

**BVPAGE Grade Level Q&A Sessions**  
**October 15, 2014**

**Elementary Session**

Susan Schuckman; Elementary School Liaison

Kristin Asquith; District Coordinator of Gifted Services

Mark Schmidt; Executive Director of Student Services

1. Are all projects in gifted class done with groups?
  - Class time in enrichment (gifted class) is generally split 50/50 between group projects and individual projects. The goals students set in their IEPs can help determine what projects they do in enrichment class. Sometimes an entire class will work on the same unit (rocketry or robotics) and students can work on different projects within the unit. The same goes for individual and group projects – sometimes a student can elect to work solo or they may choose to work with other students.
2. Do elementary gifted students have chance to interact with gifted students from other schools?
  - This is something the gifted teachers have been wanting and are searching for common areas where the students may work with each other. Currently there is a district-wide archaeology project that does include elementary gifted students from across the district. In addition the KU-Engineering department has a day for elementary schoolers to visit and the gifted students from all BV schools are invited. Parents are encouraged to include their students in outside activities and competitions that allow students to work/play with others.
  - A BVPAGE member asked the parents present that if we were to try and organize an after school social activity for elementary students, would there be interest. The parents attending said yes, there is interest for some kind of elementary gifted student activity.
3. Once in gifted program, do students have to test every year to stay in program?
  - No, once a student is accepted into the gifted program they do not have to re-test to stay in the program.
  - Every 3 years, the student is re-evaluated to make sure the gifted program is still necessary and relevant.
4. Should I use term “gifted” with my child/to my child?
  - Praise for gifted children should be handled like praise for any child: praise the effort and not necessarily the outcome. Gifted students sometimes find that being labeled as “smart” makes it hard for them to ask questions if they don’t understand something or to simply not try/do something if they can’t be perfect at it.
5. Social needs – how is this taught in gifted class? Does this apply to other areas also?
  - Social and emotional needs are one of the strands of curriculum in gifted education. While there is no day spent on ‘perfectionist’ or ‘underachieving’ the gifted teacher tries to apply these lessons as they occur on a day to day basis and on an individual basis. Working with students in smaller class settings allows the gifted teacher to address a particular problem /tendency/trait with a student without putting them on the spot in front of their peers. Addressing any social/emotional need through the gifted program can only benefit the student in all other areas of their life.

## **Middle School Session**

Kate Pepper; Middle School Liaison

Kristin Asquith; District Coordinator of Gifted Services

Mark Schmidt; Executive Director of Student Services

1. Are gifted classes in middle school mixed grades?
  - No, middle school gifted classes are made up of students from one grade only. The gifted teacher does his/her best to fit the make-up of the Guided Discovery (gifted) class(es) be beneficial to the number of students identified and the class periods available.
2. Are kids included in IEP meetings?
  - Yes, students are included in the IEP meetings and they have input into the goals and projects for the IEP.
3. When do IEP meetings take place?
  - IEP meetings take place all throughout the year and are required once a year depending on the initial date of the student entering the gifted ed program. A parent can request an update meeting or possibly change the date of their child's IEP meeting should all the supporting personnel be able to accomplish this.
  - Because IEPs and their goals span one year, they may encompass more than one school year. The goals are written to acknowledge and accommodate this.
4. Are there different IEP teachers per grade?
  - No, there is one gifted education teacher at each middle school and he/she is the gifted teacher for all 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in that school.
  - Different general education teachers will be present at a student's IEP meeting over the course of the years. The student will always have a current teacher present.
  - Our elementary, middle, and high school gifted liaisons are also gifted classroom teachers.
5. Are gifted teachers part of school conferences?
  - Yes, gifted teachers should be present during school conferences. Individual and team conferences can be requested by a parent/student and the gifted teacher will attend if possible.
6. What percentage of twice exceptional kids are there?
  - Kristin Asquith did not know an exact percentage of twice exceptional (students identified as both gifted and special needs) students. She thought there were approximately 100 or so twice exceptional IEPs in the entire school district. There would be a team to monitor and assist any twice exceptional student and the assigned 'case manager' would be in the point of contact for services.
7. Are their field trips for middle school gifted students?
  - There are field trips that are being evaluated for gifted students from different schools – finding common areas on interest that are worthwhile is an ongoing effort.
8. We need help with differentiation in the general education classrooms!
  - Some teachers are excellent at providing graduated or differentiated assignments but it seems to be teacher dependent. As a parent, you can request that your child be given more difficult/involved work without the teacher asking the student if that is ok. One parent volunteered that her child had been getting differentiated work and that the parent was unaware – all she knew was that her daughter was bringing home and working on class assignments!

- Some parents feel that they are being asked to provide differentiated projects or ideas for their students. Parents should begin discussions with the general education teacher directly and then if further action is needed, speak with the building principal.
- In the past, gifted ed teachers had been told to stay out of general ed classrooms. That is not the case anymore and the gifted ed teacher can be a resource to provide different ways of doing the same assignments as the general ed class population. Sometimes the parent needs to act as the go-between. But communication between parents and general education teachers is important – no one should assume the other knows what is and is not being offered.
- On other consideration that has parents divided is the grading for differentiated projects and ‘harder’ classes. If a student gets a harder/differentiated project but scores a lower grade on it, will the students/parent be upset? Some parents are focused on the learning and some on the GPA.

9. Are there skill level classes in middle school?

- There is one skill level graduated class called Math+ in middle school. It covers the same material as the regular math classes plus additional material.
- This is a lightning rod issue for parents of gifted students as there are no English +, Social Studies +, or Science + classes offered.

10. Gifted class is being used for assemblies and school seminars

- Parent wanted this issue brought up that time in gifted class is being used for other building assemblies. Sometimes student only getting gifted class once a week. Gifted class is important to students and they do not like time being used for other things.

11. Is there a way for middle school gifted teachers to talk to each other?

- Yes, gifted education teachers meet with each other on Professional Development days. All gifted ed teachers meet to discuss vertical requirements (what is needed from lower grades to succeed in higher grades) and level/grade specific requirements. All middle school gifted ed teachers meet with each other to discuss current projects, ‘best practices’, and to trade ideas.

## Middle School Session

Pam Fellingham; High School Liaison

Kristin Asquith; District Coordinator of Gifted Services

Mark Schmidt; Executive Director of Student Services

1. Are gifted ed classes mixed grade?
  - Yes, gifted class at the high school level generally has freshman, sophomore, juniors, and seniors. This has been a positive for many students – underclassmen can interact with upperclassmen in a smaller class setting and really get to know each other. They students learn so much from each other and find out what they need to do as they get older. The older students befriend and mentor the younger students.
2. Does my child lose their IEP if they don't take gifted class?
  - No, you will not lose your IEP if you do not take gifted class.
  - There are no requirements for taking gifted class but it is recommended that the student's try to fit it into their schedules. The gifted teacher is a great resource to students and can help them even if they are not currently in class.
  - A student taking gifted junior year can get help with studying and preparing for college entrance exams while a student taking gifted their senior year can get help applying for colleges and with application essays.
3. Can student take online course at same time as gifted class?
  - A student can take an online course at any time but officially should not be solely doing their online course work in gifted class
  - Some gifted classes have down-time where a student can work on other class assignments
4. Can you fit CAPS and gifted class in same semester?
  - Course load and course selection in high school is a matter of balance and preference. CAPS classes can take 2 to 3 class periods and gifted takes one class period. A student needs to work with their counselor and gifted teacher to find the best balance of course load and to ensure that all credits for graduation are being considered.
  - That being said, generally CAPS and gifted are not taken during the same semester though they can be taken during the same year if all the planning is done beforehand
5. Who helps student plan classes?
  - A student's counselor will help them plan their classes and the gifted ed teacher will also help plan for the gifted student's schedule and 'harder' track
6. 8<sup>th</sup> graders being told not to take honors courses! This should be different advice for gifted students!
  - When 8<sup>th</sup> graders are introduced to the idea of picking their own classes, they are often told by counselors to NOT take multiple honors classes. This advice is generally *not true* for gifted students. Gifted students need the rigor and harder classes that they may not have encountered previously. Discussing the options with the middle school and high school gifted teachers is a suggestion for anyone with individual questions. All parents should attend the information session help by the high school gifted teacher when transition meetings start to take place at the end of their student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.
7. How are gifted students assigned to high school counselors?
  - High school students generally are assigned to counselors alphabetically by last name. This ensures that a counselor will have all members of a family as his/her responsibility.
8. PSAT should be taken in what grade?

- BVPAGE is a great place to find out what recommended actions are for gifted students. Sophomores should be registered (via the online student registration system) for the PSAT. There is a small fee associated with the test. As a sophomore, the PSAT is a 'practice' for when they take the test as juniors when the scores are important. The PSAT test scores can qualify students for National Merit Scholarships.
- Freshman take a practice ACT test (no fee)
- Sophomores should take the PSAT (fee)
- Juniors should take the PSAT (fee) as this qualifies them for scholarships
- Juniors generally take the ACT and SAT during this school year
- BVPAGE parents are a great resource to help with taking what when, test prep, and test registration.

9. Is there an end to when students are identified?

- No, there is no 'stop age' or 'stop date' as to when students may be identified for the gifted program. There may be students that were not previously identified or students that move into BV from other areas.

10. BVPAGE advocacy and high school math class

- BVPAGE is an advocacy group for parents and gifted students. Part of what we do is based on what is needed. For many years any student that skipped a grade in math class got to their senior year in high school and had no match class to take. Over a long period of time, BVPAGE worked with the school district and pushed for an additional math class for these students. There currently is 1 math class (Calculus BC) available for any student who accelerated a year of school or a year of math.
- Please bring any issues, observations, or concerns to BVPAGE for the benefit of our students, the gifted teachers, or the gifted program.

## Additional Questions not Answered During Sessions

1. How can we inspire the kids to have more/higher motivation?
  - Parents of gifted kids need to find what motivates their child – if they don't like math but love baseball, have them figure out current math using baseball statistics or analogies. Find what they love and give them access to it outside of the school day. Use an IEP goal to create opportunity to something they like. But gifted kids need to be taught how to do things they don't want to do -- you have to "pay your dues" before you get to move on.
  - Motivation is complex for all students; tapping into student interests can have an impact. Create a reward system for effort and hard work using the interest areas for motivation. Also, help students see the impact that their current work has on their future plans; that often affects intrinsic motivation.
2. Typically, how many gifted students are in each elementary school?
  - It depends on each building population and student group. The percentage is approximately 8% of district population
  - Each elementary school serves any students identified as gifted within the school; the number varies from school to school and year to year.
3. What can parents do to help gifted education?
  - Get involved everywhere you can. BVPAGE is a great way to stay involved and receive first hand information. Ask your child's gifted teacher if there is anything you can do or provide. Gifted ed isn't just in Gifted classroom. Communicate often with gen ed teachers and let them know about your child's strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Encourage differentiated work or ask teacher to simply give it to student without asking him/her. Encourage contact with gifted teacher for ideas and suggestions.
4. Are there any assessments or evaluations at the end of each year?
  - Not sure what this question is specifically asking – MAP or assessments from gifted? OR even end of year gifted evaluation IEP goal progress report?
  - For kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, MAP testing is done in the fall and spring each year. Kansas assessments are given in several subjects to specific grade levels, but these assessments are typically completed throughout second semester during the state's testing time frame. High school students participate in numerous practice and official tests related to the ACT and SAT throughout high school. High school students also participate in state assessments at the grade levels and in the disciplines required by the state of Kansas. There are not specific standardized tests given via the gifted program for students in gifted education; students identified as gifted participate in the same testing requirements as all students.
5. Can you share the data on the students with his/her parents?
  - Student data can be shared with parents; contact the classroom teacher, guidance counselor, school psychologist, or principal to discuss student data. One of these individuals will direct parents to the staff member who can discuss specific data points.