

To: Members, Board of Education
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

From: Dr. Amy Warke, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer
Dr. Carrie Kamm, Senior Director of Equity
Dr. Tawanda Lawrence, Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Emily Fenske, Director of Organizational Learning

Re: 2018-2019 GTD Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Update

Date: April 30, 2019

Purpose: To provide an update to the Board of Education about the GTD Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and its progress during the 2018-2019 school year.

Introduction

The vision of District 97 is to create a positive learning environment for all District 97 students that is equitable, inclusive, and focused on the whole child. In order to achieve this vision for all students, it is important to examine district practices, procedures, and policies to ensure they align with our values, along with Illinois School Code and other state-level mandates. For the past two years, the district has engaged an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to serve as a focus group and a community feedback group around our Gifted and Talented Differentiation (GTD) program. This report is intended to provide an update on that work from the past two years, along with sharing new district handbooks aligned to the Illinois Accelerated Act and defining some next steps for the district in this work.

What is GTD?

As the Ad Hoc Committee worked over the past two years, our team wants to ensure we answer a lingering question we have heard in the community. That particular question, “Is the GTD program going away?” The goal of the Ad Hoc Committee has been to **“Strive to ensure that every student has access as well as the opportunity to learn at high levels with learning outcomes that were not dependent upon race, gender or socioeconomic status.”** Our data has indicated for years that the current programming has not served this goal for our children. Our answer to this question is no, GTD is not going away, but the program needs to evolve to better serve our students and our vision.

We also know that GTD is not a place, but a service students receive to continue learning at high levels above and beyond the differentiation they receive in the classroom. We intend on renaming the service because what it is currently called, GTD, is a dated term and is not reflective of what services the students are receiving. Additionally, curriculum and programming need to be designed for students to critically think and problem solve real world issues that are not siloed around one subject or topic but that incorporate multiple subjects in a single lesson.

The GTD program has historically been associated with math, which is another reason why the Ad Hoc Committee will continue its work into next school year, which is addressed later in this report.

D97's math differentiation initiative, while connected, is separate from GTD. Differentiation is a form of acceleration as defined by A Nation Empowered (2015). The District's efforts for differentiation in math for all students, coupled with the Eureka math resource, has increased the rigor for math for all of our students, raising expectations for all, and assisting with our district goal of having confident and persistent achievers. The GTD services are above and beyond the differentiation that all students are receiving. Currently in grades 3, 4 and 5 that service is an additional hour per week.

The Work of the Committee So Far (GTD Ad Hoc Committee Update)

On August 23, 2017, Dr. Kelley sent out all a call for interested community and staff members to apply for the GTD Ad Hoc Committee. The committee members were charged with assessing the alignment of the district's GTD program with our goals and vision. They also deepened their understanding of instructional practices that are designed to enrich the learning experience for all students. Through their assessment and learning, committee members had an opportunity to share recommendations for the current GTD program.

The GTD Ad Hoc Committee had their first meeting on Monday, September 25, 2017. At this meeting Dr. Kelley reviewed the District 97's Vision4ALL (specifically Pillar 1). Dr. Warke and Dr. Kamm provided an overview of the history of the GTD program and current program status as well as an overview of the current professional learning the 3rd grade teachers, GTD teachers, and instructional coaches were participating in to support differentiating math instruction for all learners. Dr. Yvette Jackson, our consultant and author of *Pedagogy of Confidence*, lead the group in determining group norms and learning on nurturing high intellectual performance in all students.

At the October 16th meeting, norms were finalized and Dr. Jackson facilitated a conversation on committee members' perspectives on GTD program elements, along with their perspective regarding the district's vision to challenge all students and nurture their gifts and talents, while taking into consideration the unique needs of each student. The committee also established a Slack and Padlet space so that dialogue could occur in between meetings and articles and resources could be shared in a central location.

At the November 20, 2017 meeting, each committee member gave two recommendations that were informed by their reading of relevant articles, information provided by Dr. Yvette Jackson, analysis of current GTD program data, and their own perspective regarding the program. These recommendations were shared with our Administrative Leadership team and K-5 teachers for their feedback. At the December 18, 2017 meeting, committee members had an opportunity to discuss the feedback and summarize considerations that were to be presented to Dr. Kelley and the Board of Education. The Committee posed these considerations for the district to explore as part of their long-term planning on evolving the GTD program. Their considerations included:

- District 97 administration to assess and make necessary changes to the GTD service delivery model to insure differentiation and enrichment for all learners so that each student is challenged. This included:
 - Clarifying terms such as differentiation and enrichment
 - Investing in teacher understanding of grading practices
- District 97 administration to evaluate and revise the GTD program criteria to be more equitable and inclusive. This included:
 - Examining gifted programs, such as the one in Miami-Dade school district, to learn how their selection process resulted in a more inclusive program
- District 97 to provide the necessary staff and resources to differentiate for all students. This includes:

- Providing professional learning for staff on how differentiate instruction and hold all students to high expectations for learning
- District 97 to continue challenging students who meet GTD criteria, while also creating entry points and paths for students who may not meet criteria but who demonstrate in other ways that they will potentially benefit from acceleration. This includes:
 - Making program revisions based on the IL Acceleration Act
 - Provide professional learning for teachers on culturally responsive teaching and instructional practices that nurture high intellectual performance in all students

On September 21, 2018 a call for committee members went out for new committee members to participate on the GTD Ad Hoc Committee for the 2018-2019 school year. The full committee was notified on October 18 and was given the schedule of meeting dates for the year which were October 30, 2018, January 12 and February 23, 2019 as well as the charge for the school year which was:

To serve as a 1) a focus group and 2) an advisory group to the district around GTD policies.

- In your role as a focus group, you will share your experiences and perspectives.
- In your role as an advisory group, you will be provided with information about policies and programming that the district is considering, and be asked to give feedback that will help guide the district's decisions.

This year, students were included as committee members to hear their perspective on the programming.

At the first meeting on October 23, 2018, the committee learned of the vision of the GTD programming, the why behind our need for change and how our data informed the need for that change in our programming. Additionally the committee discussed the outcomes for the three meetings

- Ensure committee work is transparent
- Determine a new name for acceleration
- Identify a clear process for acceleration, timeline, criteria for student selection, parent notification, and protocols for appeals aligned to the IL Accelerated Act
- Create a handbook, Frequently Asked Questions, etc. as an online resource
- Build understanding of our why
- Develop package for the Board Of Education, April 2019

The evening ended with the committee participating in focus groups answering the following questions to further guide the work of the administration

1. What does the term “gifted” mean to you?
2. What is your experience with “gifted” programming either in D97 or outside the district?
3. What are your hopes for how District 97 provides advanced learning opportunities?
4. Is there anything else you want to share?

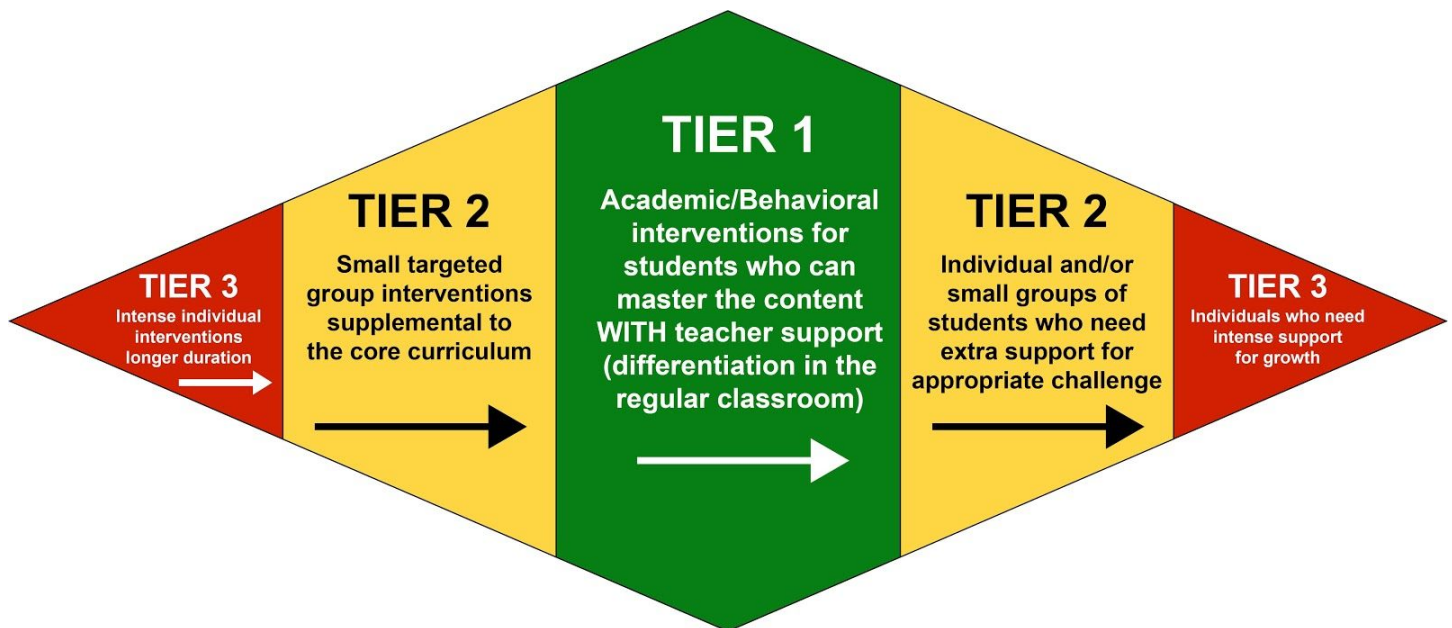
At the second meeting of the year on January 12, 2019, the committee participated in a learning session framed the work of the committee in relation to the history of equity in education in the United States and in Oak Park, built a shared understanding of the IL Accelerated Act its implications and procedures in D97, illustrated MTSS and differentiated instruction to show how the needs of all students are met in the general education classrooms, and to shared with the committee gifted models in other districts, which they had some time to explore.

At the third and final meeting of the year on February 23, 2019 the day was spent diving deeper into the Madison

Wisconsin model of service for Advanced Learners, understanding D97's process and procedure for single and whole grade acceleration in reading and math, learning about the new job description for the GTD staff and the learning that will happen over the course of the 19-20 school year for that team as they will be re-applying for those roles in March or April of 2020 and finally discussing potential new names for the program. The committee began to look at names for the services moving forward. No decisions on the new name of the program were made this school year.

GTD and MTSS

Our Multi-Tiered System of Support (tiered approach to providing each student what they need academically and behaviorally) must be a system that serves the needs of all of our students. In the typical MTSS pyramid, the emphasis is on providing rigorous universal instruction to all students and meeting the needs of our learners who are close to or significantly behind performing at grade-level standards. We argue that this same tiered approach to organizing curriculum and instructional practices, monitoring of student progress, teacher collaboration, and tiered levels of services also applies to our learners who demonstrate they are ready to learn beyond current grade-level standards. The figure below is a graphic of the MTSS model that includes advanced learners.



It is important to note that for students who have Tier 2 and Tier 3 needs who are struggling to meet grade-level proficiency, the goal is to accelerate their learning so that their learning needs can be met entirely with Tier 1 instruction. For those students who are advanced learners, the goal is to continue to provide academic challenge and learning opportunities that leverage their skills, talents and promote growth. In general, students in Tier 2 on both sides of the diamond are served through differentiated practices within the classroom, provided by their general education teacher. Students in Tier 3 on both sides of the diamond often require the support of a specialist to deliver additional instruction.

In our research on programs that support the needs of advanced learners, we were interested in learning from school districts that demonstrated our commitment to dismantling systems that perpetuate inequities, especially inequities that exist across racial lines. Madison (Wisconsin) Metropolitan School District's Advanced Learning Department's vision to create and implement systems and structures that support the identification and development of students with advanced learning needs, with proactive attention to African American and Hispanic/Latinx students, was one program that resonated with us. Instruction for students with advanced learning needs is provided as part of a larger systemic approach with Multi-Tiered Systems and Supports and is reflected in the diamond MTSS model above. In their model, a subset of

advanced learners, students needing advanced interventions, are students who have been identified as advanced learners and require interventions beyond differentiated core instruction in order to meet their individual learning needs. Students identified under this category are those who require instruction beyond that which can be provided solely by the general education teacher in the grade level classroom (Tiers 2 and 3). A student identified as in need of an advanced intervention requires supplementing or replacing some or all grade level curriculum. The Madison staffing structure includes a half-time advanced learner teacher in each K-8 school who is responsible for co-planning with general education teachers/grade-level teams and providing direct support to a few students.

From GTD Teacher to Advanced Learning Specialist

As the GTD program evolves over the next several years, the role of the GTD teacher will need to evolve as well. As we continue to learn about Madison’s model for serving students on the right side of the MTSS diamond, we decided to model this teacher role after their work. The team has drafted a job description for a role we are tentatively titling Advanced Learning Specialist. The name of the role may change as the final name for GTD services is determined. To access the draft job description, please click [here](#).

To prepare our current GTD teachers for the interview and transition to the Advanced Learning Specialist role, we will be engaging consultant Lisa Westman for professional learning with the GTD teachers over the 2019-2020 school year. That professional learning will have two main components. The first is work that will occur in the summer of 2019. Lisa Westman, along with another curriculum development specialist, Lisa Donnelly, will work with a small group of GTD teachers to develop units of instruction for GTD teachers to implement in the 2019-2020 school year. These units would align with the general education curriculum, but provide enrichment and advanced learning opportunities that would be consistent, coherent, and cohesive across all eight elementary buildings. The second component of professional learning for GTD teachers is a professional learning community facilitated by Lisa Westman running from September 2019 to March 2020. This would include half-day learning sessions focused on a book study and the knowledge and skills necessary to take on the new Advanced Learning Specialist role. The professional learning with Lisa Westman would then continue into the 2020-2021 school year, with one to two full days of professional learning as a team, along with personalized coaching. A timeline of the professional learning and interview process is described below.

Date	Activity
February 2019	Meeting with current GTD teacher team, provided overview of role transition and professional learning, shared draft job description with team for feedback
July 2019	Unit development with Lisa Westman, Lisa Donnelly, and GTD teachers to implement cohesive units across all eight elementary buildings
September 2019 - March 2020	½ day of professional learning each month as a team, with Lisa Westman
October 2019	Additional input gathering on Advanced Learning Specialist job description from Ad Leadership (principal) team and other internal stakeholders
December 2019	Advanced Learning Specialist job description goes to Board of Education for discussion
January 2020	Advanced Learning Specialist job description approved by Board of Education
February 2020	Advanced Learning Specialist job posted
March 2020 - April 2020	Interviews for Advanced Learning Specialist

May 2020	Hiring decisions completed for Advanced Learning Specialist
September 2020 - May 2021	1-2 days of professional learning each month as a team with Lisa Westman
September 2020 - May 2021	Coaching with Lisa Westman

IL Accelerated Act

The Illinois Accelerated Placement Act was signed into law on August 25, 2017. This act requires Illinois public school districts to establish policies that provide equitable access to early entrance to kindergarten and first grade, subject acceleration and grade acceleration. An overview these areas of acceleration is provided below. The Illinois General Assembly full text of the Accelerated Placement Act may be accessed [here](#).

- Early Admission to Kindergarten:
 - Students enter kindergarten before they reach the minimum school entry age.
- Early Admission to First Grade:
 - Students attend first grade in their first year of school either by skipping kindergarten entirely or by moving from kindergarten to first grade within the student’s first school year.
- Subject Acceleration:
 - Students are placed in classes with older peers for a part of the day in one or more content areas. Students could physically move to a higher-level class for instruction , or they could use higher-level curricular materials within their original classroom.
- Whole Grade Acceleration:
 - Students are placed in a grade level ahead of chronological age peers.
- **Early Admissions ([D97 Handbook Available Here](#))**
- **Single Subject & Whole Grade Acceleration ([D97 Handbook Available Here](#))**

Next Steps

As we look to the future, we feel the GTD Ad Hoc Advisory Committee will need to continue to meet in the 2019-2020 school year to provide additional feedback on district planning for advanced learners. The frequency and format of the meetings is still to be determined.

In the 2019-2020 school year, GTD teachers will follow the schedule in the table below. Principals, as part of their master schedule design, will create more detailed schedules for individual GTD teachers. No additional staffing is needed at this time to meet the needs of students in this delivery model.

Grade	Model	Time
Rotate All Kindergarten & All First Grade Classrooms	Push-in	30-minutes/week 6 week rotation
All Second Grade Classrooms	Push-in	30-minutes/week
All Third Grade Classrooms (Math Enrichment)	Push-in	30-60 minutes/week

All Fourth Grade Classrooms (Math Enrichment)	Push-in	30-60 minutes/week
All Fifth Grade Classrooms (Math Enrichment)	Push-in	30-60 minutes/week
Third Grade (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving combining ELA, Math, Science and Social Sciences)	Pull-out small group	1 hour/week <i>If time permits</i>
Fourth & Fifth Grade (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving combining ELA, Math, Science and Social Sciences)	Pull-out small group	1 hour/week <i>If time permits</i>