

GATE Gazette

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Fall 2014

What do we mean by “GATE”?

GATE, or Gifted and Talented Education, is a program in TTUSD that actually applies to a much broader group than just gifted students. In TTUSD, the “GATE” designation encompasses a combination of students (who qualify for services based on test scores on the Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test, version 8 (OLSAT8), the Portfolio Option, etc.) who are either gifted and/or high achieving students. GATE students in TTUSD make up approximately 10% of the district’s students, whereas more traditional gifted education programs usually are

made up of 3-5% of the student body.

TTUSD’s GATE program currently runs from 4th grade through 8th grade, and students are universally screened for the program in 3rd grade, when all students take the OLSAT8 exam. We meet the needs of our GATE students once they get to the high school level through honors, advanced and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

GATE programs look slightly different at all sites, but Glenshire Elementary, Truckee Elementary, Kings Beach Ele-

mentary, Tahoe Lake Elementary, Alder Creek Middle School and North Tahoe School all have weekly programs that meet either before or after school for one hour a week.

Therefore, when the district discusses GATE issues (such as the GATE Plan), it is really referring to all extension programs: GATE, accelerated learning, advanced, honors, AP, etc.



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Accelerated Learners Services (ALS) Pilot

The ALS Pilot program was adopted by the School Board on August 20th, and is aimed at meeting the accelerated learning needs of all of our students—not just our GATE students. This year, the ALS program is being piloted at Glenshire Elementary School, and Alder Creek Middle School.

TTUSD recognizes that all students have the potential to need accelerated (i.e.: faster paced) and/or enriched (i.e.: deeper) learning experiences. The ALS Pilot is designed to meet the academic needs of all students (regardless of labels, such as “GATE”) at their individual academic levels so that they can have the most rigorous and appropriate academic program possible. The continual growth

of our students is a key goal of TTUSD’s, and the ALS Pilot is designed to ensure that those students that walk into the classroom already knowing the content also have an opportunity to learn something new every day, to be challenged, and to grow academically.

During the course of the 2013-2014 school year, TTUSD, parents, students, etc. all worked together to update and revise the district’s GATE Plan, which was slated to sunset on June 30, 2014. During the course of this process, we had many opportunities for all stakeholders to weigh in on our GATE programs, and tell us what we were doing right, and what were some areas for potential growth. Through this process, several needs came

up again and again:

- Need services provided within the school day
- Need specific social-emotional support for students
- Need more professional development for teachers, etc.

Based on this feedback, a district team put together the ALS Pilot Program (*I would like to give a big thank you and shout out to: Karen Martin, Mardiece Patrick, Dave Curry, Kathleen Gauthier, Hien Larson, and all of the parents that were a part of the process!*).

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Beginning a new program can be an exciting, yet frustrating time for all stakeholders as we adjust, fine-tune, and experiment with the program until we find the “right” fit.

Accelerated Learners Services (ALS) Pilot (Continued)

There are many ways that the ALS Pilot strives to meet the academic needs of our students (please go to the district GATE page to read the pilot at: <http://epiceipcpage.weebly.com/gate.html>), which include:

- Strategically grouping, or clustering students
- Adopting a walk-to-learn model (where students may “deploy” to other, more advanced classes throughout the day in place of the regular classroom curriculum)
- Having specific social-emotional supports in place (in elementary school, this is a class with other GATE students where creativity, project based learning and a specific affective curriculum is taught; for middle school, GATE students are receiving their social-emotional curriculum through their Socratic Seminar course)
- Specific, targeted differentiation, etc.

Differentiation is a key focus of the ALS plan. Differentiation is a teaching strategy that allows the

teacher to adapt and modify the curriculum for the specific needs of her students (i.e.: the teacher can differentiate lessons for those students with advanced readiness levels, or can adapt (or “scaffold”) lessons for those students that are not quite ready for the “full” assignment).

During the course of the ALS Pilot, TTUSD, Glenshire Elementary and Alder Creek Middle School will be gathering data on the effectiveness of the program. At the end of the year, the results of the program will be analyzed, and TTUSD will make a decision on whether to continue (and scale up to other sites) or discontinue the ALS Program.

We need your help! During the course of the 2014-2015 school year, parents, students and staff members will all have the opportunity to let us know what you think about the ALS Pilot. In fact, you and your students will soon be asked to participate in a brief survey (should only take about 10 minutes) in order to gather some perception data around the program. When asked to participate in these data collec-

tion activities, it is imperative that you give us open, honest feedback so that we know what we are doing well, and what we can improve upon.

Beginning a new program can be an exciting, yet frustrating time for all stakeholders as we adjust, fine-tune, and experiment with the program until we find the “right” fit. What makes the pilot frustrating, however, is what also makes it so exciting—there is no, one right way to run the program! During the course of the Pilot, we are expecting to take chances, make mistakes, adjust, and try it again. Just as it is important for our students to understand how risk and failure is an important part of the learning process, we hope that our ALS Pilot families will also recognize that we are taking big risks because the potential reward (i.e.: a high-quality, fully functioning ALS program within the school day) is so big.

Therefore, on behalf of TTUSD, I would like to extend a big, and grateful, thank you to the students, families and educators that are making it possible for us to host this Pilot program—we could not do it without you!

G-DAC Starting Up Again Soon!



G-DAC (GATE District Advisory Committee), formerly known as the “GATE Advisory Group,” will be starting up again soon! The first meeting is coming up on Thursday, November 13th in the Board Room at the District Office.

The purpose of the G-DAC is to discuss specific GATE policy and procedural information, and all stakeholders are welcome. There will be childcare available.

According to the current GATE Plan, there will be three G-DAC meetings a year so that parents can weigh in on important questions; have any comments, questions or concerns addressed, etc. Each meeting is only one hour long, and I hope that you can all attend.

While the GATE Plan was revised and updated during the 2013-2014 school year, there were a few things that were

left intentionally undefined so that we could revisit the topics in-depth this year. Some of these topics will include:

- How will the GATE Plan be evaluated each year?
- How can we illicit more parent involvement?
- What types of social opportunities would you like to see for your children?
- Etc.

GATE District Advisory Committee (G-DAC) Meetings*:

**G-DAC Meetings are on GATE policy and procedure.*

November 13, 2014

Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Board Room (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All GATE Stakeholders

February 12, 2015

Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Board Room (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All GATE Stakeholders

May 20, 2015

Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Room 8 (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All GATE Stakeholders

Accelerated Learner Parent Workshops*:

**Parent workshops are about specific topics and strategies relating to gifted education*

October 30, 2014

Topic: Executive Function and Your Child
Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Board Room (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All are welcome

January 22, 2015

Topic: Social-Emotional Characteristics of Gifted Children
Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Board Room (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All are welcome

April 16, 2014

Topic: Depth and Complexity Icons
Event Location: TTUSD's District Office
Room: Board Room (childcare will be available)
Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm
Who Is Invited: All are welcome

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Upcoming Parent Workshop: Executive Function and Your Child

Does the adage "smart but scattered" apply to your gifted child? Do you see him/her spending time working on projects, homework and reports only to later find out that the assignments were never turned in because he/she forgot to turn it in? Have you ever arrived to soccer practice only to find out that your child has forgotten his/her soccer equipment at home? Does your child do great work, but getting him/her to *actually* start the project takes a virtual act of congress? What about outbursts? Does your child have difficulty self-regulating his/her speech, emotions or actions? Is organizing and prioritizing a constant struggle in your household? If any of these issues currently describe some of your current frustrations with your gifted child, you are not alone! Executive function skills (which encompass such skills/tasks as: short-term memory, task initiation, organization, self-regulation, etc.) are often developed by children around age 12, but, for many gifted students (boys in particular!) there can be a delay in this development. If you would like to learn more about executive function and some strategies to help your child at home and school, please come to the upcoming parent workshop: Executive Function and Your Child on October 30th. Childcare and translation services will be available at TTUSD's District Office.

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I would like to subscribe to receive an electronic copy of the GATE Gazette:

NAME: _____ STUDENT NAME: _____
SCHOOL SITE: _____ GRADE: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS(ES): _____

If you would like to receive all GATE communications and updates via email, please fill out the following:

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Please note: You may need to fill out a new form each year to ensure that your email preferences are saved.

Please return your requests to one of the following:

Email: jalb@ttusd.org

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Mail: 11603 Donner Pass Rd, Truckee, CA 96161 (ATTN: Jess Alb)

Thank you for your commitment to preserving the environment, and going "paperless" for your GATE communications!