Provides reasoning being analytical, deductive, and inductive
- Solves problems in a variety of ways
- Communicates their justification for mathematical understanding in a variety of creative ways
- Uses and applies mathematical concepts across all content areas
- Consistently searches for new and innovative ways for solutions to complex tasks
- Organizes data and information in a variety of ways
- Questions mathematical concepts to enhance and challenge their own learning
- Enjoys the challenge and takes risks when approaching a multi-step or performance-based task

Talented

Qualities of Artistically Gifted and Talented

In this area, gifted and talented students exhibit potential or demonstrated accomplishment in one or more artistic fields, such as art, drama, or music. Khatena (1992) suggested that “talented individuals in the performing and visual arts are bright, that creativity is a significant energizing factor in talent, and that specific to each art form exists highly specialized abilities that require the language and skills peculiar to that art form for their expression” (p. 147). Researchers have identified general and specific characteristics for these artistic fields (Clark & Zimmerman, 1984; Gilliam et al., 1996; Piirto, 1999; Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, & Hartman, 1976; Khatena, 1988; 1992; Seashore, Leavis, & Saetveit, 1960):

General (demonstrated within artistic area):

- Chooses artistic activity for projects or during free time
- Studies or practices artistic talent without being told
- Strives to improve artistic skills
- Demonstrates talent for an extended period of time
- Concentrates for long periods of time on artistic projects
- Seems to pick up skills in the arts with little or no instruction
- Possesses high sensory sensitivity
- Observes and shows interest in others who are proficient in the artistic skill
- Uses the artistic area to communicate
- Experiments in the artistic medium
- Sets high standards in the artistic area
- Demonstrates confidence in the artistic area
- High curiosity level and active imagination
- Sensitive and aware of patterns, shapes, and colors in the environment
- Seeks challenging experiences and is goal-oriented with high personal standards
- Capable of original thinking and arrives at unique, unconventional solutions to artistic problems
- Evidences superior ability in expressing ideas visually and can create works in a variety of media
- Responds with ease and enthusiasm to creating art projects
- Works well independently, with concentration and focus, for long periods of time

Timeline

For the 2014-2015 school year, we will be implementing the Gifted and Talented program with 5th grade and expanding to other grades once a full and complete review and evaluation has been completed.