

Parents' Frequently Asked Questions about G.A.T.E.

1. What does GATE stand for?

The G.A.T.E. acronym stands for Gifted and Talented Education. In the Rincon Valley Union School District we identify those students whose educational needs may not fit the regular grade-level curriculum due to advanced ability and/or achievement. The District then provides opportunities for both high-achieving and underachieving students who have been identified for the program. A GATE student may be achieving well above grade level in all subjects; others may be far advanced in one area and at or below grade level in others.

2. What is the GATE program?

GATE in the Rincon Valley District has three main components:

- a. Classroom: Because gifted learners need to have the core subject areas differentiated, we train our teachers to use different teaching strategies (such as Depth and Complexity, Critical Thinking levels, Universal Themes, Tiered Assignments, Curriculum Compacting, etc.) to ensure that all students are challenged at the appropriate levels. Teachers are also given additional information on social and emotional needs of gifted learners.*
- b. After school: To ensure that all GATE students receive enrichment in areas of interest, after-school GATE classes are scheduled. These are spread throughout the district and parents must arrange transportation, though assistance with carpooling is offered whenever possible. Some sessions are taught by parents and other community members with expertise in a given area; others are taught by contracted staff. Information on events and exhibits in the community is sent via email to GATE families.*
- c. Parent: Because raising a gifted child presents certain challenges, parent education and support is also a central part of the program. GATE nights, parent events, a lending library, email groups, as well as articles and resources posted on the district website offer parents information about how they can help in the education of their children. Parents can also help their students through the **Odyssey of the Mind** and **Junior Great Books** programs.*

3. How was my child identified and do I have to give permission for this?

A student is identified for the GATE program based on a multiple-measure assessment. Elements of the assessment include California Standards Test scores (STAR testing), teacher assessments, Raven Progressive Matrices score, parent assessment, and portfolio elements when appropriate. GATE is not a program a student “qualifies” for through achieving good grades or advanced STAR scores. The goal of the district GATE program is to identify those students whose educational needs may not fit the regular grade-level curriculum and who need different instruction to progress to their potential. Parents and students must sign permission for the identification in order to participate and have the identification placed in the students’ cumulative file.

4. What is the Raven?

The Raven Progressive Matrices Test is given to second graders as an initial screening/search device. The Raven is a non-verbal test of ability that gives an initial idea of whether students can reason by analogy, form comparisons, and think logically. It is just one of the identifying elements; no one score assures or prevents identification; it is truly based on multiple measures.

5. Will my child be taken out of the classroom?

Occasionally, provision is made for a GATE student to participate in another classroom for part of the school day to provide the student appropriate instruction. In addition, GATE students may participate in out-of-the-classroom groupings for Junior Great Books, the BiMathlon, or occasionally for advanced math or writing instruction. The Rincon Valley GATE program is not a pullout program, however, and the intent is to meet the needs of our GATE students in the regular classroom environment whenever possible.

6. Is the GATE program at all district schools?

The GATE program during the school day is on-site within each classroom. After-school GATE enrichment classes are held at various schools throughout the district. Parents are responsible for getting students to these classes, should their children elect to participate; the GATE coordinator helps to facilitate carpools whenever possible.

7. Does this mean my child does more work? Can I expect my child to have different projects?

Depending on the needs of the student and the particular material involved, the teacher may give different assignments. The GATE students shouldn't have simply more of the same-level material, but what might be appropriately challenging to one student might not be for another. The goal is continual progress in each subject area.

8. Will my child be with other GATE students?

Whenever possible, the GATE identified students are clustered -- although even within clusters there will be students of varying needs. When there are large numbers of identified GATE students at a grade level, two clusters are sometimes created. When a teacher has several gifted students, taking the time to make appropriate provisions for them is more realistic. Furthermore, gifted students can better understand and accept their learning differences if there are others just like them in the class.

9. Who teaches the GATE classes?

All teachers in the district receive basic GATE training; GATE clusters are placed with teachers who have had extensive GATE training whenever possible. Many of our teachers are provided additional training through the district GATE Certification Program. The after-school GATE classes are taught by parents, community members, or contracted employees of the district.

10. What is the time commitment for my child – or me?

*Because the main component of GATE is within the classroom, only those students who choose additional enrichment will have additional time constraints. Parents are encouraged to participate in GATE through teaching enrichment classes, coaching **Odyssey of the Mind** teams, leading **Junior Great Books** groups and the **Academic Scavenger Hunt** teams, and by attending GATE Parent Meetings. However, these elements are optional.*

11. Is there a cost to the GATE Program?

There is no cost for participating in the GATE program. The district does request a \$10 donation per enrichment class to cover materials, but this is not required for enrollment.

12. If GATE doesn't start until 3rd grade, what happens in Kindergarten through Grade 2?

Formal identification usually takes place at the beginning of third grade. All teachers, however, are trained in strategies to meet the needs of high ability students and are expected to differentiate instruction in all grades. Accommodations for particularly high-ability students are made in Kindergarten through 2nd grade on a case-by-case basis.

13. What is an ILP?

Teachers develop an Individual Learning Plan for students in the GATE program at Fall Parent/Teacher Conferences. In this plan the strengths and weaker areas of the students are discussed. Plans and goals are developed by the teacher, parent, and, where appropriate, the student to ensure continued growth. These plans are reviewed periodically and a Spring Conference may be scheduled.

14. Does GATE identification follow to Middle School and High School?

When parental permission for GATE identification is on file, a notice of GATE identification is placed in the student's cumulative file, which follows through transfer to other schools and/or districts. In California, districts are not required to automatically accept GATE transfer but are required to evaluate these students and generally look to see what criteria were used in the identification. In practice, however, most GATE identifications are accepted from district to district.

If you have questions, or want more information, email Merritt Booster: mbooster@rvusd.org