

Advanced Learning Program in Somers CSD

Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidelines for identification and placement procedures for students that may be served through the Advanced Learning Program (ALP). The Somers CSD has always provided opportunities for students that have advanced learning potential. In the past, this has been called Enrichment and REACH at the elementary levels. At the secondary level, students have had opportunities for advanced courses or honors programs. In order to better this experience for all students in grades K-12, we will consider all of these programs and services under the Advanced Learning Program (ALP).

The evolution of this program is directly related to the overall mission of the district to: “*ignite the passion in each student by engaging students at a personal level to ensure success in a global society.*” It is in the pursuit of engaging each student to find success that we engage in this work.

Mission:

In addition to the educational experience for all Somers students, the Somers School District will enrich the advanced learner by individualizing academic experiences to ensure each *advanced learner's* potential is realized.

Vision:

As a school district, we are committed to increasing the learning of all students. Thus, we will strive to ensure each student reaches his or her potential. In our ALP we will:

- Monitor student learning to ensure students are identified for the Advanced Learning Program (ALP)
- Develop differentiated and tiered learning opportunities
- Provide clear process and structure to support the advanced learning student

Collective Commitments:

To advance our shared vision of a highly effective ALP program we will:

- Collaborate with the student and family to enrich the learning experience
- Expand our professional knowledge about teaching the advanced learning student
- Commit to adjusting our approaches to supporting the advanced learning student
- Understand the complexity of the advanced learner
- Recognize that advanced learning students come from a variety of societal, cultural, and economic backgrounds

Definition

SCSD defines students that can access Advanced Learning Program (ALP) resources as:

- Students with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at extraordinarily high levels of accomplishment when compared with their peers.
- Students that demonstrate high performance capability in intellectual, academic, creative, and/or artistic areas,
- Students that may possess a strong capacity for leadership.

These students may require services beyond the variety of classroom opportunities.

Most often, advanced learners are in the top **5%** of students. The intent of identifying advanced learners is to plan for and monitor these students to ensure their academic growth. SCSD has developed guidelines for identifying students eligible for the advanced learner program. These guidelines support the approach of looking at a variety of information on a student to build a "body of evidence." This "body of evidence" determines if a student's needs require targeted or intensive programming beyond the regular classroom.

Dr. Joseph Renzulli identifies three elements important to the identification and growth of the advanced learner. The areas are: the learner possesses above average ability (1), creativity (2) and is committed to working on and completing tasks (3). Dr. Renzulli puts forth the belief that the advanced learner can only realize his/her potential when these three elements are working in concert. While students may exhibit aptitude, high abilities and/or creativity in any number of areas, it is important not to confuse the high-achievers with advanced learners. Research in gifted and talented education goes to great length to identify this fact. In addition, research notes that highly capable student's gifts may not necessarily translate to academic achievement. In other words, a student scoring 90's on every test is not necessarily an advanced learner just as a student scoring only 70s could be.

Many students, especially those considered advanced or gifted in a particular area, often show asynchronous development. This means they will need support for their advanced learning as well as for their social emotional development or for other areas that may not be as fully developed.

The district desires to identify advanced learning opportunities in the following areas:

General Intellectual Ability(GIA)

- A student demonstrates the ability to perform at an exceptionally high level in general intellectual ability. Most often, general intellectual ability is identified by at least 3 cognitive areas (e.g. reasoning, verbal skills and memory).

Specific Academic Area (SAA)

- A student is typically above average in the overall area of intellectual ability and is also highly capable in one or more academic areas.

Leadership (L)

- A student demonstrates exceptionally high levels of both social and interpersonal skills. These may be demonstrated in showing poise, exemplary oral and written communication, and the ability to set goals and organize others to reach those goals.

Performing and Visual Arts (PVA)

- A student demonstrates the ability to perform at an exceptionally high level of production and/or creativity in visual arts and/or performing arts (i.e. dance, music or drama).

General Overview-ALP Committee Guidelines

An Advanced Learning Program (ALP) Committee will be identified to develop guidelines and procedures at the district level under the leadership of an ALP Administrator. In addition, a district level committee will determine if a student qualifies to receive ALP services. The building level committee will consist of teacher(s), guidance counselor, and administrator representatives from each school.

The district level ALP committee will meet to determine eligibility for students in one or more of the five areas defined – General Intellectual Ability, Specific Academic Area, Leadership, Creativity, and/or Performing/Visual Arts. The meetings will occur in the Fall of each year and other meetings will be scheduled as needed. Families will be notified if they have a child that is eligible to receive ALP services. Families will be given the opportunity to accept or decline services in writing.

The District ALP committee responsibilities include:

- Reviewing criteria and “body of evidence” tools for each identified ALP category
- Providing recommendations for revision to the process anywhere along the identification process.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of ALP programs and growth of ALP learners over time.
- Reviewing the information related to a student’s identification. This process will be “blind” and based on the identified selection criteria.
- Determining placement in the ALP program.

Once a student is slated to receive ALP services, the student will not be removed from the program unless a family requests that the school should do so. However, a child’s level of advanced learning service could change depending on performance and need at a given time. The Administrator of the ALP will provide an updated list of students identified in each building to the school principal.

Communication to Families

A family permission for ALP services form must be signed and returned to the school for the following to occur:

- Placement in the ALP program
- Development of an Advanced Learning Student Plan (ALSP)
- ALP services to be provided to the child

Students identified to receive ALP service will have an Advanced Learning Student Plan (ALSP) developed to better ensure that individual needs, abilities and passions are met. Classroom teachers will work with the ALP instructor to provide input in the development of ALSP.

Families will receive a copy of the ALSP before the start of the winter break. In addition, a spring ALSP progress report will be provided to the family. In subsequent years, each fall the ALSP will be updated and shared with the family.

Timeline of Universal Assessments of Ability

Starting the Body of evidence

All students will be formally screened with various measures during their elementary school career (see below). This allows for both an initial “net to be cast” in terms of identifying students and also recognizes that students grow over time and may be ready for ALP opportunities when they are older. Students may also be referred for consideration for ALP services by a teacher, parent or administrator. Please see the appendix for documentation and nomination forms. In K, 1 and 2, students will be monitored by observation to determine a talent pool that begins looking at advanced learning potential. All students in first grade will also be screened for math aptitude using STAR Math, IXL, and Curriculum Based Measures.

In the fall of both 3rd and 6th grades, students will be assessed using the Cognitive Abilities Test or CogAT. The total score achieved on this measure has correlation to an IQ score, but is not a child’s exact IQ. **The CogAT measures three different cognitive abilities:**

- **The verbal section** measures a child’s ability to remember and transform sequences of English words, to understand them and to make inferences and judgments about them.
- **The quantitative section** measures a child’s understanding of basic quantitative concepts and relationships.
- **The non-verbal section** measures reasoning using pictures and geometric shapes. This section reduces the impact of language on the student’s score

Body of Evidence Continued

In building the body of evidence, information is gathered by looking at the screening measures mentioned above and then by looking at achievement, behavior and performance. Data is collected as evidence of intensive academic need and/or exceptional ability. Listed below are each of the characteristics and the possible data that may be used under each area as potential sources of identifying exceptional ability (Please note: not all assessments under each characteristic may be gathered or used):

- **Achievement** (Academic): New York State Testing Program (NYSTP) and Renaissance Learning (STAR Math and Reading), IXL (math), Fountas and Pinnell (reading).
- **Behavior** (Observation): Gifted Evaluation Scale (GES)
- **Performance**: portfolios, student products, report cards and grades, performance tasks, etc.

Identification Process

Formal identification occurs after the examination of the “Body of Evidence” for each referred student. The following are the possible results:

- There is sufficient data for identification of the student and an area of exceptionality is identified.
- The evidence does not support the identification of the student.
- Additional information is needed as part of this student’s “Body of Evidence,” in order to make the best determination of need.

If a child is identified as an advanced learner, an Advanced Learning Student Plan (ALSP) is developed based on student data, teacher observation and recommendations, student performance, strengths and needs, ALP teacher input, and information from parents. (sample in appendix)

Delivery Model Approach and Samples

The SCSD utilizes research-based strategies to provide opportunities for learning to ensure that advanced learning students perform at levels aligned with their abilities. Advanced learner students are provided a dynamic and challenging educational program at every level throughout their school career. The SCSD follows the Response to Intervention (RtI) model that provides a multi-tier approach to identifying and supporting the learning needs of all children. This approach to supporting students begins with universal-screening and is supported by high-quality, research based instructional practice.

Students identified to receive ALP services may experience instructional approaches delivered by classroom teachers and/or ALP teachers to meet their needs. The three tiers are described below with samples of approaches.

Tier 1

The SCSD approach to meeting the needs of Tier 1 (Universal) advanced learner needs is based on the philosophy of offering differentiated instruction within the classroom. Classroom teachers provide learning experiences that may include: project-based learning, opportunities for leadership, cooperative learning, flexible cluster learning, and personalized learning often with the employment of technology.

Tier 2

The Tier 2 (Targeted) advanced learner may experience a range of different programming. This may include project based learning, tiered assignments, academic competitions, extra-curricular activities, extension or enrichment activities, and special programming (e.g. IB and AP). The ALP teacher may also push into a student's class or collaborate with the classroom teacher to provide opportunities for the student.

Tier 3

Advanced learners may have curriculum enhancement or replacement (advancing a school grade) or curriculum compacting (skipping a grade in an academic area). They are typically placed in a higher-grade level at the commencing of a school year. In SCSD, this typically occurs for the first time as students enter SMS in math. In the elementary grades, the ALP teacher may pull these students out for small group instruction with other advanced learning peers a few times per week for curriculum enhancement.

Continuum of Support Somers Advanced Learner Program

Students in the ALP may experience a consult model where enrichment work is provided in their general education classroom by the ALP teacher, a push in model where the ALP teacher pushes into a content area to provide modified work, a pull-out model where the ALP teacher is working with groups of students with similar aptitudes, or a combination of these models.

Levels of Support

Examples of Support for Students in ALP

ALP students experience enrichment opportunities that go beyond the standard curriculum.

Tier 3

- Accelerations (small percentage of math students)
- Pull out classes
- Enrichment math

ALP students receive strategic support where some classroom experiences are replaced by higher level learning.

Tier 2

- Enrichment activities
- Projects
- Honors, AP, IB
- Outside activities
- Curriculum compacting
- Tiered assignments
- Push in teacher support

ALP students receive enrichment work delivered by their teacher in the general education classroom.

Tier 1

- High-quality Instruction -using Universal Screening
- Differentiated Curriculum and instruction
- Embedded honors courses

ALP Teacher Guidelines

The following is a partial list of the responsibilities of the ALP teacher:

- Facilitate the formal identification of students in grades 3-8 **OR** the informal identification of K-2 students i.e. “Talent Pool.”
 - Monitor assessment data and notify teachers of students that may be identified for the ALP program.
 - Accept and facilitate the identification of any referrals received through the year.
 - Provide the necessary materials to the District ALP committee for revision purposes.
- Collect the “body of evidence” to provide to the District ALP committee. The information received should not include student names, only numbers that the ALP Coordinator can later cross-reference.
- Provide letters of student status to families.
- Consult with teachers, administrators and parents to identify the best options for ALP delivery.
- Provide and/or coordinate ALP services to formally identified students in the appropriate area of identification. See delivery model samples above.
 - Develop each student's Advanced Learning Student Plan (ALSP)
 - Develop study based on student interest
- Maintain accurate records in Infinite Campus
- Provide an annual program report to the ALP Administrator.
- Provide progress notes on students receiving ALP services to families.

Program Staffing

ALP Administrator – Stacey Elconin selconin@somersschools.org

Teaching Staff

- SMS .5 ALP teacher Elizabeth Olinto eolinto@somersschools.org
- SIS 1.0 ALP teacher Sharon King sking@somersschools.org
- PES .2 ALP Math Enrichment teacher Erik Tetro etetro@somersschools.org

Appeals Process

When is the appeal process appropriate?

Initial placement in the District Advanced Learning Program was determined by a committee who established criteria for placement and compared each student's records to these criteria. These decisions were made carefully after considering student performance on tests and accompanying information regarding classroom performance. There are times when parents or teachers feel that the test results or recommendations do not reflect the capability of the student. If school personnel, and/or parents feel the need for further placement evaluation, they may refer the student to the appeal committee.

What is the role of the ALP appeal committee?

The appeal committee is a team of professionals who will take an in-depth look at a student, examine data, and make a recommendation. The committee will review the information provided by parents and teachers along with the information collected for the initial placement decision.

When does this committee meet?

Teachers and parents have 30 days from the time of the initial placement letter going out to request an appeal. The appeal should be made in writing to the Administrator of the Advanced Learning Program and should be accompanied by the appropriate appeal form. (see appendix for appeal form)

Teachers requesting an appeal should provide the advanced, differentiated programming the student requires for continued growth and achievement that is already occurring in class. A portfolio of student work that shows student performance which exceeds the grade level curriculum should be collected by the classroom teacher. This could include:

- Differentiated writing assignments
- Advanced math assignments
- Reading responses
- Data from Assessments

Additional evidence should also be provided to show mastery of current grade level content.

- Classroom Math assessments
- Word Study assessments
- Writing Assessments
- Current Reading level
- Latest STAR Scores

What are the possible appeal committee recommendations?

1. Placement is accurate, no evidence to indicate incorrect placement.
2. Reason to believe that further testing is necessary. This option means that the student will be invited to test for the following school year.
3. On the basis of accompanying documentation and new information gleaned during the appeal process, the student will be placed in the Advanced Learning Program in the appropriate area.

What are the standards for decisions?

The goal of this committee is to be child-centered without changing the integrity of the identification process. Students will not be placed in the Advanced Learning Program unless the committee consensus is clear that the child needs enriched curriculum experiences. The committee will meet to review each student's appeals file. Parents will be informed of the results.

What follows are the criteria and body of evidence taken into consideration for the different components of the Advanced Learning Program.

General Intellectual Ability (GI)

Identification Procedure

To be identified, a student demonstrates the ability to perform at an exceptionally high level in general intellectual ability. Most often, general intellectual ability is identified by at least 3 cognitive areas (e.g. reasoning, verbal skills, and memory). In addition, general intellectual ability is observed as exceptional performance in a variety of cognitive areas. (e.g. abstract and logical reasoning, spatial relations, as well as the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information.)

The identification of General Intellectual ability is determined using multiple pieces of evidence. The student must meet the criteria in at least 3 categories to receive program services and one must be the ability measure.

Ability Measure

- Student score at/or above the 9th stanine on a the CogAT.

Achievement Measure

- New York State Testing Program (NYSTP)
- Renaissance Learning(STAR Math and Reading) – Students score at the 95th percentile or better consistently.
- IXL (math grade level is a year ahead of student’s actual grade)
- Fountas and Pinnell (student is above grade level benchmark in reading)

Behavior - Teacher Rating Scales

- Gifted Evaluation Scale (GES)

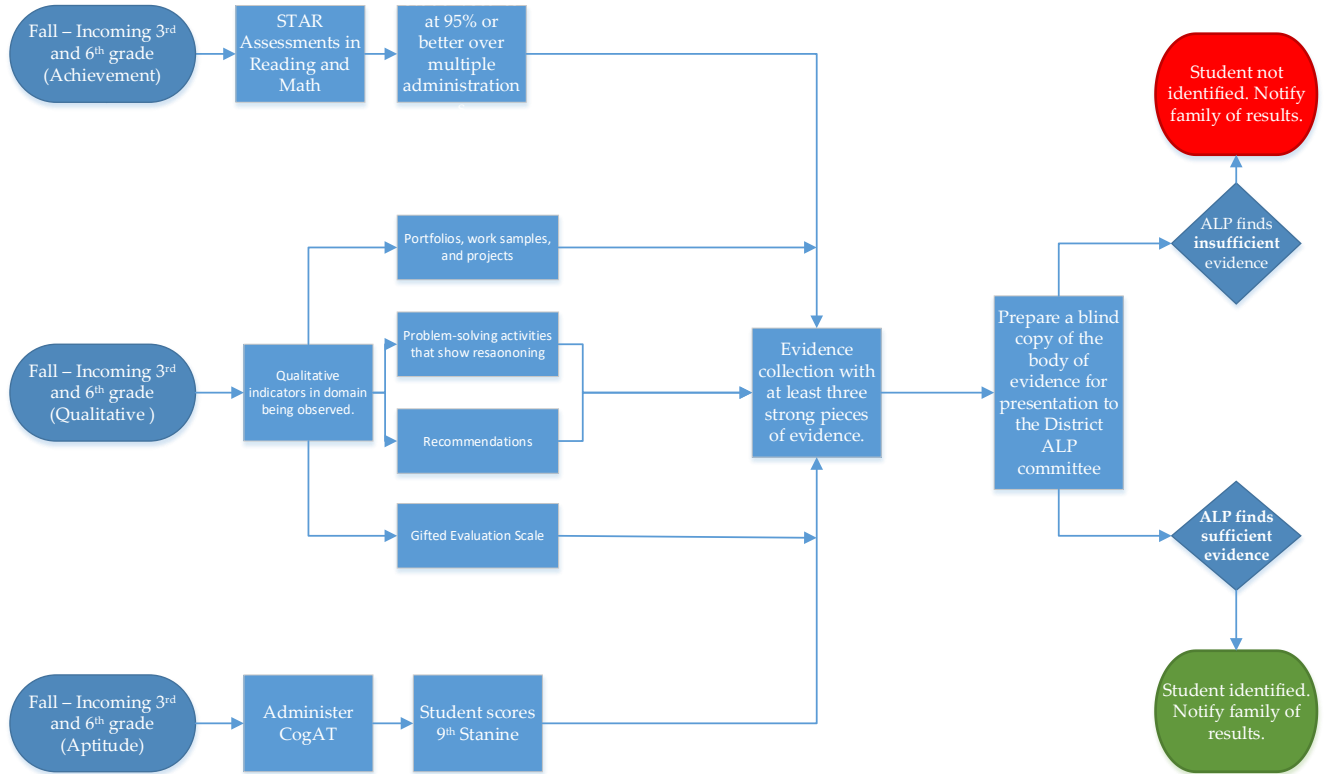
Performance Measure

- Portfolios, student products, report cards and grades, performance tasks, other.

A letter is sent to the family of individual students when a student meets the requirements for identification. In addition, parents must provide written permission to the school before services can commence. The student will work with the school ALP teacher and an Advanced Learner Student Plan (ALSP) will be developed.

Identification Flowchart

Process Chart 1- Identification for General Intellectual Ability (GI) – Whole Grade Screening



Specific Academic Area (SAA)

A student is typically above average in the overall area of intellectual ability and is also highly capable in one or more academic areas. We are able to provide ALP support at the secondary level by allowing students to take embedded honors, AP, Honors, and IB classes in areas of student interest and aptitude. At the elementary level, we provide leveled texts for guided reading groups based on a students' ability and in math we offer both problem solving groups as well as pull out for students for students for math enrichment. Starting in 6th grade we also look at opportunities for students to accelerate their math instruction with strict criteria, so we can ensure students have a firm math foundation.

Math placement options for enrichment students after Grade 5:

Criteria	6 th Grade Math Placement		
	Algebra	7 th grade w/ enrichment	6 th grade w/ enrichment
IXL	≥900	≥675	<675
7 th Grade Final Assessment Score	≥90	≥90	<90
7 th Grade Accelerated Final Score	≥90	≥90	<90
STAR	≥97 th	≥97 th	<90 th
Math Olympiad	≥20	≥20	

Leadership (L)

A student demonstrates exceptionally high levels of both social and interpersonal skills. These may be demonstrated in showing poise, exemplary oral and written communication, and the ability to set goals and organize others to reach those goals. Starting in Grade 3, students have the opportunity to run for Student government. This allows students the opportunity to speak in front of peers, relate their understanding of things important to them and their peers, and if elected, to make decisions making and relate important information back to others. As students get older, they also have opportunities to be leaders and officers in various clubs and sports at the Highschool.

Performing and Visual Arts (PVA)

A student demonstrates the ability to perform at an exceptionally high level of production and/or creativity in visual arts and/or performing arts (i.e. dance, music or drama). All students in grades K-8 are provided with opportunities to learn about music, perform as a group, and to create artwork. Starting in Somers Intermediate School, students can make choices about Choral Performance, Strings Instruction, and/or Band Instruction. Once in High School, students can study IB Dance and there are several Choral and Instrumental Ensembles as well as Drama and Musical Productions to participate in both on and behind the stage.

An additional opportunity in grades 5 and 6 is Art ALP. Students may choose to audition by creating an art piece that is then judged by two art teachers using a rubric. Once students are selected, parents are notified, and students come to the school outside their regular school day for this Art ALP experience.

Appendix

Sample letters to a parent of an advanced learning student who qualifies for the ALP.

Dear Parents,

Our district has always provided opportunities for students that have advanced learning potential. In the past, this has been called Enrichment and REACH at the elementary levels. At the secondary level, students have opportunities for advanced courses or honors programs. In order to better this experience for all students in grades K-12, we will consider all of these programs and services under our new Advanced Learning Program (ALP).

For the 17-18 school year, the focus of the ALP will be on grades 1-6. The ALP will provide both small group pull out and/or in class support for students who meet our advanced learner criteria. We are looking at Cognitive ability as the first area for advanced learning.

Your child has been identified as a candidate for the ALP.

_____ is the ALP teacher for _____ School. S/he can be reached at _____@somersschools.org. Your child's ALP services are outlined on the following page.

We are committed to collecting a body of evidence that best reflects the abilities of each student. Please take time to fill out the enclosed parent questionnaire and return to your child's ALP teacher at your earliest convenience.

Please contact us with any questions.

Thank you,

Advanced Learning Program

To the parents of _____,

Your child has been identified as a candidate for the Advanced Learning Program. Your child will receive a pull-out program three times per week. During this time your child will work on enrichment activities with _____ in a small group.

Schedule:

Days: Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

Time: _____

Room: Room B-8

Please respond by checking the appropriate box.

Yes, my child has permission to participate in the Advanced Learning Program.

No, my child will not participate in the Advanced Learning Program at this time.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this permission form and the parent questionnaire in a sealed envelope to your child's teacher.

Sincerely,

Advanced Learning Program

To the parents of _____,

Your child has been identified as a candidate for the Advanced Learning Program. Your child will receive push-in enrichment from _____ who will push into your child's classroom weekly to enrich the curriculum for your child.

Please respond by checking the appropriate box.

Yes, my child has permission to participate in the Advanced Learning Program.

No, my child will not participate in the Advanced Learning Program at this time.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this permission form and the parent questionnaire in a sealed envelope to your child's teacher.

Sincerely,

Parent Questionnaire

Student Name: _____

Parent Name: _____

Cell Number: _____

Home Number: _____

Email address: _____

1. What are your child's strengths and interests?

2. What goal you would like your child to achieve in the Advance Learning Program? (*This may be an academic, personal, or social goal.*)

3. Is there anything that you would like me to know about your child?

Thank you!

We will have an exciting year of learning.

Sincerely,

Advanced Learning Program Referral Form(s)

Staff/Parent Appeal Form for the Advanced Learning Program

Student Name: _____ Name of person making referral: _____

Please complete this checklist and the questions below it for the student named above. This information will be considered along with additional school data to inform a decision about placement in to the Advanced Learning Program. Please see ALP Handbook for additional information requested. Thank you.

Characteristics	Seldom or never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
Develops unevenly, meaning that some areas show advanced development, but not others (i.e., early talking and high levels of vocabulary, yet normal or lagging physical development, early understanding of mathematical concepts, yet emotionally immature).				
Is oversensitive physically, emotionally, sensorily, or intellectually. Imagination can overtake reality at times.				
Begins school with an abundance of knowledge and often complains of being bored; may have some behavior issues at school.				
Is an excellent problem solver, inventing his or her own strategies and solutions.				
Overthinks or analyzes seemingly simple tasks and requires additional time for task completion (i.e., cleaning room, getting in car, eating food).				
Is idealistic and resists unfairness in any form (i.e., household rules, play with friends, or global issues and problems).				
Struggles to connect socially with same-age children. Prefers older or adult friends.				
Displays lack of motivation and effort in school, yet intensely pursues own learning interests and passions independently.				
Has perfectionistic tendencies (i.e. is highly self critical of work, perceives anything less than "perfect" as failure, is highly controlling in play or in the way things must be done).				

1. Explain why the Advanced Learning Program might be appropriate for this student.
2. Describe any special interests, talents or projects this student pursues independently.
3. List the student's academic and/or social challenges (if any).
4. Describe any sensitivities the student displays.
5. Please add any additional information you would like us to know about this student.
6. If this student qualifies for ALP services, how do you feel the program can help the student?

Advanced Learning Program Parent Referral Form Student Characteristic Checklist

Please check characteristics in each box that this student regularly demonstrates.

Cognitive Ability

- Capable of reasoning like someone 2-4 years older
- Uses advanced vocabulary
- Enjoys problem-solving and other intellectual activities
- Understands and learns quickly
- Seeks mental stimulation
- Highly sensitive to human issues, to beauty, and nature
- Has a more sophisticated sense of humor
- Asks questions, seeks meaning
- Enjoys interacting with intellectual peers/adults/older adults
- May have less effective interpersonal skills
- Intense, high energy level
- Multiple interests and talents
- Tends to be a perfectionist

Creative Thinking

- Has a large number & variety of ideas and questions
- Has unique, original ideas
- Enjoys solving problems in areas of interest
- Tolerant of ambiguity
- Likes open-ended assignments
- Non-conforming in thinking, manner of dress
- Risk-taker in thinking and problem-solving
- Willing to be different
- Unique sense of humor
- Enjoys creating stories or plays
- Draws cartoons and/or creates characters

Math

- Thinks logically, mathematically, "scientifically"
- Enjoys abstract problems and topics
- Has a strong number sense
- Quickly sees patterns
- Enjoys puzzles and chess
- Solves problems intuitively, but may not be able to explain how
- Explains data, statistics
- Persistent in learning about math topics
- Pursues math activities in free time

Reading/Writing

- Reads widely/avidly/fluentlly, in and out of class
- Uses advanced vocabulary
- Interested in words and word relationships
- Exhibits understanding of language structure
- Plays with language
- Recognizes and appreciates quality literature
- Writes descriptively; communicates a story
- Applies literary devices to writing
- Understands and processes key ideas
- Writes with voice, in variety of forms
- Enjoys writing for creative outlet

In addition to the characteristics above, this student displays unusually high performance and/or interest in:

Leadership
 Science
 Social Studies
 Art
 Music
 Drama
 Dance

This student has participated in:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chess <input type="checkbox"/> Debate Team <input type="checkbox"/> Future Problem-Solving <input type="checkbox"/> In-the-Know <input type="checkbox"/> Inventing <input type="checkbox"/> Math competitions <input type="checkbox"/> Media Production <input type="checkbox"/> Literary Magazine/Newspaper/Yearbook <input type="checkbox"/> Student Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Art Shows <input type="checkbox"/> Destination Imagination <input type="checkbox"/> Summer Programs for high-achieving students <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Community activism or volunteer work <input type="checkbox"/> Extended research <input type="checkbox"/> Literary magazine/newspaper/yearbook <input type="checkbox"/> Science Fairs <input type="checkbox"/> NYSSMA <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
|--|--|

Please give specific examples of this child's unique abilities, either in this box or in an attachment.

Parent Signature: _____