SPARTA TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gifted and Talented Education Comprehensive Program Manual

Board Adopted August 27, 2020

Board Reviewed August 24, 2023

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Developed 8/14/20 - Updated 7/2021

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Preface

Sparta Township Public Schools is committed to providing program and curricular options to meet the unique needs of the gifted and talented students. This manual provides the official policies, processes, and procedures for organizing, operating, and evaluating the gifted and talented educational services. The gifted and talented education program outlined is referred to as the Sparta Township Enrichment Program (S.T.E.P.).

Gifted & Talented Education Policy ([District](#) & [State](#))

District Policy

In accordance with district policy, the Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to identify gifted and talented students within the school district and to provide these students with appropriate instructional adaptations and services. To that end, the Board directs each such student in the school district to be identified and offered an appropriate educational program and services.

For purposes of this Policy, "gifted and talented students" means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

The Superintendent will develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environments.

The Superintendent will develop procedures for an ongoing Kindergarten through grade twelve identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures. Multiple measures may include, but are not limited to, achievement test scores; grades; student performance or products; intelligence testing; parent, student, and/or teacher recommendation; and other appropriate measures. The identification methodology will be developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered by the district. The identification procedures will be reviewed annually.

The Superintendent will take into consideration the Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Twelve Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students. The educational program offered to gifted and talented students will encourage and challenge them in the specific areas of their abilities, but will not replace the core instructional program of the various grades

of this district. The program offered to gifted and talented students may include, but are not limited to, pull-out programs; classroom differentiated instruction; acceleration; flexible pacing; compacted curriculum; distance learning; advanced classes; or individual programs infused into the student's regular instructional program, provided that a written description of the infusion has been prepared and filed in the student's record.

Programs for gifted and talented students will be periodically evaluated for their continuing efficacy and adjusted accordingly.

The parent of any student identified as gifted or talented shall be consulted regarding any program designed to address the student's particular needs.

New Jersey Statutes and Regulations

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3

"Gifted and talented students" means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

"Instructional adaptation" means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling students with disabilities, ELLs, or students in alternative education programs or who are gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and/or demonstrate knowledge and application of the NJSLS.

6A:8-3.1(a) Curriculum and instruction

District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the NJSLS and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for ELLs, for students enrolled in alternative education programs, and for students who are gifted and talented.

6A:8-3.1(a)(5)

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

1. District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures.
2. District boards of education shall provide appropriate kindergarten through grade-12 (K-12) educational services for gifted and talented students.

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3. District boards of education shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment.
4. District boards of education shall take into consideration the Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students.

6A:8-3.1(c)

District boards of education shall be responsible for the review and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction based upon changes in knowledge, technology, assessment results, and modifications to the NJSLS, according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-2.

1. District boards of education shall include interdisciplinary connections throughout the K-12 curriculum.
2. District boards of education shall integrate into the curriculum 21st century themes and skills.
    3. District boards of education shall provide the time and resources to develop, review, and enhance interdisciplinary connections, supportive curricula, and instructional tools for helping students acquire required knowledge and skills.
    The tools include, but are not limited to the following:
        1. A pacing guide;
        2. A list of core instructional materials, including various levels of texts at each grade level;
        3. Benchmark assessments; and
        4. Modifications for special education students, for ELLs in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15, for students at risk of school failure, and for gifted students.

6A:13-2.1(a) Standards-based instruction

All school districts shall implement a coherent curriculum for all students, including English language learners (ELLs), gifted and talented students and students with disabilities, that is content-rich and aligned to the most recent revision of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). The curriculum shall guide instruction to ensure that every student masters the NJSLS. Instruction shall be designed to engage all students and modified based on student performance. Such curriculum shall include:

1. Interdisciplinary connections throughout;
2. Integration of 21st century skills;
3. A pacing guide;
4. A list of instructional materials, including various levels of text at each grade;
5. Benchmark assessments; and

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6. Modifications for special education students, for English language learners in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15, and for gifted students

Components of the Program

2019 Gifted Programming Standards published by the National Association for Gifted Children

Learning and Development - Educators create learning environments for gifted students that encourage awareness and understanding of interests, strengths, and needs. Students' cognitive growth and social-emotional skill development in school are actively developed.

Assessment- Students with gifts and talents are identified for services using multiple measures. The data received from assessment is then utilized to match instruction with students' interests, strengths, and needs.

Curriculum Planning and Instruction- Educators ensure that students with gifts and talents demonstrate academic growth commensurate with their abilities each school year; students with gifts and talents are given opportunities to demonstrate their potential or level of achievement in their areas of talent and/or areas of interest; students with gifts and talents are given opportunities to become independent investigators; students with gifts and talents develop knowledge and skills for living in and contributing to a diverse and global society. (See Curricular Adaptations section for specific examples.)

Learning Environments- Learning environments foster a love for learning, personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership to ensure specific student outcomes.

Programming- Educators use evidence-based practices to promote cognitive, social-emotional, and psychosocial skill development of students with gifts and talents. Programming meets students' interests, strengths, and needs.

Student Identification Process & Criteria

Students are screened and identified based on the eligibility criteria for their grade noted below. Students may also be referred to the STEP committee by any stakeholder(s) for review.

For eligible students, parents/guardians are notified of acceptance into the program. Parents/Guardians do not need to consent for participation, however they can request to opt out of the program if they do not wish for their child to participate.

Students can only be evaluated for the program once per academic year.

GRADES K - 8

SCREENING/IDENTIFICATION:
- End of Kindergarten, ongoing through Grade 2
- End of Grade 2, ongoing through Grade 5
- End of Grade 5, ongoing through Grade 8
- Students whose total matrix scores fall within the top 5% will be eligible for services.
- Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students (SAGES-3) is used as an additional measurement for students in the top 6-10% of point total
- Kindergarten and new student entering the district - Parent/Teacher referral SAGES-3 (unless CoGat score available)

STAR Screening Assessment (starting with the top 10% of each grade level)			
Math Screening (Scaled Score)	1 Point Top 6-10%	2 Points Top 3-5%	3 Points Top 2%
Reading Screening (Scaled Score)	1 Point Top 6-10%	2 Points Top 3-5%	3 Points Top 2%
Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)			
Verbal	1 Point 126-130	2 Points 131-135	3 Points 136+
Quantitative	1 Point 126-130	2 Points 131-135	3 Points 136+
Non-Verbal	1 Point 126-130	2 Points 131-135	3 Points 136+
SAGES-3 (Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students) *Given to K-5 students who fall in the 6-10% range of their grade level on the above matrix, students referred for evaluation, and students who are new to the district (unless CogAT score available). Given to grades 6-8 students who are referred or new to the district. Eligibility for students who take SAGES-3*			

Composite Indexes	Possibly Gifted	Likely Gifted	Very Likely Gifted
is based solely on those results using the table below. **minimum of 5 points needed to enter the program.*			
Nonverbal Reasoning	1 Point 110- 119	2 Points 120- 129	3 Points >129
Language Arts/Social Studies	1 Point 110- 119	2 Points 120- 129	3 Points >129
Verbal Reasoning	1 Point 110- 119	2 Points 120- 129	3 Points >129
Mathematics/Science	1 Point 110- 119	2 Points 120- 129	3 Points >129

Twice Exceptional Students(IEP/504 Plans)

In addition to the multiple measures already used, the child study team will refer to the Gifted & Talented District 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. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

ELL Students

Classroom teachers will work closely with the district ELL teacher to develop ways to identify gifted English language learners. Teachers look at growth and behaviors as well as achievement and aptitude scores when considering ELL students for gifted services. All gifted & talented testing of ELL students will be done in the student's native language. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

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GRADES 9-12

SCREENING/IDENTIFICATION:
- Students will be identified based on previous eligibility in the secondary program. For new students, both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

Individualized Pupil Learning Opportunities
According to N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-5.1 a (2) ii district boards of education must establish a process for granting of credits through successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement in meeting or exceeding the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) at the high school level. Such programs or assessments may occur all or in part prior to a student's high school enrollment. Please contact the Sparta High School Guidance Department for additional information.

Course Waiver
In addition to the criteria below, a waiver process is in place that allows students and parents to waive a student into a course, in consultation with their school counselor and dept supervisor.

General criteria for placement into other high school honors and AP courses:

Students entering 9th grade must meet the following criteria to gain access to the honors program:
- Teacher recommendation
- Minimum 93 class average in prerequisite courses for the first three marking periods.

High school students enrolled in a college preparatory (CP) course seeking admission to the Honors/AP program must meet the following requirements:
- Teacher recommendation
- Minimum 93 class average in prerequisite college preparatory course for the first three marking periods.

Students enrolled in an Honors course seeking admission to an AP course must meet the following requirements:
- Teacher Recommendation
- Minimum 73 average for the year to continue in the Honors and/or AP program. Any change in a student's academic status requires department evaluation.

Criteria for placement into 9th grade honors math:

Honors Algebra: Completion of Pre-Algebra 8 with an average of 93% or higher and a strong teacher recommendation.

Honors Geometry: Completion of CP Algebra with an average of 93% or higher and a strong teacher recommendation or completion of Honors Algebra 8 with an average of 90% or higher and a teacher recommendation.

<u>Honors Algebra 2</u>**:** Completion of Honors Geometry with an average of 90% or higher and a strong teacher recommendation.

Note: Recommendations to go beyond these accelerated placements may be made on an individual basis to address the specific needs of students.

GRADES 9 - 12, STEM ACADEMY

Upon application to the SHS STEM Academy and completion of the Science Skills assessment, the following rubric will be completed. The highest a student can score on the rubric will be a 28. To be considered, a student must score a minimum of 23. In order for students to remain within the SHS STEM Academy during their career, they must maintain honors/AP eligibility. (Students must obtain a 73 or better in their core honors/AP classes to move up to the next honors/AP course in the sequence). Students who fall below honors/AP criteria will be placed on academic probation. Retention will be determined by the STEM Academy Review board on a case by case basis.

CRITERIA	4	3	2	1
Math Performance	96-100 average in Honors Algebra 96-100 average in Honors Geometry 98-100 average in Pre-Algebra	94-95 average in Honors Algebra 94-95 average in Honors Geometry 96-97 average in Pre-Algebra	91-93 average in Honors Algebra 91-93 average in Honors Geometry 94-95 average in Pre-Algebra	90 and below average in Honors Algebra 90 and below average in Honors Geometry 93 and below in Pre-Algebra
Science Performance	98-100 average in Science	96-97 average in Science	94-95 average in Science	93 and below average in Science
Performance on Science Skills Assessment	91 – 100 final score on Science Skills Assessment	81 – 90 final score on Science Skills Assessment	74 – 80 final score on Science Skills Assessment	73 and below score on Science Skills Assessment
Teacher Recommendation Rubric	24-25 on Teacher Recommendation	21-23 on Teacher Recommendation	18-20 on Teacher Recommendation	17 or below on Teacher Recommendation

Discipline Record	No Infractions	One Infraction	Two Infractions	Three or More Infractions
Attendance	98 -100% Attendance	91-97% Attendance	86-90% Attendance	85% or below Attendance
Eligibility for Honors ELA and Honors SS	Yes for both			No, or only eligible for one

GRADES 9 - 12, Humanities Academy
Upon application to the SHS HUMANITIES Academy and completion of the assessment, the following rubric will be completed. The highest a student can score on the rubric will be a 32. To be considered, a student must score a minimum of 26.

CRITERIA	4	3	2	1
ELA Performance	100% - 98% average	97% - 93% average	-	-
History Performance	100% - 98% average	97% - 93% average	-	-
Lexile level based on STAR assessment	Above 1350	1300 - 1349	1250 - 1299	Below 1249
Performance of a stimulus-based prompt	91-100 final score on assessment	81-90 final score on assessment	74-80 final score on assessment	73 and below score on final assessment
Teacher Recommendations	24-25 on teacher recommendation.	21-23 on teacher recommendation	18-20 on teacher recommendation	17 or below teacher recommendation
Discipline Record	No infractions	One infractions	Two infractions	Three+ infractions
Attendance	98% - 100% attendance	91% - 97% attendance	86% - 90% attendance	85% or below attendance
Eligibility for Honors Math and Science	YES	--	--	No or only eligible for one

Service Plan

Service plans are developed based on the individual needs of students in the Gifted and Talented Education Program.

Grades K-2

Kindergarten - Students in kindergarten are monitored throughout the year. Extraordinary cases are reviewed and pull-out STEP eligibility is determined on a case by case basis.

First Grade - Students in first grade who have qualified for pull-out STEP receive services twice a week for the length of one class period each day. Services during these sessions are provided by the K-2 STEP teacher. The sessions typically take place in the STEP classroom and include all students in that grade level who have qualified for services.

Second Grade - Students in second grade who have qualified for services receive pull out STEP services three times per week for the length of one class period each day. Services during these sessions are provided by the K-2 STEP teacher. The sessions typically take place in the STEP classroom and include all students in that grade level who have qualified for services.

Differentiated Instruction - is provided by the classroom teacher to identified gifted students through core classroom instruction, and cluster grouping allows for them to collaborate on standards-based enrichment. Students will be pre-tested for proficiency of skills and concepts being presented in the classroom. Those who demonstrate mastery will receive appropriate differentiated instruction. A guideline will be recommended to classroom teachers by the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee.

Accelerated Math - is offered to all advanced math students in grades K-12 based on a criteria established by the Math Department. Students in **grades K-2** will have access to daily enrichment opportunities based on individual needs, in addition parent/teacher initiation may prompt early screening consideration. Certified district support staff can provide acceleration support.This is not the gifted and talented program, and it is accessible to students who meet the eligibility criteria. The math supervisor for grades K-5 is the contact person. For additional information please see the [math acceleration rubric](#). Recommendations to go beyond the traditional grade level placements for individual subjects, or to skip an entire grade level, may be made on an individual basis to address the needs of students. These decisions are not specific to the gifted and talented department. They are made by committee in collaboration with academic departments, involving parents, teachers, supervisors, and building administrators. *All acceleration opportunities for grade skipping must be determined by July 31st. After July 31st*, with the exception of students new to the district, students will not qualify for math acceleration for the upcoming school year.* [Sparta Acceleration Policy](#)

Grades 3-5

Pull-Out Support Class
Students identified as gifted and talented by the aforementioned matrices receive pull-out services between 2-4 periods per week. Students receiving services participate in above grade level interest-based activities designed to engage them in active problem-finding and problem-solving and research. Pull-out services for identified students provide opportunities for making connections within and across systems of knowledge by focusing on issues, themes, and ideas.

All pullout classes focus on critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, original product creation and personal interests. At the start of each school year, students are given interest surveys to assist the teacher of pullout gifted programs in providing a variety of course choices focused on their interests and talents.

Differentiated Instruction - is provided by the classroom teacher to identified gifted students through core classroom instruction and cluster grouping. Students can be pre-tested for proficiency of skills and concepts being presented in the classroom. Those who demonstrate mastery will receive appropriate differentiated instruction. A guideline will be recommended to classroom teachers by the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee.

Accelerated Math - is offered to all advanced math students in grades K-12 based on a criteria established by the Math Department. *Students entering **grade 3** will have access to daily enrichment opportunities based on individual needs, in addition parent/teacher initiation may prompt early screening consideration. Students entering **grades 4-5** will have access to daily enrichment opportunities based on individual needs, in addition parent/teacher initiation may prompt early screening consideration. The top 5% of all 4th and 5th grade students based on STAR and NJSLA data will be screened for math acceleration considerations at the end of each school year. All acceleration opportunities for grade skipping must be determined by July 31st. After July 31st*, with the exception of students new to the district, students will not qualify for math acceleration for the upcoming school year.* Certified district support staff can provide acceleration support. This is not a gifted and talented program, and it is accessible to all students who meet the eligibility criteria. The math supervisor for grades K-5 is the contact person. For additional information please see the [math acceleration rubric](#). Recommendations to go beyond the traditional grade level placements for individual subjects, or to skip an entire grade level, may be made on an individual basis to address the needs of students. These decisions are not specific to the gifted and talented department. They are made by committee in collaboration with academic departments, involving parents, teachers, supervisors, and building administrators. [Sparta Acceleration Policy](#)
*In addition a midyear review will be conducted in order to determine if a student is eligible for enrichment through curriculum compacting.

Grades 6-8

Pullout Support Class
Students identified for pullout gifted classes in grades 6, 7, and 8 are scheduled during two physical education classes per week. The content of these courses is also available in Google Classroom, so that students are able to continue their course study and projects at home or during extra time in school. Students with like interests are grouped together, so they have the opportunity to research, problem-solve, and create in a collaborative environment.

All pullout classes focus on critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, original product creation and personal interests. At the start of each school year, students are given interest surveys to assist the teacher of pullout gifted programs in providing a variety of course choices focused on their interests and talents. Each marking period, students are given an opportunity to make new course choices.

Differentiated Instruction is provided by the classroom teacher to gifted students in the regular core academic classrooms, and cluster grouping allows for them to collaborate on standards-based enrichment. Students will be pre-tested for proficiency of skills and concepts being presented in the classroom. Those who demonstrate mastery will receive appropriate differentiated instruction. A guideline will be provided to classroom teachers by the gifted and talented district committee.

Accelerated Math - offered to all advanced math students in grades 6-8 based on a criteria established by the Math Department. This is not a gifted and talented program, but it is accessible to all gifted and talented students who meet the eligibility criteria. The math supervisor for grades K-12 is the contact person for additional information. For additional information please see the [math acceleration rubric](#).

Accelerated Math Courses:
      Grade 6: Accelerated Math
      Grade 7: PreAlgebra, Algebra I or Geometry
      Grade 8: Geometry or Algebra II

Recommendations to go beyond the traditional grade level placements for individual subjects, or to skip an entire grade level, may be made on an individual basis to address the needs of students. These decisions are not specific to the gifted and talented department. They are made by committee in collaboration with academic departments, involving parents, teachers, supervisors, and building administrators.

GRADES 9 - 12

Students identified as gifted and talented learners in secondary grades will receive academic instruction at the *honors and/or advanced placement* level in all major content areas and in specialized courses as identified in the *[Sparta High School Course Catalog](#)*. Advanced

coursework affords students the opportunity to master accelerated curriculum as well as earn college credits through [concurrent enrollment](#). Students at the secondary level also have access to a wide variety of co-curricular clubs designed to meet the needs of specific interests and talents.

Honors Courses
Sparta High School offers honors courses in the Sciences, Social Studies, English, Art, Music, World Languages, and Computer Programming.

College Board Advanced Placement Courses
Sparta offers the following Advanced Placement Courses: English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Economics, Statistics, Computer Science A, Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics C: Mechanics/Lab, United States History, U.S. Government and Politics, Art History, Psychology, European History, Studio Art, Music Theory, French, German, Spanish, as well as the AP Capstone Program which includes AP Seminar and AP Research.

STEM Academy
Biomedical Engineering, Engineering and Design, and Computer Sciences

Humanities Academy
Letters, Public Administration, and Social Sciences

Challenger Program
In partnership with the County College of Morris and Sussex County Community College, high-achieving juniors and seniors have the opportunity to take college courses while still at Sparta High School. Juniors may only take evening session courses outside of the regular school day, while seniors have the option of taking either day or evening courses.

Co-Curricular Clubs - Descriptions can be found in the activities section of the SHS website: [List of Clubs and Descriptions](#).

Curricular Adaptations

K-2 Curricular Adaptations

The STEP program at the first and second grade level focuses on an interdisciplinary curriculum that allows students advanced opportunities based on interests. Students participate in a process that is research/product driven and encourages in-depth and independent learning. The program allows students to broaden their knowledge through hands-on, research-based cooperative learning experiences. Many of the activities allow students to readily see

complexities and connections to the real world. The activities and projects completed during STEP promote complex and abstract thinking.

Examples of current areas of focus can be found here. These activities change yearly based on student interest and the newest technology available:

- **code.org**- Students have accounts and work through a variety of the programs offered.

- **WeDo 2.0 Lego Coding** - WeDo 2.0 strengthens students' understanding of science and computing practices, including asking questions and solving problems; modeling; prototyping; investigating; analyzing and interpreting data; computational thinking; creating evidence-based arguments; and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information.

- **Wonder Workshop Dash and Dot Robot** - Dash is a real robot that responds to voice commands or any of our five free downloadable apps to sing, draw, and move around. It's more than learning to code. Dash lets kids explore loops, events, conditions, and sequences and see how they result in Dash's real-life movements.

- **Educating Young Engineers (EYE) LEGO Program** - Educating Young Engineers seeks to provide every child with access to hands-on/minds-on engineering education.

- **Trout in the Classroom** - Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is a science-based program that teaches children about the importance of coldwater conservation through a hands-on approach to learning. Through the process of raising rainbow trout from eggs to fingerlings, the size they are at release time, students learn about the importance of clean, cold water, not only for the rainbow trout we are raising, but also for other organisms, including people. The TIC program is cross-curricular and can encompass many subject areas, such as science, math, art, language arts, reading, technology, music, and more.

- **STEAM** (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts & Math)- Students participate in multiple STEAM challenges throughout the school year. They also participate in the Alpine STEAM Olympics which is a schoolwide event including all special area classes and a range of STEAM related challenges.

- **Typing** -is introduced to students during STEP class. Students continue their program in their general education.

- **Google Classroom** - Students learn to locate assignments, post, and communicate with peers through Google Classroom.

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- **Google Drive** - Students learn how to navigate and use Google Drive to create, save, and share documents.

- **Countywide Math Competitions** - Students have accounts on www.sumdog.com and compete at least once a year in a countywide Sumdog math contest.

- **Stop Motion Animation** - Students use the app to learn the basics of stop motion animation. Students create a video used to help educate their peers about one character education trait. Students use stop motion animation to be introduced to green screen technology using Stik Bots.

- **Commercial Design and Filming** - Students create commercials to promote Alpine Elementary School. They write the narrative piece, take pictures around the building of the specific areas being discussed in their narrative, and finally use iMovie to merge the pictures, voice recording, and music to create a commercial.

- **Countywide Field Trip** - This event invites 2nd-4th graders to participate in a countywide field trip based on coding and technology.

GRADES 3 - 5 Curricular Adaptations

Identified STEP students have the opportunity to choose enrichment courses created by the STEP specialist or create their own individual learning plan through an Independent Study opportunity.

As the student population changes and new technology is available, the STEP teacher will adapt the enrichment courses to meet the needs and interests of the identified students.

Sample courses may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **The Stock Market Game**
  The Stock Market Game is an online simulation game where students are given $100,000 to invest over a period of 5 months. In this course, students will build a fundamental understanding of investing while learning with real-world skills and practice in math, English language arts, economics, social studies, and other subjects. Students will have the opportunity to meet with a professional stock analyst for advice and inspiration.

- **Create Bravely**
  Students will participate in activities that require them to actively seek out new ideas and experiences, to see familiar things in new and different ways, to use both analytic and holistic thinking, and to make, think or do things that haven't been made, thought or done before.

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- **World Explorers - Developing Global Connections**
  In this course students will explore the 5 themes of geography through connections with classrooms around the world, activities within their own classroom, and virtual field trips. This class will focus on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and how students can make an impact locally and globally.

- **WordMasters**
  In this course students will prepare for the [WordMasters](#) contest which addresses higher-level word comprehension and verbal reasoning in two ways:
    - It bases the analogies on special vocabulary lists, developed for each grade and difficulty level by experienced teachers, which participants study before each meet.
    - It challenges students to complete analogies based on relationships among words they have learned.

- **Math Olympiad**
  In this course students explore higher-level math concepts in preparation for the [Math Olympiad](#) contests. These contests are dedicated to stimulating enthusiasm, fostering creativity, and strengthening intuition in mathematical problem solving.

- **Number Ninjas**
  This class is similar to the Math Olympiad course without the competition aspect.

- **Philosophy for Kids**
  In this course students will discuss philosophical ideas through literature. Students participate in the [Philosophy Slam](#) in March.

Great Debaters
  Students in this course will analyze different debate formats and participate in debates with classmates.

- **Engineering is Elementary**
  [EiE engineering design challenges](#) show students how what they learn in school connects with the world around them. Most EiE activities involve small-group work that encourages students to consider more than one solution or idea and work collaboratively. All EiE curricula develop students' communication skills and encourage them to share ideas in several ways: speaking, writing, drawing, and building. EiE's engineering design challenges engage students in inquiry. As they analyze their own data and make decisions about their design, students engage with content, hone their critical-thinking skills, and take ownership of their learning.

- **The Biggest, Baddest Book Club**
  A book club for avid, high-level, inquisitive readers.

- **Independent Study/Genius Hour**
  In this course students will develop their own plan for learning.

- **Neuroscience for Kids**
  In this course students will explore the world of neuroscience through experiments, models, simulations, & dissections. They will meet with visiting scientists and prepare Brain Awareness Week lessons for the greater school population.

- **Creative Writing**
  In this course students will explore creative techniques modeled by acclaimed writers. Students will write for pleasure, experimentation, and publication.

- **Rube Goldberg**
  Students in this class will learn about Rube Goldberg, research simple machines, and design an overly complicated complex machine to perform a simple task.

- **Computer Science Fundamentals**
  In this class students learn how the Internet works, basic computer programming, and navigate through activities that require logic, problem solving, and creativity. Students will apply what they learn in the Computer Science Fundamentals Course to various robotics in the school. Students in this course will organize the Hour of Code for the school and act as coding ambassadors for the greater school population.

- **App Lab**
  In this class students will create simple apps using App Lab, a programming environment in which students code with blocks or JavaScript.

GRADES 6-8
Sample of interest-based choice courses available to gifted students:

- **Financial Literacy and Stock Market Game**-
  This course will focus on important concepts in personal finance, such as checking/savings accounts, types of credit, interest rates, taxes, insurance, budgeting, and college/careers. It will also focus on different investment types and strategies. Students will work together to research a variety of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Then they will use a hypothetical $100,000 to build, trade, and manage their own investment portfolios.

- **Rock Band**
  In this course, students will choose an instrument: piano, guitar, ukulele, bass, or drums. After learning the basics of their instrument, they will collaborate as a group to choose a song. They will then master their individual parts and ultimately their parts will be put together as a full band. The group will learn as many songs as possible during our time frame, and at the end of the marking period, there will be a Battle of the Bands across

the grade levels. (I have a sampling of instruments in my classroom, but it is best if students have their own to use).

- **Current Events, Cultural Awareness and Geography Bee Preparation**
  Each year, our school participates in [The National Geographic Geography Bee](#), which begins at the local level and works up to a final competition in Washington D.C. This course helps students prepare for the Geography Bee beginning with background knowledge on continents, countries, states, provinces, islands, and the major physical features of our planet. They will also brainstorm ways to educate their peers about important events and look for ways to make positive change. Most importantly, this course builds cultural awareness and global citizenship.

- **Advanced math concepts, problem solving and [Math Olympiad](#) competition.**
  This course is designed to nurture enthusiasm and love for mathematics. It introduces important and challenging math concepts, teaches major strategies for problem solving, and fosters mathematical creativity and ingenuity. Students in this course will develop mathematical flexibility and strengthen their mathematical intuition. They will also participate in 5 international mathematical competitions.

- **Creative Writing**
  Students in this course will analyze and discuss famous short stories and poems. They will identify the components of well-written pieces, and they will go through a writer's workshop approach to composing original pieces. They will also be encouraged to enter a variety of writing contests and endeavor to get their original work published.

- **Introduction to Psychology**
  In this course, students will investigate a variety of theories in the field of psychology. They will identify ways in which psychology affects their everyday lives and gain knowledge that will provide a foundation for future psychology courses. The course will make connections between different areas of psychology and identify ways in which different perspectives contribute to a deeper understanding of human behavior. Throughout the marking period students will have opportunities to test out prominent psychological theories by conducting experiments for themselves.

- **[Engineering](#)**
  In this course, students will learn about the many different types of engineers, focusing heavily on the Biomedical, Engineering/Design, and Computer Science strands offered in the SHS STEM academy. They will use the design process to solve real-world problems, and they will collaborate on many hands-on activities that require them to explore biological systems, safe materials for human interaction, mechanical advantage, potential/kinetic energy, physics, and programming languages. This course will provide

background knowledge for future STEM academy applicants, as well as help students decide which strand most interests them.

- **[Scratch Programming](#)**
  Scratch is a creative tool that was developed by the MIT Media Lab. In this course, students learn the Scratch programming language and they design and build original video games. Scratch has the important features of many programming languages, like loops (repeat blocks) and conditionals (if-then blocks). With these features, Scratchers can create algorithms to complete specific tasks. Other programming language courses will be offered in future marking periods.

- **Video Game and App Design Using JavaScript**
  Students will use [Code.org's](#) Game Lab and App Lab to master the JavaScript language and learn all of the concepts needed to build a video game and/or app that showcases a personal interest. The concepts they will learn and apply include Booleans and Comparison Operators, If Statements, If-Else Statements, For Loops, Timed Loop, Timed For Loop, Variables, Naming Variables, Arrays, Modifying Arrays, Random Numbers, Functions, and Patterns.

- **Intro to Yoga**
  This course will introduce students to basic yoga poses and terminology, as well as breathing and meditation techniques. Perfect for increasing flexibility and core strength, while decreasing stress and anxiety.

- **[Pixar In A Box Animation Curriculum](#)**-
  Pixar and Khan Academy have collaborated to create, develop, and promote a series of learning tutorials that demonstrate how traditional school subjects such as math, science, and the arts are a vital part of the everyday work put into Pixar's filmmaking process. In this learning sequence, students will focus on Sets and Staging, Patterns, Rigging (coding a character), Mathematics of Subdivision (character modeling), and Mathematics of Depth of Field (virtual cameras).

- **[Rubik's Cube](#)**
  Students will learn how to solve the 3x3 cube and complete STEM activities related to the cube. They will have Google Meet and or in-person competitions, and those who have mastered the 3x3 will have the opportunity to move on to the 4x4 cube.

GRADES 9-12

Sparta High School offers a wide range of AP courses, Honors courses, the STEM Academy, and the Humanities Academy that gifted and talented students can access based on the course criteria.
Below is the link to the course catalog:
https://sites.google.com/sparta.org/2020-2021-course-catalog/home

Appeal & Program Opt Out Process

District Appeal
A parent/guardian has the option of requesting an appeal if they do not agree with the decision regarding student eligibility for the program. A parent/guardian must request an appeal in writing to their child's building principal. The principal will provide the parent/guardian with the Gifted and Talented Parent/Guardian Rating Scale Form to complete. Upon submission of the form, the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee will meet to review all documents and provide an opinion in writing regarding the eligibility of the student based on the program criteria within 10 school days of the principal referral to the committee.

If a parent/guardian does not agree with the opinion of the Gifted and Talented District Advisory committee, they have the option to appeal in writing to the Superintendent of Schools within 5 school days of the committee's notification.

Parent/Guardian Rating Scale Form

Complaint of Noncompliance

An individual who believes that a school district has not complied with the provisions of Chapter 35, Title 18A (18A:35-8) may file a complaint with the board of education. The board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the district's action in the matter.

The individual may then file a petition of appeal of the board's written decision to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulation.

Program Opt Out
For eligible students, a parent/guardian may request in writing to their child's building principal to opt out of the gifted and talented education program at any time.

Family & Community Engagement

Family

- District and teacher websites, newsletters and approved social media are used to share program highlights.
- STEP teachers are available during parent/teacher conferences.
- Parents/Guardians are provided with professional learning resources to support learning at home.
- Parents will be notified of any continuation or changes in student eligibility to receive services in the program.

Community / Global Connections

Connections can include but are not limited to:

- County-wide field trips
- STEP students have the opportunity to meet with members of the professional community as it pertains to their units of study (i.e. visiting scientists, artists, engineers, computer programmers, writers)
- STEP students share what they have learned through performances, ambassadorships and organized activities for the school population.
  Some examples include:
  - Technology-Based Gifted and Talented Field Trip(s)
  - Bridge Building at a local elementary school
  - SumDog Countywide Math Challenge
  - Junior Women's Club Annual Spelling Bee
  - The Stock Market Game/SIFMA Foundation
  - Coding Ambassadors for Computer Science Education week
  - Brain Awareness Week outreach
  - Connecting with students around the world via Flipgrid, Skype & Google Meet
  - Global Read Alouds

Professional Development

- STEP teachers will meet quarterly in vertical articulation sessions to collaborate and discuss curriculum development, coordinate activities, and review the gifted and talented education program to monitor consistency of implementation across the district.

- In addition to the district's professional development requirement, STEP teachers will attend a minimum of one professional development opportunity per school year related specifically to supporting gifted education. The following are recommendations for professional development opportunities, however, teachers may submit for approval of other professional development opportunities to their program supervisor.
  - [Events offered through New Jersey Association for Gifted Students](#)

- - [Professional Development available through New Jersey Association for Gifted Students](#)

- The following are recommendations for professional development opportunities, however, teachers may submit for approval of other professional development opportunities to their program supervisor.

- STEP teachers will participate in the Sussex County Gifted and Talented Consortium to provide opportunities to learn and discuss how districts across the county are adapting and growing their programs.

- Suggested professional associations for G&T educators:
  - [New Jersey Association for Gifted Children](#)
  - [National Association for Gifted Children](#)
  - [Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted](#)
  - [Council for Exceptional Children](#)
  - [The Association for the Gifted](#)
  - [World Council for Gifted and Talented Children](#)

- STEP teachers will record professional development hours through Sparta Township Employee Portal (Genesis) Professional Development tab.

- Each Gifted & Talented teacher will develop a focused professional development goal specific to the needs of the program at their level.

Program Review Cycle

- At least once per year, teachers of gifted & talented across the district will meet to discuss program progress and recommend program enhancements to the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee that would be beneficial in meeting the learning goals of the gifted student population. Every three years, a program review will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program in meeting the needs of gifted students based on the national programming standards.

- Annually, parents of gifted students, as well as the students themselves, will be surveyed on their overall feeling about the effectiveness and success of the programming offered. The survey will provide an opportunity for an open-ended response with suggestions for improvements. The teachers of gifted & talented will compile the survey data and share it with the Gifted & Talented Advisory Committee. The results will be interpreted as a committee and used to implement program and/or policy changes that will best meet the needs of the specific student population.

Reporting

NJ Rev Stat § 18A:35-37 (2019)

In accordance with 18A:35-37 coordinator for gifted and talented services, the school district shall file with the coordinator a report on a schedule that coincides with the school district's New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum review pursuant to section 11 of P.L.1975, c.212 (C.18A:7A-11).

The report shall include, but not be limited to the following:

(1) the gifted and talented continuum of services, policies, and procedures implemented in the school district;

(2) the total number of students receiving gifted and talented services in each grade level kindergarten through grade 12 disaggregated by race, gender, special education designation, and English language learner designation;

(3) the professional development opportunities provided for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders about gifted and talented students, their needs, and educational development; and

(4) the number of staff employed by the school district whose job responsibilities include identification of and providing services to gifted and talented students.

District Reporting Timeline for the SID Management Collection

- STEP Teachers for (K-8) and the Supervisor of College and Career Readiness for (9-12) will identify students who meet the Gifted and Talented criteria, no later than the third week of each school year and submit this list to the school building registrar.
- The school building registrar will remove ineligible students and make the identification of eligible students for the current school year using the G&T green icon in the Genesis Student Information System, no later than the third week of each school year. Once completed the registrar will notify the Technology Support Specialist.
- The Director of Student Support Services will provide information about the professional development offerings and submit the list of staff members identified for the G&T program to the Technology Support Specialist, no later than the third week of each school year.

- The Technology Support Specialist will do the data entry for the SID Management collection, no later than October 10th of each school year and request review by the Director of Student Support Services and Superintendent of Schools in preparation for the October 15th snapshot.
- After the October 15th snapshot, The Technology Support Specialist will provide a report to the Director of Student Support Services containing information for all the district's G&T students disaggregated by grade level, race, gender, special education designation, and English language learner designation.

District Advisory Committee Information

Purpose

The purpose of the District Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee is to advise the school district of the educational needs of all gifted learners. The committee members serve as advocates who are committed to ensuring that the district program and policies meet the needs of all gifted learners.

The duties and responsibilities of the advisory committee are to:

- Develop annual goals and priorities for the gifted and talented education program;
- Review the program manual containing the plan for the gifted and talented education program, including revisions;
- Review data to determine the extent to which the program is implemented with consistency across the district to provide equitable supports to meet the needs of all gifted learners;
- Serve as advocates who represent the needs of gifted learners and their families;
- Serve as the appeal board;
- Become knowledgeable about current programs, research, and best practices in gifted education and serve as a resource to the school community;
- Focus attention on issues relative to improving the educational services and supports provided for gifted learners; and
- Provide policy and program recommendations to the Superintendent and the district's Board of Education.

Committee Members

The committee is made of various stakeholders who serve in administrative and instructional roles in the district. Committee members represent various schools, grade levels, departments, and content areas within the district.

Administrative Staff

Tara Rossi, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
tara.rossi@sparta.org

Peter Miller, AES Principal
peter.miller@sparta.org

Katie Madsen, MAS Principal
katie.madsen@sparta.org

Doug Layman, HMS Principal
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Frank Ciaburri, SMS Principal
frank.ciaburri@sparta.org

Edward Lazzara, SHS Principal
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Adrienne Castorina, Director of Special Services Grades PreK-12
adrienne.castorina@sparta.org

Cherie Shefferman, Supervisor of Special Services Grades PreK-12
Cherie.Shefferman@sparta.org

Marie Parisi, Supervisor of English/Language Arts (PreK-5)
Marie.Parisi@sparta.org

Brent Rivers, Supervisor of English //Language Arts (6-12)
brent.rivers@sparta.org

Laura Kasa, Supervisor of Mathematics (PreK-12)
laura.kasa@sparta.org

Marisa Wilson, Supervisor of Science, Technology and Engineering (PreK-12)
marisa.wilson@sparta.org

Andrew Buchanan, Supervisor of Social Studies and World Language (K-12)
Andrew.Buchanan@sparta.org

Instructional Staff
Candice Jahn, Teacher of English Language Learners (K-12)
candice.jahn@sparta.org

Christina Morrow, Teacher of Gifted and Talented
Alpine Elementary School (K-2)
christina.morrow@sparta.org

Morgan Bleakley, Teacher of Gifted and Talented
Mohawk Avenue School (3) and Helen Morgan School (4-5)
morgan.bleakley@sparta.org

David Gorecki, Teacher of Gifted and Talented
Sparta Middle School (6-8)
david.gorecki@sparta.org

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How does *New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.)* define a student who is gifted and talented?

New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:8-3.1 defines students who are gifted and talented as those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

2. How does our district identify students who are gifted and talented?

The kindergarten through grade twelve identification process for gifted and talented students includes multiple measures. Multiple measures may include, but are not limited to, achievement test scores; grades; student performance or products; intelligence testing; parent, student, and/or teacher recommendation; and other appropriate measures. The identification methodology will be developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the

programs and services offered by the district. The identification procedures will be reviewed annually. See the identification process section of our [website](#) for grade specific identification.

3. How often will the district identify students for giftedness?

The identification process is ongoing. Identification begins in kindergarten, or when a student first arrives in the district. Once a student is in the program in our K-2 building, they remain until the end of 2nd grade. The same applies for grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and 9-12. New students can be added during those time periods, but no student will be removed (unless it is requested by a parent/guardian). Requalification is required for incoming 3rd, 6th and 9th grade students. High school Honors, AP and Academy eligibility is reevaluated each year, according to the identification criteria.

4. What gifted services does our district provide?

Our gifted programming revolves around the [Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children](#). The educational program offered to gifted and talented students will encourage and challenge them in the specific areas of their abilities and interests, but will not replace the basic instructional program of the various grades of this district. The program offered to gifted and talented students may include, but are not limited to, pull-out programs, classroom differentiated instruction, acceleration, flexible pacing, compacted curricula, distance learning, advanced classes, or individual programs infused into the student's regular instructional program.

5. Are local school districts obligated to accept the evaluation of a student's giftedness from another state, school district, or independent service?

[N.J.A.C.](#) does not set requirements regarding the identification of gifted and talented students. The measures that are used for the identification process are determined by the local school district. Therefore, a school district is not obligated to accept the evaluation from another state, school district, or independent service.

6. If I am moving to New Jersey from another state, how can I find out what programs are offered in a specific school or district?

All public school districts in New Jersey are required to identify gifted and talented students and provide services. The types of services may differ from district to district. For information regarding services available in our district, visit the gifted & talented section of our [website](#) and/or contact the staff members responsible for the grade level your child is entering using the contact information below.

Christina Morrow, Teacher of Gifted and Talented
Alpine Elementary School (K-2)
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Morgan Bleakley, Teacher of Gifted and Talented
Mohawk Ave School (3) and Helen Morgan School (4-5)
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David Gorecki, Teach of Gifted and Talented
Sparta Middle School (6-8)
David.Gorecki@sparta.org

Shannon Benson, Director of Pupil Services
Sparta High School (9-12)
Shannon.Benson@sparta.org

7. What should a parent/guardian do if he or she is not satisfied with the services that his or her child is receiving?

Parents should reach out to their child's gifted & talented teacher directly. If there is difficulty resolving the issue, they should reach out to the child's school building principal or the Assistant Superintendent using the contact information below. Parents will also have the opportunity to complete a program evaluation survey annually. Results will be analyzed by the gifted & talented committee, and they will be used to improve the program.

8. Are students with unique learning needs considered for inclusion in our gifted programs?

Yes. Students who are identified as "twice-exceptional" may have learning disabilities that mask their giftedness. In addition to the multiple measures already used, the child study team will refer to the gifted & talented 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. Both parent and teacher recommendations are considered.

9. Are English language learners considered for inclusion in our gifted programs?

Yes. English Language Learners have specific needs in terms of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Classroom teachers work closely with the district ELL teacher to develop ways to identify gifted English language learners. Teachers look at growth and behaviors as well as achievement and aptitude scores when considering ELL students for gifted services. All gifted &

talented testing of ELL students will be done in the student's native language. Both parent and teacher recommendations are considered.

10. Does qualifying for STEP mean more work for my student?

STEP is not designed to be more work for students; it is a way to differentiate instruction and meet the needs of all learners.

11. When does the screening process take place?

The screening process usually takes place in May/June (end of the school year). A parent/guardian of a student who qualifies for services will be contacted prior to the beginning of the upcoming school year. Services will begin after the first few weeks of the upcoming school year.

12. Is the STEP Program the same as the Gifted and Talented Education Program?

Yes. In our district the gifted and talented education program is referred to as STEP, Sparta Township Enrichment Program.

References and Resources

Resources used to help develop this manual
- State of New Jersey Department of Education Gifted and Talented
- New Jersey Association for Gifted Children
- Administrator Quick Guide to Gifted Education
- NAGC PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards
- Texas Gifted and Talented Program Implementation
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted
- Council for Exceptional Children
- The Association for the Gifted
- World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

Resources for Educators and Parents/Guardians
- National Association for Gifted Children - Resources for Parents
- https://www.njagc.org/for-parents.html
- SENG - Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted
- Center for Education Gifted Policy
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development
- Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development