



REACH PROGRAM REVIEW/EVALUATION REPORT

June 1, 2016

The following report contains the results of a program evaluation and review conducted during the 2015-2016 school year. Quotes are verbatim from students, parents and teachers who participated in surveys or focus groups.

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Introduction and Review/Evaluation Design

At the request of the Superintendent, a review/evaluation of the REACH Program was conducted beginning in January of 2016 and culminates with this report. A committee of classroom teachers, parents, and administrators was established to assist in the review. The committee identified focus areas of the questions for surveys and helped to write survey questions. The committee reviewed both the quantitative results and qualitative analysis of the survey data. Committee members did not see all verbatim comments due to specific references to staff members and/or schools.

In addition to the committee, the review included information from the following sources:

- Student survey
- Parent survey
- Parent input via email and phone calls
- Teacher survey
- REACH Teacher focus group
- Documents submitted by REACH staff members (e.g., letters home, rubrics, descriptions of services, number of identified students by school and area of giftedness)
- NWEA MAP results for REACH students
- DIBELS Next Results for REACH students
- Feedback from principals

A purpose and expected outcomes for the review/evaluation was provided to the committee by the reviewer. The statements and a list of committee members are as follows:

Purpose of the Review/Evaluation: To review the Amphitheater Public Schools REACH Program for gifted students, provide information to the administration on the results of the review and to make recommendations as needed regarding programming for gifted students in our schools.

Outcomes: The evaluation and review team will compile all key points and data analysis regarding the REACH program evaluation and provide a report to the administration.

Evaluation/Review Team Committee Members:

Facilitators: Mike Bejarano (Facilitator for 6-12), Dr. Roseanne Lopez (Facilitator for K-5),

Principals: Wendy Biallas-Odell (Principal, Painted Sky Elementary), Diana Walker (Principal, Harelson Elementary), Tassi Call (Principal, Amphitheater Middle School), Natalie Burnett (Principal, Ironwood Ridge High School)

REACH Teachers: Cymry DeBoucher, Susan Cook, Jennifer Jones-Hinz, Donna Shreve, Melanie Derkson, Vanessa Hill

Classroom Teachers: Anne Bonar, David Humphreys, Erika Sparlin, Dr. Charlene Stone

Parents of REACH Students: Leslie Ferre, Traci and Patrick Moore, Kayte Crowther, Mandy Quelland

Focus Group Members, REACH Teachers: Ruth Slattery, Jessica Jacobs, Landi Roark, Laura Tanem, Charlotte Glenn, Joy Ellsworth, Anne Held

Executive Summary

The REACH Program review/evaluation was well received by gifted program staff, parents, and students. Responses to surveys was high, and written responses to open-ended questions, or those questions offering a place for a comment, were substantial. A total of 7293 comments were received overall. The results of this review will provide a launching point for our district to improve the services we provide through this program, and through our regular instructional program, for our gifted students.

Several major themes permeated the review. The first, and most pervasive, was the need for students to have more time in the program, or more time receiving services. Inconsistencies in programming within a level (Elementary, Middle School and High School) were noted in comments throughout the process indicating a need for articulation and development of program consistency. The inconsistencies were seen in curriculum, instructional time, resources available, communication, and services offered. There is a perceived lack of challenge in regular classrooms, particularly at the elementary level, where students do not have as many choices regarding classes to take, or subjects to study. This theme was still present in middle school and high school, but to a slightly lesser extent. Students appear to be more challenged in math than in other subjects. In middle school, many respondents commented on the need to expand services beyond Humanities. At the high school level, there were positive comments about the advanced coursework offered at all three schools, however, needs were expressed for assistance in the areas of social and emotional development and college and career planning. The small number of students who have chosen the internship program at the high school level appreciate the program.

Increased communication with parents, teachers, and students is needed. There were a number of comments indicating that some students at middle and high schools do not know there is a program, or, have not connected the services they are receiving with “REACH”. There may be a need for transition communication as students move from level to level.

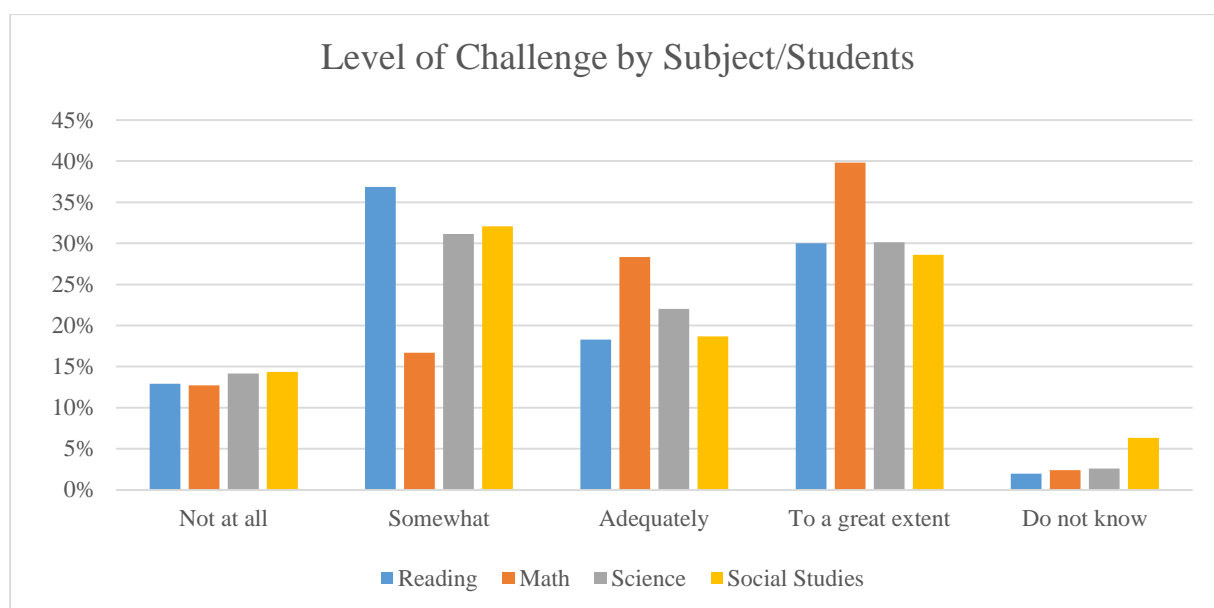
This report includes a large volume of quotes from parents, students, and teachers as well as quantitative data from surveys. Recommendations for the administration and the Governing Board are included at the end of the report.

Results of Student Survey

A survey link was sent to all REACH staff members to distribute to students. The link could not be sent directly to students as we do not collect student email addresses at the district or school level. Teachers asked students to complete the survey via the on-line link or to complete a paper copy of the survey. Surveys that were completed on paper were entered into Survey Monkey by administrative assistants in the School Operations office. This facilitated analysis of the data. A total of 1920 (100%+ response rate) student responses were received indicating a slight discrepancy between the numbers of identified students (1891) reported for the document review and the number of surveys received. This may be explained by the number of students who may have logged on, answered a question and then skipped the questions. The length of time student respondents have been in the program range from less than one year (6.3%) to over six years (22.9%).

The student survey results provided a number of insights. Quantitative and qualitative data will be presented in this section of the report with some interpretation of the data provided as appropriate.

One of the main concerns that surfaced from the student survey is student perception of the level of challenge provided in their “regular” classes. The chart below shows the extent to which students believe they are challenged by classes in four content areas; Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies. Only 45% of students believe they are adequately or greatly challenged by reading, a greater number 65% believe they are challenged in math courses, a little over 50% believe they are challenged in science, and about 42% indicated they were challenged in social studies.



Students were asked questions regarding the REACH program and their learning. The questions and response percentages are on the charts below:

In your opinion, does participation in REACH influence your motivation to learn?

To a great extent	To some extent	Neutral	Not at all	Do not know
37.8%	39.8%	12.95%	6.10%	3.4%

In your opinion, does the REACH Program help you develop your creative thinking skills?

To a great extent	To some extent	Neutral	Not at all	Do not know
50.53%	30.50%	12.95%	4.85%	2.84%

In your opinion, does the REACH Program help you develop your critical thinking skills?

To a great extent	To some extent	Neutral	Not at all	Do not know
43.03 %	36.68%	13.05%	4.17%	3.06%

In your opinion, is the REACH program meeting your academic needs?

Yes	No	Do not know
72.65%	10.79%	16.55%

What is your perception of the REACH Program overall?

Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Somewhat negative
49.94%	33.86%	13.63%	2.57%

Generally, the student responses indicate that when engaged in REACH, their participation is motivating and helps them develop both critical and creative thinking skills. Most students believe that the REACH program is meeting their academic needs. They generally have a positive overall perception of the program.

Another important component of any gifted program is providing an opportunity for the students to be grouped together at least part of the time with other REACH students. One of the questions on the survey addressed this issue.

In your opinion, does participation the REACH Program provide you a place where you can “be yourself”?

Yes	No	Do not know
71.41%	12.10%	16.49%

This response indicates that students are comfortable in the REACH setting.

The following verbatim comments illustrate student impressions, concerns, etc. regarding the REACH program:

**Comments of interest from students taken from responses to the “be yourself” question:
(Note: Comments are verbatim.)**

- “I haven't really experienced the REACH environment when I was in middle school because the class, Humanities, was basically an advance social studies class. There was nothing special about it. In elementary, the pull-out activity was fun and different. There was always something new to hope for and learn when I was pulled out of class every Monday. Currently in high school, there was nothing that I've done so far with REACH.”
- “The REACH program helped me focus in class. It is a great program, but I was very disappointed this program is not in high school.”
- “Gifted children are not the same, so it isn't as simple as being yourself and being accepted. We are such a diverse group it is quite hard finding someone with distinct similarities.”
- “Yes because in my class if the teacher is asking a question it takes a lot of time for the whole class to share their answers so sometimes she skips people cause there is no time for everyone so I don't get to share my opinion”
- “In the REACH program it did allow me to be myself because it gave me the opportunity to interact with other students who think in either the same way as me or in an even different way than me, allowing me to learn even more”
- “Honestly the program has not helped what so ever, I was tested in 8th grade, since then I've in all honors classes and AP, this program has provided me with no skills to help with my future thus far. It does not help me get ahead in high school, help my critical thinking skills, or even improve my life skills. I was hoping for a far more helpful experience but so far all I have done is look at colleges in more depth and create a resume. This program has potential.”
- I think that in Elementary schools REACH kids should go for longer amounts of time or go every day. I think that the REACH program would be more effective if we got it every day. I loved going to REACH so I hope that the elementary kids will get the opportunities that I wish I had. I think that if I had had reach every day then I would have answered all the questions with a more positive response.
- “I haven't been in REACH since elementary school”
- “From first through fifth grade, I was in a REACH program in which I felt very safe and unique, in which we participated in Odyssey of the Mind competitions, and now I'm in Academic Decathlon, which provides a similar environment. I have never felt particularly discouraged from being independent or been shunned into doing things a certain way in any REACH program. I've mostly felt encouraged and supported by my peers and mentors”

- “I think that I can be myself in REACH because it is a smaller class and I have more time to share my opinions on certain topics. I also feel as if we talk about more engaging concepts in REACH that sparks my brain to be more focused.”
- “I think this because I LOVE, LOVE to be creative and some people don't like that and call me weird, but in REACH, I can.”
- “I love all of the awesome projects that we do and it is such a great experience. Everyone is so nice. Mrs. ##### is such a great teacher. I love that all of the advanced kids can get together and share all of our ideas while challenging our mind and mental skills”

Another important component is to assist gifted students in discovering career and college options that match their areas of interest and strength. The following two questions address these areas:

In your opinion, does the REACH Program provide you with opportunities to explore possible career opportunities?

Yes	No	Do not know
61.79%	15.66%	22.55%

In your opinion, does the REACH Program provide you with opportunities to explore possible college opportunities?

Yes	No	Do not know
60.43%	16.10%	23.46%

Although generally positive, these two questions indicate that the program needs to spend more time addressing these issues. Gifted students need additional guidance on selecting college and career paths. They typically have numerous choices and can have difficulty making the choices due to some of their characteristics (e.g., perfectionism, over-analyzing situations, intensity, etc.).

Review of Student Comments and Suggestions

The open-ended written responses to questions yielded hundreds of comments. Students were asked two open-ended questions; what do you *wish* the REACH Program looked like at your school? And, in what ways has the REACH program helped you? Responses were reviewed for themes.

The “wish” question revealed several themes worthy of investigation. A total of 332 comments (samples above) from students referred to the desire or need for more time in the program. The 45 minutes to an hour a week was seen as not enough by the elementary age children. Students in

middle school indicated that the Humanities class was not enough, they wanted to be grouped together in other subjects. There were several comments at the middle school level that indicated that the students believed the Humanities class was just “social studies” and that it was not REACH. They also expressed concern that the class was not just for REACH students.

Many comments referred to, or suggested that, they did not know there was a program at the high school, (e.g., “I wish the program existed at my school.”, “I feel I have been very uninformed about the REACH program...here at (HS) I don’t know what the program looks liked because I haven’t received any information about it at this school.”) There were numerous comments of this nature.

Other high school students offered suggestions such as, “I wish that there were other programs besides JUST the internship class. I wish that it supplied time and space for study groups...Until this point I forgot I tested as gifted.” “I wish the REACH program was as large as the special education program. Children and young adults in REACH also need special treatment because we learn differently than others...”, “I wish the REACH program offered classes like REACH World History or REACH literature...”, “I wish we had more structured time together and learn about, and this might sound slightly snobbish, gifted student problems, and college prep.”, “If a REACH program were at high school, I would see it as more of a club, which would provide opportunities for volunteering with others...” “I wish that there was more of an emphasis of connecting REACH students together so that we would know other people we could talk to about the challenges we face.”

The student responses indicate that the programs may need to be revised to better meet the needs of the students. Some comments indicate a need for better communication and/or a better understanding of the services that are currently offered. Several themes from the student survey are found in the parent survey and the teacher survey.

Results of Parent Survey

Surveys were sent to parents via an email link utilizing Survey Monkey. There were a total of 472 responses to the survey from a total of 2294 emails sent indicating an approximate 20.5% return rate.

There were several opportunities for parents to comment or offer an open-ended response to questions. The following comments were consolidated from several hundred responses.

The following representative general comments/suggestions were provided by parents of high school REACH students. The comments are verbatim and unedited:

- To have a structured program for high school students as you have it for lower grades
- More awareness, more teachers
- She always loved reach classes when younger and is very excited about the internship
- Address the needs of gifted students that have no keen interest in academics. My child is a "gifted underachiever" and as such, did not fit with the IB program. He has ADD and was on a 504 plan for a while. But I don't feel his gifted-ness was really addressed in HS, nor was he offered or encouraged to take advantage of opportunities provided by the REACH program.
- Cultivate the gifted/academically superior students/families. Provide better advanced classes at the feeder schools to retain the best and the brightest.
- Increase the access to REACH services at the high school level.
- Provide parents on-going information about giftedness and the various needs of gifted students as it relates to their different developmental levels. It would be great to have tips on how to continue to encourage and support gifted students as they get older.
- Debate team, more support for freshmen taking AP classes, more time for students to do reading of materials in AP classes, start looking at post-high school plans freshman year
- More time with counselors to talk about school loads and classes, just to keep them on track.
- Direct communication with parents
- Kids change. Be sure to reevaluate for new gifted kids in the beginning of middle school and high school.
- Make it an early (1st period) class or an elective where they could learn to adapt and work with who they are. Teach them skills for managing the stress and what they expect out of themselves - understand themselves and enhance their gifting, not look at it as different from others.
- **THEY NEED TO HAVE IT IN HIGH SCHOOL!!!!** It's critical!
- A larger presence in the high school forum.
- Give more information. Better educate parents about the program
- The middle school programs were NOT well-received by my children, but some of that was personnel-related. That's an age where helping students become more self-aware is

critical and our district pretends that teaching a history class masked as humanities is all that's needed to enrich learning for middle-school aged gifted kids...it was just busy work, with zero connections to anything relevant.

- Outside sources on career paths
- More information for parents
- More “small” group social support for kids in high school.
- Redesign the high school Reach Program including no requirement to miss core class and ensure that Reach Coordinator actually meets each student in the Reach Program. We have had no contact. My student attended one seminar and then said it was too much of a hassle to miss class and that it was poorly attended.
- Provide more meaningful gifted classes in elementary and middle school.
- Yearly meeting with students at each school
- I really liked the gifted learner conference a few years back. It would be nice to see that return. I think it helps to know more about how my child learns and thinks.
- Please look into creating a program that challenges even the non-verbal spatial children, and offer more than just the one course in middle school.

Comments from parents of elementary and middle school REACH students (verbatim):

- I would change how the Humanities class is done. I like it better at our previous school in another state where it was a general class and looked at more areas. Hard to explain here, but I doubt things will change based on this comment.
- Focus on social skills development
- Better contact with parents, more socio-emotional groups
- It's the same district so they should all be on the same page. Working similar
- To help them understand that just because some things come easy to them doesn't mean they don't have to do it. That is the problem I'm having with my son. He doesn't push himself.
- Some kind of individual counseling. I would really like to know what is making my very bright child do so poorly and be apparently unable to focus this year.
- Most obviously, more contact time with my children.
- My daughter loves the class, and learns things she may not be exposed to in a regular class. I don't know what, if anything, I would change.
- I would like to see more understanding of giftedness across the school, not just in REACH class. For example, when my kids were younger and at a different Amphi school, they were not allowed to check out chapter books because they were in first grade even though their reading levels were 3rd and 4th grade level. So much depends on the school and the teacher. So much so that we moved our kids to a different school. I would like to see more consistent support across schools and grade levels.
- I know it's a funding issue, and I certainly don't want to lose our REACH teacher, however, it would be really nice if every school could have a full time dedicated elementary REACH teacher. The kids could have more time, and the teacher would have more flexibility and more time to be in the regular classroom.
- To provide social groups for students.

- More than once a week.
- I think every REACH student should have an advocate just like our special education students- someone who is the "go to" person for our students and someone who ensures the needs of our students are met.
- Add science
- Social clubs, places where students could gather during lunch, and before and after school.
- Add an after school component that helps the kids connect to learning and enrichment.
- A separate class that meets 1-2 times even a month for fun educational learning like previous grades. Maybe even an after school club!
- The REACH teacher at XXXXX does not post her assignments on her website. This makes it terribly difficult to help my children find missing assignments on days they've missed. If it's standard coursework, maybe it should be posted to a REACH website to be more accessible.
- Allow the children to test as soon as they begin / transfer into the school district.
- Academic assessment & placed in same level (higher grade, advanced, etc.) classes as appropriate. Social & emotional resources available if needed.
- Keep those students together for all classes.
- More opportunity for individual differentiation in regular classroom and better understanding of giftedness from regular classroom teachers.
- Perhaps incorporating more structure and continuity in the elementary program. Each school has a varied program and when the gifted students come together at Middle School it can be difficult.
- Provide REACH class for mathematics. He is at a serious disservice because he did not have this access since he will need to take Algebra I as a freshman. As a future science major in college, he needs to be in Geometry freshman year and he should not be "penalized" in having to take a math course in the summer to make this happen.
- Help students to be the best they can be and be proud be aware of negative comments made to kids by other kids and provide them the knowledge to be bully proof
- More time in REACH at the elementary level and varied instruction. Six years of the brain was too much and my child really did not want to keep participating in REACH.
- More extensive program at the Elementary level. They need to go daily (as a class period,) ideally, if not then at least 2-3 days a week.
- I would like to see more offered other than the Humanities course.
- More options for advanced students within specific career focused fields (i.e, engineering, STEM)
- I believe we need to do some serious reorganization of our reach program or we are going to continue to lose our students to other schools. I do not believe we value our high achieving students as much as we should. They also need to be taught about the social and emotional challenges many of them face. As most of them just think they're odd and do their best to fit in.

- I think that if there was a separate class, or even the same humanities class but with a decreased social studies projects requirement (there are huge projects due continuously) and more focus on gifted learning and individuals, it would make a huge difference.
- More time to finish work in class or homework for reach.
- It would be great if there was an advanced science course, a better 7th grade advanced language arts class, more rigorous computer classes or robotics (sorry, that's 4 suggestions)
- Provide more assistance for the twice exceptional student.
- Have a special session for reach learning instead of a class- she doesn't feel like this class is any different than her other advanced courses
- More time with a gifted specialist and mentoring of teachers who teach REACH clusters in their regular classrooms.
- Focusing a bit more on social skills would be a great help.
- Make the REACH program half of each school day. For example, regular classroom learning in the morning and REACH in the afternoon.
- More time each week, meetings with parents
- More time for these kids!!!
- I am told my daughter feels like there isn't enough time. Not sure if it's her lack of time management or truly cramming in info.
- More time at Reach
- A twice a week program would be preferred!
- More help with improving their weaknesses. Being gifted leaves a bigger gap with those areas that may be "low average" but cause classroom difficulties because of the gap. Such as organization, note taking, attention, emotional issues.
- More direct communication between parents and the specialist. I'm not sure I've ever met her in 3 years.
- Not sure how the transition from Elementary REACH to Humanities could be smoother...seems to be a "disconnect". From fun activities to sitting in a class learning to take notes...
- I love the program and am so thankful for it. What a difference the program at all levels have made for my 2 gifted children.
- Direct communication periodically in person with Reach teacher.
- More frequent communication (email is fine) about the particular activities the students are engaged in during REACH class time...and obviously more periodic personal feedback (email is OK here too) regarding my child's efforts would also be great, though that would understandably be hard because of the extra effort needed from teachers who don't get paid enough as it is for all the hours they work.
- Offer a class similar to Humanities earlier, like 4th grade.
- More balance between creative projects and traditional reports. I would like to see my daughter further hone her writing skills which will serve her much better in college and her professional life. Dioramas, as an example, should be left behind in elementary

school. I'd rather see them explore creativity in middle school years in more professional ways, such a digital media applications.

- Determine the areas where the kid needs to be challenged and work on it as much as possible.
- Maybe schedule it during specials like music or art, and not miss key classes like math, reading, writing, science and history.
- Online computer learning at on subject student excels at or wants to learn about Determine the social areas where the kid needs help and work on it as much as possible.
- A REACH parent night so parents can go to the classroom and interact with kids and teachers to further understand what is happening in the enrichment services.
- Reduce the amount of content area that the teachers should focus on. Since the Reach teachers in middle school are limited to teaching Social Studies in the humanities classes, my child has lost interest in getting services with Reach. There should be a balance. I believe the Reach program in middle school needs to be restructured in terms of meeting their social and emotionally needs first. I am also confused as to why we are not funding this program in the same way that other special education services are funded. A push for more funding for REACH is imperative for this generation of gifted learners.
- Trying to help build friendships so that the children engage in enrichment activities outside of the Reach Room.
- More programs/workshops during week
- More mandatory creative/problem solving competitions (e.g. Odyssey of the Mind, robots, science extras)-- bringing "extra-curricular" into school day within the "electives" offerings
- More communication with parents on strategies that we can use as home to provide additional support for our child.
- Hold a workshop with the parents at the beginning of the year to inform and gather comments about the program. Then offer individual parent/teacher conferences twice per year that are optional for the parents.
- More communication with the parents and offer it to the kids more than once a week.
- More regular communication from REACH staff. The only thing I ever receive is the quarterly report card.
- More time for students in the Reach classroom.
- More time in REACH. Once per week is not enough.
- More time participating in REACH during the week.
- Personalized academic plans.
- Provide more classes taught by Gifted Ed specialists similar to the TUSD model.
- I know in TUSD they offer GATE in all core classes: English, Humanities, and math. I would suggest that for Amphi.
- More time
- More services
- Communicate with parents!

- Help and emotional support for the wiggly, unorganized boy. Strategies for classroom success and guidance to practice them and learn them so he can be successful in high school and beyond.
- More time for elementary students and actually clustering them in the class
- Reach school or a whole day pull out with real work production.
- Hire another REACH teacher so XXXXX could provide service to just one school
- When I speak with parents who have chosen to send their children to a charter school, I almost always get the same reasoning for it; their child just needed more.....I believe that Amphi could easily provide this same environment. What I envision, is taking one of our smaller schools that is centrally located, like Donaldson or Mesa Verde, and offering one class per grade level that is teaching and accelerated curriculum. These classrooms would assess the skill levels, teach only the skills that the students need, and move quickly through the material...It has been shown that parents are willing to provide transportation to the charter schools, so, I would imagine they would be equally willing to drive their child to another school in the district if transportation was not available.

It is apparent from the comments above that parents would like to see more services for their children both in the regular classroom and in the gifted program. They made a number of suggestions that could be considered as the district looks at possibilities for revising the current model.

Parents were asked about the amount of time in REACH services. 57% of parents surveyed believe that there is either not enough time, or far too little time, in REACH. The results of this question were compared to a question regarding challenge in the regular classroom. 78% of parents surveyed believe that there is only “some challenge” or “not enough challenge” in the regular classroom (See charts below on questions 6 and 7 from the parent survey). Parents were also asked about the level of challenge provided by the REACH program. 46% of parents believe that students are challenged or extremely challenged by REACH (see chart below for question 9).

It was interesting to note that over 43% of parents do not know the area of giftedness that qualified their child for the REACH program.

Question 6: Regarding the time your child spends in REACH classes/services, do you feel your child is provided...

Too much time in REACH	0.91%
Just the right amount of time in REACH	41.50%
Not enough time in REACH	41.95%
Far too little time spent in REACH	15.65%

Question 7: To what extent does your child feel challenged in the regular classroom?

Extremely challenged	A good amount of challenge	Some challenge	Not challenged
1.56%	20.31%	59.82%	18.30%

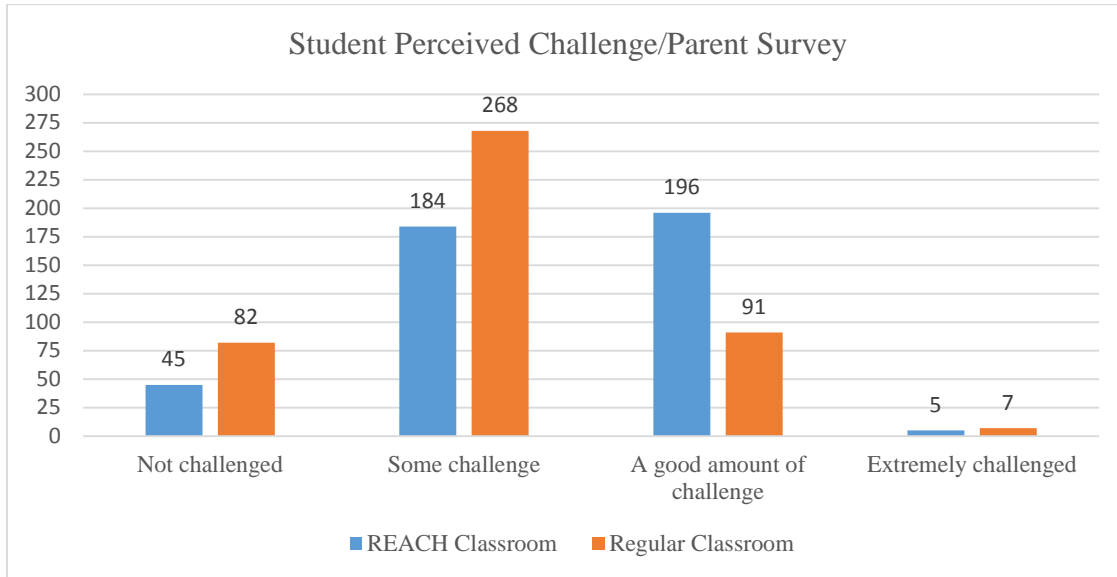
Question 9: To what extent does your child feel challenged by the work and activities provided by the REACH program?

Extremely challenged	A good amount of challenge	Some challenge	Not challenged
10.47	45.58%	42.79%	10.47%

It was important to further analyze the information regarding the perceived lack of challenge. The information was broken out into elementary school, middle school and high school responses. The lack of challenge appears to be a problem K-12, decreasing slightly as students enter high school. The data from this analysis is presented in the chart below:

	Not challenged	Some challenge	A good amount of challenge	Extremely challenged
Elementary School (236 responses)				
in a Regular Classroom	17%	66%	16%	1%
in a REACH Classroom	6%	44%	50%	0%
Middle School (115 responses)				
in a Regular Classroom	22%	55%	23%	1%
in a REACH Classroom	5%	42%	50%	2%
High School (85 responses)				
in a Regular Classroom	16%	49%	31%	4%
in a REACH Classroom	31%	42%	26%	1%

The graph below presents the data using actual student counts.



Question 8 gave the parents an opportunity to comment on the level of challenge their child receives in the regular classroom. There were 189 comments from parents in this regard. The following chart lists representative comments by themes drawn from the responses.

Theme	Representative Comments (Note: Comments are verbatim.)
Kudos/Pleased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teachers do a good job of teaching the content and he comprehends well. • My child has a really great teacher this year who is requiring him to think deeper and work harder, I love it! • She has come a long way and now the regular classrooms provide her good challenge as she has been allowed to advance beyond her grade level. • There are many opportunities for students to take challenging classes. • She is working in ability grouped classes which have helped her receive a lot more challenges in the classroom. • The teacher does a good job of addressing the needs the best that she can in the classroom, but these kids process and think about things differently. It would be beneficial to either pull them more frequently for services or offer them more small group learning opportunities in the classroom. This is just hard to do what the class sizes being what they are these days. More project based learning opportunities often allow these kids to explore on their

	<p>own levels of individuality and interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The third grader isn't challenged that much. But the first grader is in blended class with second graders so she is challenged just fine.
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fourth grade teachers work together to have different groups in math which has been incredibly beneficial as it has been challenging! • My child is bored in school except for math which he is well challenged in. • He is challenged in math particularly this year because he is attending a 5/6th grade math class. • I was upset that she qualified for Advanced Geometry but wasn't put in it because it conflicted with taking French (was there only one class?). Now she's completing problems before the teacher finishes explaining it and is receiving a very high A. That's no fault of the teacher. She should have been placed where she belonged. • ##### has allowed the 4th and 5th grade students to switch classes for math and English based on their abilities. Without this option, my child would not be challenged in the classroom. • We are very happy with math groups. • My child has opportunities that have been provided to accelerate in mathematics. We are grateful that he has been provided this experience.
Pre-AP/AP/IB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He is in the IB program, which provides ample challenge. When major assignments hit with similar due dates, it can be problematic. Synchronizing the assignment calendars to avoid this would be helpful. • XXXXX Pre-AP and AP Program are a disappointment. The English program at XXXXX used to be spectacular; it is now an embarrassment. Unqualified teachers teaching Pre-AP programs and AP teachers who don't make an effort. The best teachers were pulled for IB and no effort has been made to rebuild the AP Program. Really glad I don't have younger, gifted kids, I wouldn't keep them in Amphi. The Math program is good, God help XXXX if it loses XXXXX (teacher name). • Our son has been in pre-AP and regular classes and then entered the IB program his junior year. The various academic programs at XXXXX have allowed him to find challenge in his areas of strength. IB has been a good fit although the need to remain in foreign language was not a good fit for him all the other classes in IB were a great fit. We are glad we open enrolled to XXXXX. • My child has been somewhat challenged by Humanities classes and Pre-AP classes, largely due to the amount of work that is needed, not necessarily because the work itself is too hard. • You say regular classroom but our son takes mostly AP or

	<p>advanced classes. I'm really curious if there is any guidance on classes he should take or at his age information on how to handle certain teachers. I know there is one teacher who "picks on" very motivated bright students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our sophomore son has been bored in most classes for quite a while. He is internally driven and researches out a lot of things on his own. He is 2 years ahead in math, so that has been the best fit. He has also taken both 9th and 10th English as Pre-ap which has been fairly good at keeping him challenged. He is a big math/science kid and the Pre AP science at XXXXX has been the biggest frustration for him. Very boring and not challenging like he would love to have. On the flip side, 5 years ago when our oldest son had those classes at XXXXX, he did feel at least more challenged that our youngest son does. Our son does not care for the busy work classes, such as social studies that are required, nor does he want to take the AP version of those, to just receive more busywork.
<p>Elementary Challenge/Lack of Challenge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My child didn't start an above grade level reading group until January, so she spent the first half of the year not being challenged at all. During that time she did coloring and reading that was way below her level. She is in a "cluster" class but it seems like all kids do all of the same work. • Both my 1st and 4th grade teachers have made some effort to challenge my kids (1st more than 4th). However, with a large class and lots of kids that need attention for NOT keeping up, it's hard to give attention to kids who are doing just fine. But then the kids who excel aren't being pushed. • Regular leveled classes move too slowly for my son. • I am disappointed in the clustering that my child received in elementary. There was some years she was with some other reach kids and some years there were hardly any other students. The reach teacher picked who was to be in her class based on her own preference to who she wanted to teach for the mere 40 mins she saw them a week. The rest of the time my child was in class with kids not on her academic level. Middle school has been better in this area but she also relieves services daily. • She's used as a helper with other students that are not as advanced as she is. This is a good way for her to master certain topics but she would like to not have this be her challenge as much. She doesn't always feel comfortable with the kids she is set up with to help. Example are boys that have behavioral difficulties and other kids that doesn't put in the effort necessary to obtain the outcome she expects of her own work.
<p>Behavior, Boredom, Social emotional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once asked, he said he was not challenged at all. • I believe my daughter's teacher is awesome and does the best she can, but there are too many children in her class and she is not

	<p>able to give the more advanced students more challenging exercises. All the children learn the same thing and at the same pace which makes it hard to challenge those that need it and can add to discipline problems in the classroom when they are bored.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He typically grasps concepts and finishes work at an accelerated pace. He complains of being “bored” when he is waiting for other students; this has contributed to a discipline problem this year. • REACH becomes even more critical in High School, and yet there seems to be nothing for REACH kids at XXXXX. IB seems to be where they are trying to funnel them, but neither of my kids are interested in IB. XXXXX is an AMAZING teacher with a huge knowledge base in Gifted Education, but there seem to be no REACH programs for her to run at XXXXX High School. As an advocate she is far too overworked to handle the needs of all the REACH kids at XXXXX. They need to have cohorts for these kids when they get to high school! With all of the scholastic pressure, emotional upheaval, and expectations piled on high school kids these days, we OWE it to them to be able to support them. Their needs are just as important as SPED students, and many are twice exceptional! Anxiety and depression run rampant and are often a part of a REACH kid’s daily life, because of their giftedness.
<p>More time, more funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I was in the gifted program in the 90's in CA, I had after school specialized class designed to work in a more child-center teacher-guided style of instruction. We decided together on what subject to study and we learned from each other, we were challenged and creative. I would hope for more funds to be given to the REACH program at our schools to allow for more group learning with the assistance from a well-trained teacher specializing in REACH. • More REACH time. • In order to be competitive with other programs/schools in the area I think that more resources and time should be dedicated to the REACH program.

Question 11 asked: Do you believe your child’s social and emotional needs are being met, in part, by the REACH program? Why or why not?

There were a total of 317 responses to this question. 81 respondents indicated that the program did not meet these needs, 161 indicated the program did meet these types of needs, 37 did not know or were unsure and 9 indicated they did not feel their child had needs in this area.

Two communication related questions were included in the survey. One regarding whether or not parents had been informed of needs of their gifted child and another on communication style preferences.

Question 12: Has the district/school/REACH staff informed you about your child’s needs as a gifted student?

Yes	No	Not sure
48.70%	34.04%	17.26%

Question 13: How would you prefer to receive information about the needs of your gifted student?

School newsletter	Workshops	Emails	Parent conference with the REACH teacher
3.35%	1.91%	61%	33.73%

Less than half of the parents responded that they were given information regarding the needs of their gifted learner. The department should determine how this could be done consistently from the time the child is identified until they complete high school or leave the district. It is also clear that the parents prefer electronic communication over the other options. This should be considered when the program, and the teachers in the program, communicate with parents.

REACH Program Review Survey for Parents: Program Strengths

Parents were asked, does the participation in the REACH Program and/or advanced courses increase your child’s enthusiasm for learning?

Yes	No	Not sure
72.55%	9.07%	18.38%

The results indicate that when students are engaged in these options, parents perceive their children are enthusiastic about learning.

Parents were given an open response question and asked to identify a strength of the REACH program in our schools. A total of 252 comments were analyzed to identify themes. The following chart lists the themes identified and representative parent comments fitting each theme. Comments are verbatim.

What is one strength you see in what is offered by the REACH program in our schools?		
Theme	Number of Comments	Comment Examples (Note: Comments are verbatim.)
Challenge/Thinking Creative & Critical	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school curriculum is challenging and fun. • The children are encouraged to think outside the box, and my daughter enjoys that! • Challenging a variety of ways of thinking. Hands on project based learning. • Educational opportunities aligned with advanced aptitude. • Out of the box thinking and creativity!! No worksheets!!
Humanities	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanities program at xxx is innovative and creative. We love the hands-on approach! • Xxx has definitely changed the perspective for humanities, more than most teachers do. However, she does it in a way where they can be successful, challenged and engaged. She also sends weekly emails that keeps families in the loop. • The Humanities course has been excellent.
Identification	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are identified early • Helps parents identify that their kids need to be challenged
High School Internship	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right now the internship
Recognition of Differences/Socially /Emotionally	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program provides to some the challenges that can be faced by a gifted child and provides the students with strategies on how to engage his/her abilities in numerous ways.
Time Together/Grouping with Other REACH Kids	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clustering the kids in classrooms I think is a real benefit to make them feel comfortable being different in the classroom and to have a familiar group to share ideas and lessons with. • I appreciate that it provides my daughter with a safe place to be different from other kids. • It gives him an opportunity to be around others who have a similar way of thinking.
Strong Staff	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong teacher • The REACH staff at xxx is very knowledgeable and well-trained. • The teachers really understand the students and strive to give them the best education and help their brains continue to grow and flourish. • Teachers who are passionate about students having great learning opportunities and who see each student's individual qualities. • The REACH teachers are highly qualified. • The REACH teachers are very knowledgeable

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The REACH teacher knows my children well and advocates for them at the school.
Just Thankful for the Program	10	
Negative/Neutral/None	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish something like this was available at xxx. If there is something, I was never made aware of it. • Haven't seen anything from xxx about anything they are working on. • The students are at least seen once a week; it could be worse. • I like the pull out activity but don't seem much advantage offered by the clusters. • This year she seems bored and does not look forward to REACH days. Apparently they have been working on codes forever and I am not really sure what else they have done. • Thus far, not much offered in high school.

The results from parent input are similar to that of students in many ways. Parents and students believe they need more time in program services. They also indicate that they may not be as challenged as they need to be in the regular classrooms. The comments are many, and thoughtful.

Results of Teacher Survey

Surveys were sent to district teachers via an email link on their district email. There were a total of 294 responses indicating an approximate 39% response rate.

Teachers were asked a number of questions regarding their perception of the REACH program at their school site. The survey results and corresponding questions are provided below:

In your opinion, do the REACH Program services meet the needs of gifted students at your school?

To a great extent	To some extent	Services are adequate	Not at all	Do not know
26.26%	43.53%	9.63%	4.32%	17.27%

In your opinion, does the REACH Program testing and identification process find the students who need the services?

To a great extent	To some extent	Adequately	Not at all	Do not know
36.73%	37.09%	10.91%	1.45%	13.82%

Are you aware of which students in your class(es) are identified as gifted and eligible for REACH services?

Yes	81.95%
No	18.05%

What is your overall perception of the REACH Program services in your building?

Very positive	Positive	Neutral	Somewhat negative	Other
36.57%	34.70%	15.67%	2.99%	10.07%

In your opinion, to what extent does your school and/or the REACH program at your school provide gifted students with exposure to college and career opportunities which align with their area of strength?

To a great extent	28.91%
To some extent	61.33%
Not at all	9.77%

How easily are students able to access REACH services at your school?

Very easily	37.59%
Adequate	36.47%
Difficult to access	6.39%
Do not know	19.55%

I could benefit from professional development on understanding the needs of gifted students.

Yes	65.02%
No	29.28%
Other	5.70%

I could benefit from professional development on differentiation of instruction for gifted students.

Yes	70.72%
No	25.10%
Other	4.18%

Teachers provided insightful comments for Question 15. They were asked, “What other information would you like to provide which will help our district provide services for gifted students?” The following table provides the themes taken from the comments and sets of representative comments from each theme:

Theme	Representative Comments (of 101 total) (Note: Comments are verbatim.)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To me, it is very sad that when we have a student who qualifies for REACH and cannot receive REACH services until the following school year. I believe that like special education, once a child qualifies they should begin receiving their REACH instruction. • I am concerned that the initial screener is administered in a large group setting. This can impact the results for highly distracted students and doesn't take their accommodations into account. • I believe we need equity and parity in our service of REACH students. We currently under-identify minority and LSES students and the testing needs to be rethought so that more opportunity is given to students who don't have built in advantages. We also need to expand REACH services in the elementary so that parents feel there is real program in effect. Currently, many parents feel that one hour a week of enrichment does not constitute "services."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish they were tested earlier in the school year and then start going in that school year.
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would love REACH to be an extension of what we do in the classroom to provide the students with higher level learning that relates to the classroom and what we are doing. • We need REACH counselors at the high school level. Gifted students need an IEP almost as much as special ed students do, and we drop the ball here. • I just question how a free-for-all Humanities class benefits REACH students. How about supporting their unique social & emotional needs? • While students can be gifted in many different areas, our REACH program only addresses the needs of those who have strengths in language and social sciences. XXXX does an outstanding job, but she is limited by the curriculum required in the class. The class does serve the needs of many of our REACH students, but I believe its existence does a disservice to our other students. The average student in the regular social studies classroom is robbed of the exemplars and high level of thinking that used to be present in the room when REACH was a pull out program. • After teaching this 1/2 blended classroom this year, I have come to the conclusion that if we offered more of this style of learning to kids, we wouldn't be losing so many to "other" educational facilities such as XXXXX. The kids in my classroom have proved my theory that if you don't put a ceiling on their learning (I refer to this as a "lid on their pot") which limits them to the grade level they are in - they will meet your highest expectations and then some. Not all kids thrive in this environment though. Students who have done extremely well are the independent and highly motivated learners. It's been fun but a LOT of work. I would love to do it again but with extra pay and a half-time aid:-) • I would like to see gifted classes in science. • I feel clustering gifted students allows for easier differentiation to meet their needs. However, this option is not always seen as "fair" in the eyes of some stakeholders. I feel the REACH department needs to provide more training/information to support the best model for gifted students.
Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to see extension services for gifted readers or teacher

<p>Development</p>	<p>training on how to provide age-appropriate reading extension for young readers. It is difficult to extend reading for primary-aged children without moving into more mature reading content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be great to have feedback/content from the REACH teacher/department that would support students' particular needs/strengths. What are "Sam's" particular strengths? What should Sam be challenged with in class? What struggles does Sam have that need to be supported related to giftedness? • I believe that providing professional development for ALL teachers regarding how to best serve REACH students within their classes would be helpful. • All classroom teachers need some training in gifted education. Gifted learners are not just gifted in their "special" class, they are gifted 24/7/365. Just allowing gifted learners to take advanced classes does not make a gifted program unless the teachers of those classes have training in gifted education. • I would be interested in more training and classes for meeting REACH needs with my PD time during school hours. • I also think we spend a lot of time focusing on our bottom 25%, and little time learning about how to address the needs of our top 10-25%.
<p>Staffing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I often wonder why it is that IEP students have a resource teacher to push into a class and REACH does not. Sometimes my advanced students in science classes or social studies would benefit from extra ideas from their REACH teacher. Having the REACH teacher in the classroom would also help collaboration because I cannot always work with her during her assigned days here. • Several years ago the REACH services were cut at both the elementary and high school level. The services were restored for elementary but not for high school. This has really been a disadvantage at the high school level. Not only are services minimal but the FTE is not equitable between the high schools. • One of the things that sets Amphitheater School District apart from others in the Tucson area is that it has been cognizant and mindful in providing gifted services to its gifted population for over three decades; even doing so when other districts were reducing services and personnel due to state and federal funding issues.

	<p>One area that I feel is often considered low priority is the high school level. Many people believe that programs/courses such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge Program, and dual-credit classes provide an adequate level of challenge and rigor to meet the needs of the gifted population, so it seems acceptable to have reduced contact time and/or personnel at this educational level. To a certain extent, I agree, those programs may meet some of the academic needs of this population but there are many other aspects that curriculum and programming do not meet which needs to be addressed at this level. High school student brains are more developed and capable of comprehending the physiological and psychological differences they have and should have some guidance and information about these aspects which are not addressed in other areas of the education process.</p> <p>For example, the Specialist would be able to form more meaningful, long-term connections with students and parents in order to better advocate for and to serve the gifted population's needs by providing support to the counselors, being able to offer workshops/seminars for gifted students and parents regarding college/career readiness, academic/life skills that would establish a solid foundation for future success; and possibly guide/help gifted parents/guardians to form a parent information/ support group.</p> <p>I believe that the high school gifted population at two of the three high schools is large enough to warrant the assignment of a full-time Gifted Specialist at those sites in order to better provide services and to assist faculty in order to meet the needs of this population. Actually, I think it would be a distinctive "selling" point for the district if each high school had a full-time Gifted Specialist. A full-time Specialist at each site would be easier for students, parents, and faculty to connect with and gifted services would be greatly improved.</p>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted students need more REACH time. One hour a week is not enough. (Many comments of this type.) • Ideally, a full day of Reach would be wonderful, instead of one or two hour sessions. • I think that the students should be seen more often than once a week. I know it is a budget issue but I think the students would benefit.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted students need to meet with REACH teachers more than once a week so that they can have more time spend helping them deal with how their giftedness makes them a unique learner. • My gifted students meet with the specialist one hour per week, because she is spread so thin. Each student deserves to learn something new and challenging daily. Therefore I spend a lot of time preparing extensions to my lessons. • It would be nice if the kids could go more than once a week for an hour. My previous district did pull outs for 3 hours every 6th day. I also came across recently a school that pulls out each grade level 1st through 5th for the entire day, once a week. Kinder is then just serviced in the spring for only an hour to ease them in. In the regular classroom, with 28 students, it is hard to give the gifted cluster what they need every moment of the day. I do my best to differentiate as much as possible, but never feel it is enough. It also compounds the problem when you have high, out of the box, thinking gifted kids, and kids that are still on a low kinder level in 1st grade... I would love to be able to do a cohort for learning more about gifted education - but I guess there weren't enough people interested when XXXX mentioned it to me last year.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would love to know more about what the REACH program does and how students are identified outside of teacher recommendation for testing.
Kudos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program is awesome. The kids wait all week for their day to go. It is such a great outlet for them to be grouped with like-minded kiddos. Sometimes in the classroom they just don't have any peers at their level. • Our Gifted teacher is amazing! Very talented, insightful and fair. We are thankful to have her!

Results of REACH Staff Focus Group

A Focus Group was held for REACH teachers. The teachers in the group were asked five questions and were given the opportunity to respond to each question. Themes surfaced from the responses that were similar in nature to those discovered in the parent comments and student comments.

Five Questions from the REACH Teacher Focus Group (includes written comments and one phone conference)

1. From your work with gifted students in our district, what do you see as the greatest benefit of their participation in the REACH program?
2. What do you believe are some of the areas where the REACH program could improve?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the identification procedures for REACH?
4. If you could give one piece of advice to the district regarding any aspect of the REACH program, what would it be?
5. Looking forward to the next ten years, what would you like to see happen for gifted students in our district?

Themes from all questions	Comments (Note: Comments are verbatim.)
Social/emotional needs	“There is a lack of social emotional...in middle school.” “We struggle with materials for social and emotional needs.” “We provide a safe place academically and emotionally.”
Curriculum	“Humanities is good, but, now we have to teach for the final exam.” “Need a consistent REACH curriculum in the district.” “Long term (Level 4) projects are hard because they lose momentum with only 45 minutes per week.”
Time	“Elementary time is the biggest issue.” “Time. Heavy caseload, so, they only get 45 minutes per week.” “Time equals equitable service. Envious of the middle school teachers because they get to

	<p>see their students every day.”</p> <p>“Workload is high. Three different preps, (e.g., World History, American History, Government) then testing, and then the specialist position, seems unmanageable.”</p>
Materials	<p>“We need money for materials and supplies.”</p> <p>“This is our investment – doesn’t Amphi want to know – these are our future leaders...engineers, computer programmers. We have no computers, no engineering kits, no science materials. These kids <u>could</u> amaze us.”</p>
Professional Development	<p>“Allowing us to go to the NAGC conference was very helpful.”</p> <p>“If part of the solution is the cluster model, then teachers must be ones who really want to teach the cluster and we must provide training for them.”</p> <p>“Clustering without training, empty words.”</p> <p>“Administration needs to know more about the needs of gifted and talented students.”</p> <p>“Professional development is needed for regular classroom teachers.”</p>
Testing and Identification	<p>“The identification process has more strengths than weaknesses.”</p> <p>“Screening casts a wide net.”</p> <p>“We use a variety of tests.”</p> <p>“Hand scoring tests takes a great deal of time.”</p> <p>“Teachers are pulled away from teaching to test three times per year.”</p> <p>“Placements in middle school humanities causes an issue, it is not consistent.”</p> <p>“If there is one thing that we should not touch it is the identification procedures.”</p>
Other	<p>“We need to be the premier district in retaining and attracting gifted students.”</p> <p>“We are losing students because we are not funding this program or offering enough services, kids want more, parents want more, we are pro Amphitheater School District employees– need more services.”</p>

Identification of REACH Students

The identification “policy” for REACH students was reviewed by the committee. REACH teachers and classroom teachers believe that the process is effective in finding students that are gifted verbally, non-verbally and quantitatively. Testing is administered by REACH staff members which means that the program is suspended while children are tested and the tests are scored. All tests are scored by hand by REACH staff members. This is done three times per year. All of the tests used are approved by the State of Arizona for identification of gifted students. The testing procedures are included here for reference:

Amphitheater Public Schools REACH Department/Gifted Services Testing Policy

The REACH Department will provide testing to identify gifted students at each of our school sites at least once a year. Students can be referred for testing by their teachers, parents or peers. A *Permission to Test* form must be on file in the REACH office before testing can take place. The REACH teacher will notify the student and parents when testing is scheduled. Students who miss testing at their home school may be transported to another site for testing. There are at least 21 opportunities for testing in our district during each school year.

Students who score at the 97th percentile or above on any one of the three areas tested (verbal, quantitative, nonverbal) will be identified for gifted services.

Students in grades K-7 who score at the 95th or 96th percentile on any one area tested will be placed in the program provisionally and receive gifted services for one year. At the end of the year, the REACH teacher will evaluate the student’s need for continued gifted services.

Students in kindergarten and 1st grade who are eligible for testing will be given the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT) and/or the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT).

During the first semester, all 2nd grade students will be screened in their classroom for gifted services using the Ravens. Students who score in the superior range will be referred for further testing. Students may also be referred for testing by teachers and parents.

All students in grades 2-11 who are eligible for testing will be given the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) for verbal and quantitative reasoning and the NNAT to identify nonverbal strengths.

Students whose primary home language is other than English (PHLOTE) and/or who have at-risk factors may also be tested with the Ravens’ Test of Progressive Matrices. The REACH teacher may evaluate these students using our district’s Multiple Criteria Checklist (MCC). Students who score at least 10 points on the MCC will receive gifted services on a one-year provisional basis. At the end of the year, the REACH teacher will evaluate the student’s need for continued gifted services.

Students can be tested twice in elementary grades, once in middle school, and once in high school. Testing cannot be repeated during any 12-month period. It is the recommendation of the REACH Department that students not be considered for testing more than twice.

Addendum to Testing Policy:

If a student was previously placed in REACH on a provisional basis and was not permanently placed at the end of one year, that student may later retake the test for REACH, but must place in the 97th percentile or above to be considered for placement. A second provisional placement will not be considered. *Updated: 07/15*

Once students are identified for services they begin in the program the next year or the next semester. There were a few comments from teachers stating that they take them in right away “if there is room”. This was mentioned in some of the survey comments. Respondents believed that the students should start receiving services right away. **It is interesting to note that placement information/explanation is not included on the permission to test form, permission to place form, or the testing policy.**

Part of the identification procedures include the use of the Multiple Criteria Checklist (MCC). The MCC allows reviews more than one source of information to determine placement in the program. This practice is important to ensure equitable access to programs and services by a diverse population of children.

REACH Teacher Caseloads

The reviewer examined caseload numbers and found the following:

Teacher	Caseload	Number of Schools
HS (AHS and IRHS)	320	2
HS (CDO)	215	1 (.40FTE)
MS (AMS)	77	
MS (La Cima)	74	
MS (Coronado)	100	
MS (Cross)	138	
MS (Wilson)	145	
Elementary	232	3
Elementary	137	2
Elementary	208	2
Elementary	134	1 (Part time art also)
Elementary	197	2
Elementary	170	2

Caseloads are high for all staff members. Some staff members have taken on other roles at a school site in order to stay in one place and presumably to avoid being an itinerant employee. Large caseloads may lead to fewer services for students and makes communication with parents and others more complex.

REACH Student Achievement Results on Traditional Assessments

The data department ran an analysis for the past three years comparing gifted to non-gifted gains in achievement on the DIBELS-Next assessment in kindergarten and first grade and the NWEA MAP assessment in grades 2-8. In most cases, REACH students as a grade level cohort scored better than their “non-gifted” peers. However, in some cases they did not do as well. This was

true on DIBELS-Next for kindergarten and first grade and NWEA-MAP in grade 2-8. Spreadsheets are available.

Feedback from Principals

Principals were asked to respond to the reviewer by email to provide general feedback on the program. The elementary principals who responded were pleased with their REACH teacher. Some principals identified a need for professional development for classroom teachers on the needs of gifted students. The use of the cluster model seems to be confusing for principals. They indicated that the model is not a good one at smaller schools where there are 22 children in a grade level and two teachers. They may have a misunderstanding about what constitutes a cluster (4-8 students) and what they need to do at their school. In this example, both teachers would be a cluster teacher and both teachers would be trained in differentiation for the gifted students in their classroom.

One high school principal indicated that there had not been any services at his school and expressed a desire to have his own REACH staff member full time, or more time.

Results of Document Review

As of April 11, 2016 the number of students identified for the gifted program was 2208. There were 1830 students identified on non-verbal measures, 227 identified on quantitative measures and 332 on verbal measures. 188 students are identified in more than one area.

The REACH Scope and Sequence that was sent to the Arizona Department of Education was reviewed. The structure of the document is provided by ADE and the department is asked to complete the final column describing the services, testing, etc.

Communication about the REACH Program services vary in type and style from school to school. Examples of communication type documents received for the review included newsletters to parents, letters to parents regarding testing and results of testing, web sites, etc.

Rubrics for critical and creative thinking tasks were presented and represent best practice in the field. An overview of the high school internship program was also provided which was detailed and provided students with clear information about course requirements.

The National Association for Gifted Children has developed a set of standards which provides guidance for evaluating program quality based on research and best practices in gifted education. All committee members received a copy of this document and many referred to the document throughout the course of the meetings.

Program Strengths

The REACH Program review revealed a number of areas of strength in terms of identification and services. There was a general lack of negative comments or suggestions for change with regard to the identification process. While identification of students should always go through periodic checks for a balance of identified students, review of potential testing options, etc., the committee believes that the process in place now is working well and does not need to change at this point in time.

There were a number of comments from parents, students and classroom teachers that indicated support for the majority of the teaching staff that is currently in the program. They recognized the efforts of the teachers given current funding issues and large caseloads.

Elementary students and their parents generally like the pull out class time and the creative and critical thinking tasks and projects presented during those sessions.

The Humanities programs at some of the schools were seen as a strength.

Most classroom teachers (80%) know which students in their classes are identified as gifted and have requested assistance to meet their needs.

Recommendations of the Committee (Not in priority order)

1. The committee recommends that the time in REACH classes be increased at the elementary level.
2. The committee recommends that the REACH department develop consistent curriculum for the elementary REACH pull out classes.
3. The committee recommends that the program develop a communication plan which includes a plan for regular contact with parents, students, classroom teachers, and administrators regarding the program activities, needs of gifted students, and professional development opportunities. Further it is recommended that the department materials be consistent and “branded” with both the district logo and the REACH logo to ensure a professional presentation of information.
4. The committee recommends that the high school REACH program be examined and revised to allow for more student contact, counseling specifically geared toward the social and emotional needs of gifted individuals, guidance for career and college readiness, and the special academic needs of this population.
5. The committee recommends that the middle school humanities program at each middle school be examined including curriculum, instruction, assessment, assignments, and inclusion of students in these classes in order to ensure consistency.
6. The committee recommends that the REACH program at the middle level expand beyond the humanities option to better serve the needs of the students who have other areas of giftedness.
7. The committee recommends that professional development on needs of gifted learners be offered to teachers who are designated as “cluster” teachers and to teachers who have courses where gifted students enroll to ensure that the students are properly challenged and supported in their learning.
8. The committee recommends that the funding for the REACH program be increased in the areas of staffing, supplies and materials, and professional development.
9. The committee recommends that REACH staff be allotted time for collaborative planning and curriculum alignment with one another, and with regular classroom teachers.
10. The committee recommends that REACH students be provided engaging instruction, materials, and support in accessing advanced level content, processes and products, in all core content areas of their regular education programming. REACH students should be provided opportunities to follow a topic/project of relevance when they have mastered the core content. Generally, the committee recommends that if a student demonstrates proficiency within a content area, they be given the opportunity to engage in further self-directed study, enrichment or acceleration.
11. The committee recommends that the district develop a set of core beliefs regarding instruction of gifted students which meet the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) standards.

Based upon the “deeper dive” into the responses, what the data revealed, and the overall look of the review, the following additional recommendations are provided for consideration:

1. Parents, students and teachers want our gifted children to succeed and to have access to appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction. Elementary students should be grouped together in some manner and instructed at their level for the areas of their giftedness/high ability (e.g., math, reading).
2. Elementary teachers need easy access to reading materials/units that are challenging for gifted learners. A collection of such materials should be available for loaning out to teachers.
3. We need to extend learning opportunities for students by allowing access to additional materials and materials at higher reading levels.
4. The documents from the gifted program do not appear to be cohesive. It is recommended that the department work with our Community Relations department to be sure that all documents, especially those explaining the program or providing testing information and results, be branded and presented in a very business-like professional manner.
5. The REACH Program should have a comprehensive and continuously updated web page expanding on what is currently available.
6. The Department Chair should have at least .50 FTE assigned to working on program consistency, communication, planning, curriculum, etc.
7. The identification of students is a strength of the program, however, it pulls teachers away from the very little time they spend with students. We need to work on ways to decrease the down time of instruction for testing. Perhaps one small way to assist in this effort is to have the tests scored electronically.
8. There are a very high percentage of identified students who qualified based on the non-verbal/spatial assessment. The REACH program and services need to be reviewed for alignment toward this area of giftedness.

Conclusion

REACH staff members should be proud of what they are able to accomplish, given limited resources. The review of the program indicates a demand for services that the district has not been able to fund in recent years. Attracting and retaining high ability/gifted children is an important priority for our schools. Hopefully, the comments and suggestions provided by hundreds of individuals during this review will assist the district in taking important next steps to enhance the services for gifted students in Amphitheater School District.