



Berkeley Heights Public Schools Gifted and Talented Program

Program Overview

The New Jersey Department of Education requires that each school district provide services to meet the needs of students who have been identified as gifted and talented. Each school district must establish a process to identify students as gifted and talented using multiple measures. These students require modification to their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities (*N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1*). The Berkeley Heights Public School District addresses the needs of our gifted and talented students through a variety of educational opportunities, each addressed in this document.

Gifted and Talented Students

What is “giftedness?” According to the National Association for Gifted Children, giftedness includes students with gifts and talents who perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Students with gifts and talents:

- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential
- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally
- Are functioning above grade level and at the superior range in one or more areas

We recognize that we have many highly capable students in Berkeley Heights whose needs are met through our multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS/NJTSS) and by teachers who differentiate the curriculum using a variety of instructional strategies. Among our highly capable students, there may be 1% to 5% who demonstrate truly superior ability when compared to their chronological peers, and are functioning well above grade level. These students are in the top tier in relation to the national and local norms.

Differentiated Instruction

The most effective strategy to meet the needs of all students and address the specific needs and talents of exceptionally able students is to differentiate instruction. Teachers in all grades, from Kindergarten through grade 12, and in all subject areas possess the skills and resources to differentiate instruction for students. At the elementary level, the Assistant Superintendent and Content Area Specialists provide guidance, support, resources, and expertise to help classroom teachers design instruction and modify curriculum to provide a challenging learning environment for all of their students. Student performance data is utilized to compact specific students out of mastered standards. Students are also provided extension learning activities in the form of classroom-based enrichment experiences aligned to the curriculum.

Elementary Enrichment

At the elementary level the English Language Arts curriculum (Reading, Writing and Spelling) and mathematics curriculum are designed to meet the needs of all students and in particular to address the needs of the exceptionally able students. Reading, writing, and spelling instruction is based on ongoing assessment that permits the students to progress at his or her own rate of learning. "Readers and Writers Workshops" are individualized for each student and teach the student a wide range of genre studies in both reading and writing via the Berkeley Heights Units of Study. Reading assessments and writing rubrics enable the teacher to specify learning objectives based on students' needs and progress. Spelling lists are differentiated based on each child's individual developmental spelling level.

Our Mathematics programs offer students a differentiated component to meet the needs of the most talented students. Open-ended questions, more challenging assessments and enrichment activities are included in the math curriculum and are designed to extend mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

The Visual and Performing Arts curriculum provides elementary students with numerous opportunities to engage in art projects, play in the band or orchestra, sing in the chorus, and perform in concerts and assemblies at the building and district level. Building and district physical education and field days offer students an opportunity to engage in athletic competition.

If a student exceeds modifications that are offered through differentiation, then the building principal and specialists may suggest alternative opportunities to address the student's needs.

Additional enrichment opportunities include the following:

- In grades 3, 4 and 5 classroom teachers, library/media specialists, the computer teacher, and our HEIGHTS/ G&T/QUEST teacher combine resources to introduce students to research protocols. Students use research skills to explore

topics of interest in science, Social Studies, technology and determine how they wish to present their research. Exceptionally able students can pursue their topics in greater detail and complexity as their interests and skills permit.

- Our Heights Program (Having Each Individual Gain Higher-level Thinking Skills) incorporates enriching STEAM lessons, and Project/Problem based learning tasks in all classes in grades K-5.
- Our WIN (What I Need) cycles are classes that are built into the daily schedule to give students learning opportunities that address the needs of our exceptionally capable students, along with the needs of all our learners.
- iReady is an online platform that every child, grades K-5, uses as part of his/her learning program. The platform embeds “diagnostic assessments” and creates individualized learning pathways for each child, so that whatever level a child is working at, he/she/they will be tasked with specific lessons that are on that child’s level. The iReady digital lessons are designed to enrich students in both Reading and Math.

Identification of Exceptional Students

In order to identify exceptionally able students, we must use multiple measures and criteria. For many students, classroom performance is a first measure of exceptional ability. These students are often identified at an early age in elementary school as having a specific ability that exceeds chronological peers. As students progress, the processes become more formalized as data, assessments, and other forms of information are used to identify exceptionally able students. The purpose of identifying these students is to be able to differentiate instruction effectively, modify curriculum to meet their needs, and to propose a range of opportunities that may be challenging, intellectually stimulating, and satisfying.

For Twice-Exceptional Students (IEP/504 Plans), in addition to the multiple measures used, the child study team will refer to the Gifted & Talented Advisory Committee any student they individually assess who has an IQ score in the high range on any one of the subtests of the intelligence testing performed. The Gifted and Talented Committee is a part of each school’s data team, and is made up of the Assistant Superintendent, the district Gifted and Talented teacher, the classroom teacher, Child Study Team members, and additional school data team members. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered during the data team meetings.

For English Language Learners (ELLs), classroom teachers will work closely with the ELL teacher to develop ways to identify gifted English Language Learners. Teachers will look at growth and behaviors as well as achievement and aptitude scores when considering ELL students for gifted services. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

At the elementary level the provisions for identifying gifted and talented students include the following:

- Teacher identification through classroom performance
- Classroom assessments in reading, writing and mathematics
- iReady district assessments in ELA and Math
- District benchmark assessments in ELA and Math
- High interest or ability levels in visual or performing arts or athletics
- Exceptional level of achievement in standardized testing (i.e. top 1–3%) on New Jersey Student Learning Assessment in ELA and Math (grades 3-5)
- NJ Start Strong Assessment (where given) - For the school year 2021 - 2022: Top 1-3%
- Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment (K-5)
- Student holistic student profile - looking at the “whole child”

Specific Criteria used for the QUEST Program (pull-out G&T classes in grades 4 and 5)

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogATs) - administered in grade 3 and again in grade 5
 - Composite score of 135 or higher
- NJ Start Strong Assessment (where given) - For the school year 2021 - 2022: Math score of 23 or higher, and ELA score of 17 or higher
- NJ Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA) - Highest level in ELA and Math = “Exceeded Expectations/Level 5”
- Teacher recommendations (see form below)
- iReady Diagnostic Assessment - Given three times per year
 - Score above grade level in Math with a score higher than 540.
 - Score above grade level in English Language Arts (Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary) with a score higher than 640.
- In-house Digital Benchmark Assessment - Given three times per year
 - Score “above grade level” in Math
 - Score “above grade level” in English Language Arts (Reading, Writing, and Vocabulary)
- Student Writing Samples/Student Writing Portfolio
- Fountas and Pinnell Reading Assessment - Administered by the classroom teacher in a one-on-one setting, three times per year
 - For grade 4 - reading above grade level in the T-V range
 - For grade 5 - reading above grade level in the W-Z range
- Developmental Spelling Assessment - Score in the above grade level range:
 - For grades 3 and 4 -Middle to Late Syllable and Affix Stage
 - For grade 5 - Derivational Relations Stage
- Class grades: A+ or A in ELA - Reading and Writing, and Math