

**Rincon Valley Union School District**

# **G.A.T.E. Parent Handbook**



**Gifted and Talented Education Program**

Revised: September, 2011

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Rincon Valley Union School District's G.A.T.E. (Gifted and Talented Education) Program! This program was established to help meet the needs of our students with exceptionally high intellectual ability and academic achievement. In this handbook, you will find information about gifted learners, answers to frequently asked questions about our program, and a list of resources for parents of gifted children.

Merritt Booster, GATE Coordinator

## Table of Contents

What is Giftedness? .....	3
GATE Law .....	4
Funding for GATE Programs .....	4
Identification .....	5
Myths about Gifted Students .....	6
Characteristics of Gifted Learners .....	7
GATE within the Classroom .....	8
Individual Learning Plans .....	9
GATE After-School Enrichment.....	9
Other GATE-Sponsored Programs.....	10
How Parents Can Help .....	12
FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) .....	14
Books, Journals, Organizations, and Internet Resources .....	18
Glossary of Terms .....	19
Appendix 1 (Depth and Complexity) .....	20
Appendix 2 (Critical Thinking) .....	21

## What is Giftedness?

The goal of the Rincon Valley District is to locate those students whose educational needs may not be satisfied by the standard grade-level curriculum. The definitions of who is considered a gifted individual vary widely, depending on who is doing the defining, and range from very specific to quite broad.

Some professionals state that the gifted are the two percent who score highest on tests of intelligence – IQ tests. Others prefer a broader definition, describing them as children "whose performance is consistently remarkable in any potentially valuable area." A definition widely used across the country is one given by Javits (Title IV, Part B, 1988) stating that the term gifted and talented student means children and youths who:

*...give evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity or in specific academic fields, and who require special services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities.*

Yet another definition, used to separate gifted students from those who are "merely" bright, emphasizes the intensity of these individuals and focuses on the "asynchrony" of these children. "Asynchrony" refers to the fact that gifted students' cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development may be at very different levels compared to their age peers, either lagging behind or being far ahead. This can make them particularly vulnerable and can require modifications in parenting and teaching for them to develop to their full potential.

In California, it is left to each district to define the criteria by which students are identified for GATE services, using a very broad definition:

*"Gifted and talented pupil" means a pupil enrolled in a public elementary or secondary school who is identified as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability.*

In the Rincon Valley School District, the primary consideration for GATE identification rests on the issue of what is needed for a student to maintain continuous growth in all subjects and for his/her social/emotional needs to be met. In a district such as Rincon Valley, the average student performance is quite high and thus the level of instruction is also high. Scores continually in the advanced range might be enough to qualify a student for GATE services in a low-performing district, for they would need a different level of instruction in the classroom. But if that were the case in Rincon Valley, a large percentage of the students would be identified for GATE. For more details on district identification see page 5.

## GATE Law

Gifted education is an optional program in the state of California, and as such, school districts may choose to have specific programs to address gifted learners. Despite the fact that it is not a “mandated” program, there is a history of support for gifted education, beginning with the Mentally Gifted Minors act in 1961. In 1989, legislation (AB494) was enacted which broadened identification to include areas of artistic talent, leadership, and creative thinking. New legislation (AB2313) went into effect in 2001 which requires that primary GATE services be integrated into the regular school day as differentiated learning experiences based on the core curriculum and that districts address the social and emotional needs of gifted students as well as their academic needs. Until 2009-10, districts were encouraged to create programs for gifted students and to apply for GATE funds from the state. This was done through an application process describing program design, the identification process, curriculum and instruction, social and emotional development, professional development, parent and community involvement, program assessment, and budget. Districts were then approved for up to three years of funding for their GATE Programs, with a few larger districts receiving five-year approval. Rincon Valley consistently received a three-year approval.

### Funding for GATE Programs

State funding for GATE is defined as follows:

*The State Superintendent of Public Instruction apportions funds to participating school districts based on a formula that divides the total funding available for GATE programs in the state budget for the current year by the statewide total units of average daily attendance (i.e., A.D.A.) in kindergarten through grade twelve at the second principal apportionment of the prior year for all participating school districts.*

In other words, a certain amount is allotted in the state budget each year to fund GATE programs. This amount is distributed to all districts that have approved GATE programs – proportioned by the total daily attendance average of the district, not by the number of identified GATE students. The total statewide allocation for GATE for 2007-08 was a little over \$55 million, of which Rincon Valley received approximately \$24,000. This amounted to approximately \$88/year per GATE student. Due to the financial crisis of the last few years, GATE funds were cut and the application/approval process halted. Funds are still distributed to those districts approved as of 2008-9 but have now been moved into the General Fund. Districts have full discretion in how these funds are used, and as a result, many GATE programs throughout the state have virtually disappeared.

The Rincon Valley District Board of Trustees and administrators believe strongly in GATE, however, and through parent and community support, the District uses monies from the Parcel Tax to continue GATE. This funding can only be used for elements that further education for our GATE students, e.g., teacher training, GATE program coordination, after-school classes, materials, etc. Because a large number of GATE students benefit, GATE funds can also be used for programs such as Odyssey of the Mind, Junior Great Books, Abracajazz and the Honor Choir, and the Academic Scavenger Hunt, which are open to all students. GATE funding cannot be used for classroom teachers and other expenses of the district, and the district may not charge parents for any aspect of the GATE program.

## Identification

As required by law, the Rincon Valley District identifies students for GATE services through multiple measures. This means that no one test or assessment can keep a student from identification if other measures indicate the need. Rincon Valley seeks out and identifies students primarily for intellectual ability and specific academic achievement, through a case study of each referred student.

All second graders are screened with the Raven Progressive Matrices, a non-verbal test of ability that gives an indication of intellectual level regardless of language or academic achievement. Those scoring in the top two percentiles enter the case study process, as well as all students referred by teachers or parents. Achievement scores, teacher assessments, parent assessments, evidence of work and gifted characteristics, etc. are then entered into the “mix.” The goal is to find those students who need GATE services to ensure positive academic and emotional growth as they move through elementary school and beyond.

The basic criteria for GATE identification is:

3. **(Intellectual Ability)** A score above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile on Raven’s Progressive Matrices supported by STAR score(s) above 450 in either Language Arts or Mathematics or two strong teacher recommendations (evidence of high level thinking in the classroom from multiple sources.).

OR

4. **(Specific Academic Ability)** Scores above the midpoint of the Advanced Scale Score Range in Language Arts or Mathematics (500-515, depending on grade level), for two years, with supporting evidence of a Raven score above the 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile or a strong teacher recommendation.

Those students who meet the Raven criteria in Intellectual Ability but who are without supporting evidence or who have only one year above the midpoint in Specific Academic Ability, are placed on the GATE Watch List to be re-examined in one year. During this year, their teachers are asked not only to watch for higher level thinking but also to differentiate the curriculum to offer opportunities for high-end critical thinking for these students.

Students can be assessed for GATE identification at any time during their stay in the Rincon Valley District. It is not a one-shot opportunity. Multiple teacher recommendations and scores near the stated criteria, and/or parent request will prompt a review of a student. A new case study is completed, possibly including a portfolio demonstrating work significantly above grade level. Evidence of rapid English acquisition may be part of the portfolio where appropriate.

Once a student meets the criteria for GATE identification, parental permission is required to finalize it and for GATE placement. With a parent’s signature on file, a record of GATE identification is placed in the student’s cumulative file, and the student’s teachers are informed. In addition, he or she is included in the list of gifted students reported to middle schools upon completion of 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Without parental permission, GATE identification cannot be made.

## Common Myths About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are a homogeneous group, all high achievers.
- Gifted students do not need help. If they are really gifted, they can manage on their own.
- Gifted students have fewer problems than others because their intelligence and abilities somehow exempt them from the hassles of daily life.
- The future of a gifted student is assured: a world of opportunities lies before the student.
- Gifted students are self-directed; they know where they are heading.
- The social and emotional development of the gifted student is at the same level as his or her intellectual development.
- Gifted students are nerds and social isolates.
- The primary value of the gifted student lies in his or her brain power.
- The gifted student's family always prizes his or her abilities.
- Gifted students need to serve as examples to others and they should always assume extra responsibility.
- Gifted students make everyone else smarter.
- Gifted students can accomplish anything they put their minds to. All they have to do is apply themselves.
- Gifted students are naturally creative and do not need encouragement.
- Gifted children are easy to raise and a welcome addition to any classroom.

## Truths About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are often perfectionistic and idealistic. They may equate achievement and grades with self-esteem and self-worth, which sometimes leads to fear of failure and interferes with achievement.
- Gifted students may experience heightened sensitivity to their own expectations and those of others, resulting in guilt over achievements or grades perceived to be low.
- Gifted students are asynchronous. Their chronological age, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development may all be at different levels. For example, a 5-year-old may be able to read and comprehend a third-grade book but may not be able to write legibly.
- Some gifted children are "mappers" (sequential learners), while others are "leapers" (spatial learners). Leapers may not know how they got a "right answer." Mappers may get lost in the steps leading to the right answer.
- Gifted students may be so far ahead of their chronological age mates that they know more than half the curriculum before the school year begins! Their boredom can result in low achievement and grades.
- Gifted children are problem solvers. They benefit from working on open-ended, interdisciplinary problems; for example, how to solve a shortage of community resources. Gifted students often refuse to work for grades alone.
- Gifted students often think abstractly and with such complexity that they may need help with concrete study- and test-taking skills. They may not be able to select one answer in a multiple choice question because they see how all the answers might be correct.
- Gifted students who do well in school may define success as getting an "A" and failure as any grade less than an "A." By early adolescence they may be unwilling to try anything where they are not certain of guaranteed success.

Adapted from **College Planning for Gifted Students, 2nd edition**, by Sandra Berger.

---

*copyright © 2000*

*ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education*

## Characteristics of Gifted Children and Talented Children and Potential Associated Problems

(Adapted from publications by Clark, Colangelo, Dalton and Whitmore, by Marion Mackenzie for QAGTC inc.)

<b>Characteristics of GATE Children</b>	<b>Potential Associated Problems</b>
Gifted and talented children may:	Gifted and talented children may:
learn quickly and easily; have the ability to abstract and reason critically; see relationships between ideas and events	become bored and frustrated; dislike repetition and shallow curriculum; hide abilities to gain acceptance; receive negative adult attitudes to smartness
exhibit verbal proficiency	dominate discussion; have difficulty with listening skills; exhibit manipulative behavior
have a high energy level	need less sleep; become frustrated with inactivity, lack of challenge, or active inquiry
exhibit heightened curiosity	take on too many activities
be extremely persistent; concentrate on tasks of high interest for extended periods	disrupt class routine; feel stifled by restrictions; resist interruption or schedules; be perceived as stubborn, uncooperative
exhibit different learning styles - accelerated: desiring mastery, achievement and/or - enriched: desiring depth of knowledge, the need to experience, emotional investment in subject, imagination	become frustrated with absence of progress; be prone to being 'overdriven' and/or not be motivated by results; be resistant to interruption; be seen as time wasting or preoccupied
exhibit unusual emotional depth and intensity	be unusually vulnerable; feel confused if thoughts and feelings not taken seriously
be highly sensitive; be acutely perceptive	be perceived as immature; try to mask feelings to conform; be vulnerable to criticism
be concerned with adult/moral issues; be idealistic	attempt unrealistic reforms; feel frustrated, angry, depressed; develop a cynical attitude; receive intolerance from age peers
aim at perfection	set unrealistically high goals; feel inadequate; feel frustrated with others; fear failure, inhibiting attempts in new areas
exhibit independence, nonconformity	have a tendency to challenge and question indiscreetly; have difficulty with rigid conformity, may be penalized; exhibit rebellious behavior
have heightened self awareness; feelings of being different	experience social isolation; regard difference as bad, worthless, resulting in low self esteem
have a keen sense of humor	use humor inappropriately or to attack others; feel confused when humor not understood; feel rejected by others
possess unusual imagination	be seen as weird; feel stifled by lack of creative opportunities
respond and relate to older children and adults	experience social isolation; be seen as show off, odd, superior, critical; be rejected by older children

## GATE within the Classroom

Because gifted children need intellectual peer interaction, the schools in Rincon Valley try to cluster the GATE students as much as possible with teachers knowledgeable about gifted learners. Within the classroom, teachers differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of all students, including the GATE students. An essential element in this is teacher training. This is why an important focus of the GATE program, including the allocation of GATE funds, is on staff development.

All teachers in the district, K-8, receive a release day for basic training on the GATE program and in strategies for high level learning. GATE strategies are often part of inservice training during the year as well. Opportunities to attend GATE conferences are offered to all teachers yearly, and a number of teachers are working to obtain Rincon Valley GATE Certification. There is a GATE Liaison teacher (or teachers) at each school site who has received additional training and who acts as a resource for other teachers and as a conduit for the district GATE Coordinator. Ask the GATE Coordinator or principal who is the GATE Liaison teacher at your school.

The process of meeting individual needs in the classroom is called “Differentiation.” This in-class differentiation can sometimes be hard for parents to recognize. Three of the components that are most often associated with differentiation are:

- Content – altering what is being taught; putting more depth into the curriculum, using universal concepts to create broader understanding, etc.
- Process – changing how it is being taught; using varied resources at differing levels, flexible groupings, varying instructional strategies, etc.
- Product – having different outcomes (i.e., how the student demonstrates understanding of the lesson); providing choice in product, varying assignments or levels of assessment.

Not every lesson will be differentiated and not every lesson will vary content, process, and product. Ongoing assessment helps teachers evaluate who needs an assignment altered, and how a lesson should be taught.

A key concept in differentiation for gifted learners is the understanding that providing a classroom that emphasizes universal concepts, critical thinking, and depth and complexity is beneficial to all students. Regardless of academic level, student understanding increases, but these elements also provide gifted learners the challenge and open-ended opportunities they need. **Therefore, you may not see an obviously different set of lessons coming home.**

You may hear your student or teacher talk about the following elements of differentiation:

***(see the Glossary section and Appendices 1 & 2 for more explanation)***

- Pre-assessment and curriculum compacting
- Learning styles and grouping
- Depth and Complexity and universal themes
- Critical thinking levels & questioning techniques, including Socratic questioning
- Tiered lessons and acceleration

## Individual Learning Plans

Part of the GATE program for students includes the development of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). This plan is created by the teacher with input from the student and parents and is completed at the Parent/Teacher Conference in November. The ILP should include the student's strengths, weaker areas, social/emotional issues, plans for in-class differentiation, recommendations for extra-curricular exploration, and two to four goals for the year. A copy of the ILP goes to the parents, to the GATE Coordinator, and is placed in the GATE file within the student's cumulative records file (cum file).

## GATE After-School Enrichment

Exploration is essential for gifted learners. They want the chance to investigate a wide range of subjects that interest them, and often tend to delve deeply into something and then drop it, seemingly overnight, sometimes leaving projects half completed. Be encouraged that this is not unusual at the elementary school level. This is a time of investigation; in this exploration, the students will take what they need out of a subject and move on to something else. This is not to say that students shouldn't focus and move in-depth into a study; eventually this is essential. It's just that the area of focus may not gel until middle or high school.

In addition, gifted learners need opportunities to be with students who move at a rapid pace and whom they can relate to. Some students are lucky to have a group of intellectual peers either at school or elsewhere. Others do not. Gifted learners also come from a wide range of economic backgrounds and some may lack the opportunity for enrichment.

As a result, the GATE program offers a variety of additional enrichment experiences outside the classroom, such as after-school classes in Spanish, math, art, astronomy, geology, etc. Some of these classes run weekly for months, others are as short as one or two meetings. Students receive a newsletter quarterly, which describes upcoming classes, and they have the chance to sign up for one or two that are of interest and fit their schedules. Registration is done on a first-come, first-served basis, though students usually are placed in their first or second choices. The classes are spread throughout the district at the various schools; transportation is up to each family, although we try to assist parents in coordinating carpools wherever possible.

Through the newsletter, the district lets families know of opportunities in the area that might be of interest as well. Occasionally, a weekend event is planned as an option for GATE families to attend; more often, the information about an event is simply offered for families to consider as an outing.

## Other GATE-Sponsored Programs

The GATE program also funds additional opportunities open to all students, whether GATE identified or not. These programs not only serve needs of GATE students, but also those students who may be high achievers or who have strengths in music, arts, creativity, etc.

### **Odyssey of the Mind** **Creativity Counts!**

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Students apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own mini-plays. Teams of 5-7 students meet once a week after school to work on short-term spontaneous problems that they solve within a few minutes; they can also elect a long-term problem to work on for months. They can then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and world level. Rincon Valley has had several teams competing at the state level and one at World Competition.

Odyssey of the Mind is funded through the GATE program but is open to all students. The essential ingredient is a parent or community coach who provides organization and supervision to a team of five to seven students – but who does not help solve the problem. All solutions must be student created!

Odyssey of the Mind cannot function without parent support. If you are interested, come to one of the Odyssey of the Mind information evenings held each fall or call the GATE Coordinator.

### **Junior Great Books**

GATE supports the Junior Great Books program present in many classes throughout the district. Trainings for teachers and volunteer discussion leaders are organized each fall and GATE contributes to the funding.

Through the “Shared Inquiry” method: students and discussion leaders work together to uncover deeper meanings in literature. Leaders pose genuine, thought provoking questions, and students respond with their own ideas and learn to use evidence from the text to develop and refine their interpretations. Junior Great Books helps students improve skills in four key areas: critical thinking, literacy, language arts, and listening.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Junior Great Books program, talk to your principal or child’s teacher.

## **The Academic Scavenger Hunt**

During two weekends each winter, over 140 Rincon Valley students in grades three through eight participate in the Academic Scavenger Hunt. The third graders during one weekend and the fourth through sixth graders the following. Students at the Rincon Valley Charter also have the opportunity through the school to participate. The Hunt teams scavenge through the libraries, encyclopedias, and the internet to find the answers to 25-40 trivia questions (depending on grade level) and document their resources.

The GATE Coordinator works with the local Sonoma County librarians to write and organize this Academic Scavenger Hunt to encourage the development of research skills, organization, and teamwork... AND for students to have fun doing it.

Parents can help with this hunt – but cannot do the research for their children. They are needed to provide transportation to the library (if needed), provide snacks, and help students learn where to look for answers. Teams of three to seven students are formed in each classroom where there is interest. The packet of questions is received at the end of the day on Friday and the team has until the start of school Monday to complete their answers. All students receive a small participatory prize, and the highest scoring teams at each grade level receive awards as well. The school with the greatest participation gets to exhibit the Rincon Valley Academic Scavenger Hunt trophy for the year.

If you are interested, watch for information coming home in December.

## **Abracajazz and Honor Choir**

GATE also supports the Abracajazz band and the Rincon Valley Honor Choir. These groups, directed by Rincon Valley music teachers, Ken Gadbury and Lorry Laby, are formed each year through selection by the music teachers and/or audition. The jazz band and the choir meet once a week after school on Wednesdays and perform on numerous occasions, both for the schools and for the community.

## How Parents Can Help

Raising a gifted child can be a challenge as well as a joy. The process of learning, and learning how to learn, is something that does not only happen in the classroom. Parents are the first and most influential teachers a child will have, and establishing a sense of partnership with the school can create the most positive environment for learning. Parental participation in a child's ongoing education is vital, particularly in the areas of motivation, reinforcement, emotional stability, and enrichment.

- ✎ Educate yourself about the characteristics, sensitivities, and challenges of gifted children. Investigate the internet resources listed on page 18 and read. Books are available for check-out through the District Office.
- ✎ Be aware of how you use praise. Too much praise may cause children to believe that they will only receive your love or acceptance if they earn it through their achievements. Praise effort as well as success, congratulate the child for handling failure positively, and give praise for actions unrelated to ability, such as sharing or being considerate.
- ✎ Value the process of learning, not only the end results, and model learning from your own mistakes and challenges. Bright children often become accustomed to success and quick results. It's important they learn that not all their goals or desires will be met easily. By learning to cope with difficult challenges, where success is not immediate, your child will develop the persistence to handle the increasing demands of schooling and life in general. You can help by showing your child how to break seemingly unmanageable tasks into smaller steps where effort brings success. You can also help your child by teaching her/him time management skills. Help your child to see the link between effort and success. Underachievement can become chronic if children attribute their successes to outside factors (e.g., luck, easy work, the teacher liking them), but attribute their failures to lack of ability. Encourage children to take (reasonable) responsibility for both their successes and their failures. ***Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm. Sir Winston Churchill***
- ✎ All children need to be heard -- Be an active listener, particularly when problems arise. That is, ensure that you understand the child's concerns and point of view before trying to offer advice. Active listening may involve paraphrasing what you have heard, to ensure that you have understood the child's intention e.g., "Do you mean...?" or "Are you saying that...?" Often listening and reflecting is all that is needed to encourage a child to solve the problem – sometimes with a solution you might not have considered.
- ✎ Encourage your children to attempt and persevere with things they do not do especially well. This may help them accept that they need not always perform at

a very high level, while also developing empathy for others who find it difficult to excel and appreciation for those whose talents are different from their own. Encourage your child to play a musical instrument. Playing well obviously requires effort and practice, and the lessons learned in perseverance here can transfer to other endeavors. Playing at sports they enjoy, even if they are not stars on the court or field, can also encourage appreciation and perseverance.

- ✎ If your child exhibits the more negative forms of perfectionism (e.g., fear of failure, not trying new or difficult tasks, criticizing their own work excessively), examine your own behavior, for many perfectionist children have at least one perfectionist parent. Do you set unrealistic goals for yourself? Are you overly critical of your own achievements, including your performance as a parent? Do you do too much for your children, implying that they can't do things well enough? Help children to see the difference between 'the pursuit of excellence' (which is achievable) and 'the pursuit of perfection' (which is not).
- ✎ Do not do for children things that they can do (or can be helped to do) for themselves. The primary job of parenting is preparing a child for independence; parents and teachers do children no favors by prolonging their dependence upon them. This is not a matter of 'throwing children in at the deep end', but of helping them acquire the skills and confidence necessary to take increasing responsibility for their own actions. For example, teach them how to find what they want in a library, rather than find things for them; help them with planning, instead of planning everything for them. Allowing failures and disappointments is critical; treating them as learning experiences, and modeling optimism, is essential parenting.
- ✎ Read to your children long after they are capable of reading themselves. This provides a model for good reading, opportunities for connection and discussion (and fun), and exposure to books they might not choose for themselves.
- ✎ Provide enrichment but don't over-schedule your child -- and don't let an older child over-schedule him or herself. Everyone needs time to think, to plan, and most of all, to dream.
- ✎ Volunteer and get involved in your child's education. Parents are needed to teach after-school GATE enrichment classes, lead Junior Great Books discussions, coach Odyssey of the Mind teams, and provide expertise and enrichment in the classroom. Talk to your child's teacher about how you can help.
- ✎ Advocate for your child but be wary of living through your child. All parents want the best for their children, but their goals and dreams may be very different from the ones we have for them.
- ✎ Most of all, remember that gifted children are first and foremost...children.

## FAQs

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **1. What does GATE mean?**

*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 be satisfied by 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 Education:** 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 be met by 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. [See the identification section for more detail]*

#### **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 and 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, a 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 choose 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. [See the GATE in the Classroom section for more detail.]*

#### **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 – and for me?**

*Because the main component of GATE is within the classroom, only those students who choose additional enrichment classes or programs will have additional time commitments. 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. There is also an optional donation for those students participating in Honor Choir or Abracajazz to cover costs for t-shirts.*

**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 (ILP) 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. Students attending the Rincon Valley Charter School remain in the GATE program.*

**15. Once my child is identified, can he or she be removed from the GATE program?**

*Once a student has been identified for the GATE Program, he/she remains in the program while attending a Rincon Valley school. Upon leaving the district, information on the GATE identification follows the student in his/her cumulative file; it is up to the student's new district whether to simply transfer this identification to their GATE program or reassess the student. Most often, it is a simple transfer. For those students moving on to Rincon Valley Middle*

*School or Slater Middle School, a list of all incoming GATE students is sent to the counseling offices in May.*

**16. How will the curriculum be modified for my student?**

See page 8 for this information.

**17. What are AP and Honors classes and does a student need to be GATE identified to take these?**

*Advanced Placement and Honors classes are offered at the high school level and placement in these classes is done through student achievement and interest. Students do NOT need GATE identification to take these classes; they simply need to be high achieving students. AP classes have a nationally administered exam that students may choose to take in the spring; those scoring well may be given college credit by some colleges and universities. Honors classes are generally offered only in freshman and sophomore years with students moving on to AP classes thereafter.*

**18. My child is already busy after school. How much commitment is expected?**

*The primary focus of the GATE program is differentiation within the classroom. After-school enrichment classes are offered but are optional. Many GATE students take only one after-school class a year, and others elect not to participate after school at all, as their schedules are very full. Some choose to participate in Odyssey of the Mind instead.*

**19. How much extra homework will this mean for my child?**












*GATE students should not receive extra homework or class work because of GATE identification. However, the work that children have ought to be commensurate with their abilities. Teachers may increase the pace or complexity for their advanced students, which means homework may be more challenging, but not necessarily take more time to complete. As with questions about instruction in the classroom, if you have questions or concerns about the homework, it is always best to meet with your child's teacher to discuss the purpose of assignments and to work together to best meet your child's needs.*

**20. One of my children was identified for GATE but the other was not. Why? How do we deal with this as a family?**



*While it is true that in the majority of cases, siblings are relatively close in intelligence, it is not a given that they both may need or be identified for GATE services. All children have strengths; not all children are "gifted." Parents should try to focus on meeting the individual needs of each child, should work with the teachers to provide for those needs, and should put the center of attention on each child's strengths, discussing the process of learning rather than grades or scores.*

## Books, Journals, Organizations, and Internet Resources




### Books (available for check-out at the district office)

-  When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers
-  The Gifted Kid's Survival Guides
-  Worth the Risk
-  Fighting Invisible Tigers
-  Perfectionism: What's Bad about Being Too Good
-  Raising your Gifted Child
-  Counseling the Gifted and Talented
-  Growing Up Gifted
-  Power and Promise (Gifted Girls)
-  ReForming Gifted Education
-  Living with Intensity



### Organizations:

-  **California Association for the Gifted (CAG):** [www.cagifted.org](http://www.cagifted.org)
-  **National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC):** [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

### Other Internet Resources:

-  **Hoagies Gifted Education:** [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)
-  **Visual/Spatial Resource:** <http://www.visualspatial.org/>
-  **Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG):** (articles page)  
[http://www.sengifted.org/articles\\_index.shtml](http://www.sengifted.org/articles_index.shtml)

### Journals

-  *Parenting for High Potential – (past issues available for check-out at the District Office)*
-  *The Gifted Communicator – (past issues available for check-out at the District Office)*

## Glossary of Terms

*In reading about gifted education, you may come across these terms often used by educators. These definitions are taken from the California Association for the Gifted website; if you need clarification or more information, email or talk to Merritt Booster.*

### **Affective Learning**

Outcomes of teaching that incorporate the development of social and emotional skills into the curriculum. The study of values, attitudes, and knowledge and appreciation of self and others are included.

### **Asynchrony**

A term for the uneven rates of cognitive, emotional, and physical development often found in gifted children. As advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine, inner experiences and awareness are created within the gifted student that are qualitatively different from the norm. Developmental differences increase as the level of asynchrony increases.

### **Bloom's Taxonomy**

The term cognitive is used to include activities such as remembering and recalling knowledge, thinking, problem solving, and creating. The taxonomy identifies six levels of goals or outcomes in the cognitive area and presents them in a hierarchical order; from lowest to highest they are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Use of the cognitive taxonomy can help teachers gain perspective on the emphasis given to the levels of outcomes in their curriculum planning and encourage more use of the higher levels, especially appropriate for gifted students.

### **Cluster Grouping**

A method for organizing a heterogeneous classroom by assigning a group of students with similar needs, interests, and/or abilities to the same classroom to provide more effective learning.

### **Compacting**

A system in which students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of skills and concepts required in the regular curriculum rather than forcing them to repeat already learned material. By demonstrating the level of proficiency in the basic curriculum the student can then be allowed to use instructional time to engage in more appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

### **Complexity**

The quality or process of thinking that combines many ideas or parts to develop complicated and interrelated wholes. A common characteristic of gifted students is to seek complexity in their thinking and to understand complex concepts and generalizations at a more sophisticated level. Making connections with other ideas, showing the relationship between concepts, and introducing understandings from perspectives other than the student's own can meet this need. Such experiences require students to find multiple solutions across the disciplines, over time, and from different perspectives.

**Core Curriculum**

The content or subject areas specified by the California State Department of Education as basic for all students: reading, writing, mathematics, history/social studies, and science. The core curriculum is sequentially based. The state frameworks provide guidance to local districts in deciding the common knowledge and skills to be learned by all students of a particular grade.

**Critical Thinking**

The use of analytical thinking for purposes of decision-making. This includes the development of specific attitudes and skills such as analyzing arguments and points of view, understanding different perspectives, and reaching sound conclusions.

**Depth**

A process of thought that seeks to understand concepts and generalizations through the analysis of the rules and principles that support the larger idea. A common need of gifted students is to be able to explore a subject at a higher level of understanding by finding the principles and facts that make up its generalizations and concepts. Meeting this need for depth in thinking allows gifted learners to discover details and identify patterns and trends that lead to the formulation of unanswered questions and the understanding of overarching ideas.

**Differentiation**

The modification of the curriculum to meet the unique needs of learners. It may include modifications in complexity, depth, pacing, and selecting among, rather than covering all, of the curriculum areas. The modification is dependent on the individual needs of the students.

**Flexible grouping**

A variety of grouping patterns that allows students to work in many configurations, sometimes alone, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in small or large groups. The choice the teacher makes for organizing the type of grouping to be used may be based on the task, the need or level of the student, or the outcome desired. A student may work most effectively in different levels of grouping in different subjects; for example in a high group for math but a lower group in reading depending on the academic needs.

**Graphic Organizer**

A visual format for the organization and representation of information and ideas. Flow charts, concept maps, and webs are examples of graphic organizers.

**Learning Styles**

A theory regarding the learning mode and/or learning environment most favored by individual students. For example, students may be primarily auditory learners rather than visual or kinesthetic learners. Some gifted students are strong visual-spatial learners. Some students are more successful in a structured environment, while others work best in an independent learning situation.

### **Open-Ended Question**

Questions used to provide opportunities for more than one solution or answer. Student response is judged by the logic used to explain or defend the solution or answer. Students must be able to recognize tasks without a label, draw upon prior knowledge, generate relevant approaches on their own, and articulate their reasoning.

### **Problem-Based Curriculum**

An instructional model that enables learners to solve meaningful problems using knowledge and skills across the disciplines. It enables gifted students to practice critical and creative thinking while researching information and organizing ideas to solve real-world problems.

### **Social-Emotional Needs**

The affective needs of learners that include social relations, personal adjustment, motivation, emotional expression, values, and moral reasoning. Gifted students often experience unusual sensitivity to expectations and feelings of others, heightened self-awareness, early development of idealism and a sense of justice, emotional intensity, high expectations of self and others leading to perfectionism, advanced levels of moral judgment and profound level of altruism and global concerns. These and other areas of advanced or asynchronous social and emotional development can result in at-risk behaviors such as underachievement, symptoms of depression and/or create needs that can inhibit cognitive growth and contribute to feelings of insecurity and isolation.

### **Standards**

Common categories and definitions for standards used in California are:

Content standards refer to the specific academic knowledge, skills, and abilities that all public schools in this state are expected to teach and all pupils are expected to learn in each of the core curriculum areas at each grade level. The teacher can determine specific and/or additional content standards for each lesson or course of study, preferably with the collaboration of the students.

Performance standards communicate the ways by which the content standards can be met or the evidence that can be used to show mastery of the content or skill being learned. Opportunities need to be given for students to have choice and input into the ways in which the outcomes of learning can be communicated and assessed.

Product standards or rubrics define and detail the criteria for and the way in which the learner can meet each level of competence or mastery for the curriculum content or skills for which content standards have been established. These standards allow a more precise evaluation of the degree to which a student has met the content standards. This function is sometimes referred to as the Performance Standards.

Program standards define the goals, design, implementation, and assessment of educational programs.

## The Rincon Valley GATE Program

The primary goal of the Rincon Valley District GATE Program is to meet the needs of our gifted learners -- academically, socially, and emotionally, in all grades. It's a huge task, and one that cannot be successful without an active partnership with parents.

A gifted child is both a joy and a challenge to raise. Characteristics of gifted children also bring potential problems. The more parents and teachers understand these children, the more effective they can be in advocacy and helping them grow emotionally and academically.

Hopefully, this handbook provides answers to some of your questions and stimulates you to learn more. If you have any questions, feel free to email or call me.

Merritt Alden Booster,  
Rincon Valley GATE Coordinator

[mbooster@rvusd.org](mailto:mbooster@rvusd.org)

(707) 542-7375 ext. 4124