

*SUGGESTED OUTCOMES FOR
ACADEMICALLY GIFTED EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
GRADES 9-12
IN MISSISSIPPI*

*OFFICE OF GIFTED EDUCATION
PROGRAMS*

*MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION*

1996

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Dear GEP Contact Person:


It is our hope that the information contained in this document will be useful in planning services for academically gifted students in Mississippi. While the outcomes are suggested and not required, it is clear that written outcomes are a necessary component for program integrity. We encourage each of you to have written outcomes for your local Academically Gifted Education Program by the end of the 1996-97 school year. Personnel from the Office of Gifted Education Programs will conduct regional workshops during September of 1996 on these suggested outcomes and how to integrate them into your local program.

We wish to thank the members of the panel for their input, guidance, and contributions during the meeting and the revisions of the draft document. This project would not have been possible without them.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Walter Moore, retired Director of Special Projects. It was under his leadership that this project was started.

We are grateful to Dr. Tom Burnham, State Superintendent of Education, and to Mr. R. D. Harris, Deputy State Superintendent of Education, for their support of this project and for the resources provided.

Sincerely,


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**SUGGESTED OUTCOMES
FOR ACADEMICALLY GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
GRADES 9-12**

PREFACE

During the Summer of 1995, a panel met to begin the development of outcomes for students participating in an Academically Gifted Education Program in grades 9-12. Work continued on this project through the 1995-96 school year. The panel was composed of practicing teachers of the gifted, a district administrator and a gifted student. The suggested outcomes presented in this document represent the combined efforts of the members of the panel and personnel in the Office of Gifted Education Programs within the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).

Parents and educators will think that some of the outcomes sound desirable for all students. In fact, some of the outcomes are highly desirable for many students at the high school level. Gifted students have the ability to demonstrate mastery/understanding of the process skills and academic content in greater depth and breadth than other students, regardless of age or educational experiences. They frequently identify problems/issues that others would not, and understand the multifaceted complexity of those issues. However, most students, including some gifted students, will not demonstrate the level of task commitment necessary to be successful with the processes outlined in this document. Students lacking that commitment should not be considered for placement in the program. It is suggested that educators in local districts work with teachers of the gifted to seek ways that some of these processes could be appropriately integrated into regular education classes.

Advanced coursework should require students to engage in more abstract-level thinking and work. In *National Excellence*, a report on the status of educational programs for America's brightest students, several students tell about only having to study less than an hour a day to graduate at the top of their class from high school. Later, as they pursued a college degree, they reported that they felt cheated from their high school courses and teachers. They were never required to work at or near their potential in order to make top grades. As a consequence, they never learned how to work hard at studying; they never had to stretch and develop any knowledge or ability in-depth. In the literature on gifted education we refer to this as "forced underachievement." Simply put, students are forced to achieve at a level lower than their abilities because the curricula does not demand that they stretch their abilities to earn good grades. There is another factor that enters into the picture that we must deal with as educators; some students with exceptional abilities will not enroll in advanced courses because they are afraid it will lower their GPA, thus lowering their standing in their graduating class and diminishing chances for obtaining top scholarships. Hence, we send mixed messages to very bright students. You need to take advanced courses to appropriately challenge your abilities and prepare you for college, but don't do so if it will hurt your GPA and scholarship opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

"The catalyst for true success is learning. Learning leads to knowledge. Knowledge leads to understanding. Understanding leads to wisdom." (Jay Rifenburg)

The research in the field of gifted education clearly shows that only providing honors classes and/or advanced placement for gifted students falls considerably short of providing appropriate educational experiences to meet their unique needs. It is necessary to differentiate even the advanced curricula to make the learning experience appropriately stimulating for gifted students. These advanced courses should require more complex and abstract-level thinking and work. Pure intellectual ability is not sufficient. Strong motivation is essential on the part of the student if they are to experience success in this program. The focus of the student must be on the learning, not on the grade. Hence, careful consideration should be given before a student is placed in one of these courses.

Based upon the writings and research of Drs. John Feldhusen, James Gallagher, Sandra Kaplan, June Maker, Sally Reis, Joseph Renzulli, Joyce Van Tassel-Baska and Virgil Ward, the following should be components for any course designed to appropriately meet the needs of academically gifted students:

1. Development of higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) in the pertinent academic area.
2. Development of critical thinking skills in the pertinent academic area.
3. Allowance for in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the pertinent academic area.
4. Development of research methods specific to the academic area.
5. Focus on open-ended tasks.
6. Concentration on more complex tasks and abstractions than their age peers could handle at the depth and breadth that gifted students are capable of managing.
7. Development of more sophisticated products than their age peers should be expected to manage.

Ideally, we would like participation in an Academically Gifted Education Program to afford the motivated, academically accomplished student the opportunity to develop the depth and breadth of a Renaissance Man. This noble goal seems, at first thought, quite appropriate. However, we live in an age of specialization. Doctorates are conferred today in very specialized areas of knowledge. Also, in Mississippi an academically gifted student need only be eligible in one academic area (the pertinent academic area according to regulations). Perhaps a more appropriate

goal would be to facilitate the development of an intense love of learning, combined with an avid love for reading in areas of personal interest. (NOTE: a personal area of interest may not relate directly to a single academic class offered at the high school level, but might be more interdisciplinary in nature.) Academically gifted students frequently have developed in-depth knowledge in an interest area which far exceeds traditional honors classes. At times this knowledge base exceeds that required for success in the first or second year of college in that area. Therefore, it is necessary to allow for the extension of that knowledge through self-selected topics for investigation within the framework of the academically gifted class. In the process, we should not forget that there are still students who can be that Renaissance Man, and deserve the opportunity to do so.

It might seem that the outcomes defined in 1994 for an intellectually gifted program would basically be the same for an academically gifted program, but that is a surface perception. While there tends to be a considerable overlap in the process skills, the desired products differ considerably. It is true that many intellectually gifted students are also academically gifted, yet many students who can easily qualify for an academically gifted program do not satisfy criteria for eligibility for an intellectually gifted program. We must also recognize that not all intellectually gifted students who qualify for an academically gifted program will have the motivation and task commitment necessary to be successful in the program.

The skills listed on the following pages, together with the global goals of **development of an Intense Love of Learning and an Avid Love for Reading in areas of personal interest** make up the suggested outcomes for academically gifted students in grades 9-12. While these are not mandated outcomes, the Panel and MDE believe that having outcomes in place will help develop, improve and/or maintain program integrity. They will provide direction for providing appropriate learning experiences for academically gifted students. Superintendents and other district administrators are encouraged to study the contents of this document, deciding which skills could appropriately be integrated into all academic courses.

OUTCOME CATEGORIES

These outcomes are *suggested* for all Academically Gifted Education Programs, grades 9-12, within the State of Mississippi. Because of the interrelatedness of some skills, categories were developed for communication and management purposes. No single outcome or skill should be taught as a stand-alone topic. Each should be integrated into the course content. It is also clear that one cannot develop an appropriate activity for one of the outcomes without dealing with one or more of the other outcomes. Because of this, the outcomes should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive. Thus, the categories are simply provided to facilitate the organization of ideas and activities within course content.

There are four major outcome categories: Research Skills, Self-Directed Learning Skills, Thinking Skills, and Communication Skills. Each category is accompanied by a major outcome statement. Each major outcome is broken down into sub-categories, which are mainly process skills that students need to have at their command to successfully accomplish the outcome. It is important to point out that the skills listed under each outcome are repeated under other outcomes.

Research Skills: Research has been defined as a studious inquiry or examination, investigation, or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws. The ability to design and conduct meaningful research has long been viewed as an ability reserved for the very learned. Academically gifted students, by virtue of their ability to learn things faster and in greater depth than age peers, need to develop research skills appropriate to the academic area of study. They can appropriately manage in-depth investigations into areas of special personal interest. It is important that they learn how an expert, in an area of interest to the student, would conduct an investigation. They need to be familiar with resources specific to the area, techniques specific to an investigation in the area, and how would an expert report the findings to various audiences. The idea of the traditional research paper is out. Students need to identify and conduct an investigation into a problem that is of interest to them. Bright, young minds frequently discover solutions to real problems that older, more experienced minds do not see because of tradition or other limitations learned through working in the real world.

OUTCOME

The student will select an area of intense interest within the pertinent academic area, define the problem or research topic, design an appropriate research plan, conduct an investigation using techniques and resources appropriate for the academic area and research design, decide upon the most appropriate media for dissemination of the findings, and present the results before an authentic audience.

NOTE: This may be accomplished as a member of a small group at the discretion of the teacher.

RESEARCH SKILLS/SUB-CATEGORIES

- * demonstrate the ability to identify topics/problems that are manageable
- * demonstrate effective question formulation
- * demonstrate the ability to formulate an appropriate hypothesis/problem
- * demonstrate the ability to use data collection skills appropriate for the problem and academic area
- * demonstrate the ability to conduct a feasibility study
- * utilize creative problem solving skills
- * utilize intuitive thinking skills
- * utilize critical thinking skills
- * utilize inductive/deductive thinking skills
- * demonstrate ethical awareness
- * demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections
- * utilize technology appropriately to facilitate the search for information, data analysis, and product presentation
- * demonstrate the ability to cross-reference information
- * demonstrate the willingness to take risks
- * utilize creative abilities
- * utilize effective writing skills

- * utilize effective speaking skills
- * demonstrate the willingness to accept and learn from failure
- * demonstrate an understanding that disproving one's hypothesis is just as valid as proving it
- * demonstrate the ability to defend the research design
- * demonstrate the ability to defend the research findings
- * demonstrate the ability to evaluate the research project and make suggestions for additional research and/or how to improve the project
- * demonstrate the ability to read and evaluate published research
- * demonstrate an extensive written/oral vocabulary
- * demonstrate organizational skills
- * demonstrate time-management skills

Self-Directed Learning Skills: Eminent people, regardless of their area of endeavor, do not rely on others to tell them what needs to be done in their field. They constantly search for new problems to be studied. It is their intense love of learning that drives them to identify and investigate those problems. In short, they are self-directed learners. Teachers of the academically gifted should facilitate the development of an intense love of learning in the students with whom they work through displaying their own love for learning in the academic area. Academically gifted students should not rely on others, including teachers, to direct the total of their learning experiences. Mastering the skills of being a self-directed learner will give students then skills necessary to become highly successful in advanced studies at the college level.

OUTCOME

Given an area of intense personal interest, the student will develop an in-depth investigation, producing a product appropriate to the design and area studied, will generate new knowledge from what is known and will evaluate the product, determining how the investigation and product could be improved.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING SKILLS/SUB-CATEGORIES

- * demonstrate the ability to select topics/problems to investigate based upon interest instead of a requirement
- * demonstrate academic tenacity in the selected area of interest
- * demonstrate an intense love of learning in the area of interest
- * demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections
- * demonstrate effective organizational and study skills
- * demonstrate the ability to establish realistic goals
- * demonstrate task commitment
- * utilize appropriate research skills
- * demonstrate the ability to evaluate efforts/products
- * demonstrate ability to manage time effectively over an extended period
- * demonstrate the ability to formulate plans for further investigation
- * demonstrate the ability to develop new knowledge from what is known
- * demonstrate the ability to identify ethical implications arising from their investigation

- * demonstrate a stylistic maturity of expression
- * utilize technology to create the most effective presentation of the finished product
- * utilize risk-taking abilities
- * utilize decision making skills
- * demonstrate the ability to identify ways in which the product and/or investigation could be improved
- * demonstrate the ability to take personal responsibility for learning
- * demonstrate the ability to use an extensive written/oral vocabulary
- * demonstrate a diverse repertoire of sentence structures, length, beginnings, etc.

Thinking Skills: In our society of accelerated change and ever increasing complexity, it is critical that students become proficient in using thinking skills. No longer can we feel comfortable teaching students facts; rather, it is becoming increasingly necessary to teach them how to think. It would have been reasonably impossible to have predicted thirty years ago what society would be like today based upon technological changes during that time period. Accordingly, we are not able to accurately predict what society will be like thirty years from now. Yet we must prepare students to live in that society. We cannot imagine the rapidity of changes that students today will face during their lives. Nor can we possibly give them all the factual knowledge they will need to be successful thirty years from now. What we can reasonably do is teach them how to find information and how to evaluate and use that information once found.

OUTCOME

Given a topic/problem, the student will define and classify the problem(s), make connections and draw distinctions, analyze information objectively and critically, reflectively developing a relationship between facts and values, and differentiate beliefs and what is true from his/her understanding of what is logically and realistically possible.

THINKING SKILLS/SUB-CATEGORIES

- * demonstrate the ability to use higher order thinking skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use critical thinking skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use analogical thinking skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use creative thinking skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use creative problem solving skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use inductive/deductive reasoning
- * demonstrate the ability to use intuitive reasoning
- * demonstrate the ability to use figural reasoning
- * demonstrate the ability to identify ethical issues related to topic
- * demonstrate the willingness to take risks
- * demonstrate the ability to make interdisciplinary connections
- * demonstrate decision making skills
- * demonstrate ability to formulate appropriate questions
- * demonstrate the ability to use spontaneous thinking skills
- * demonstrate the ability to use research skills

Communication Skills: Some of the best ideas have gone unnoticed because the individual lacked the ability to communicate effectively. That ability is a critical skill in the world today. Communication skills go far beyond the traditional ones of speaking and writing, although both of these are still extremely important. It is imperative today, and will be more so in the future, for students to be able to utilize available technology for transmission and retrieval of information.

OUTCOME

Given the need to retrieve and/or disseminate information, the student will select and utilize the most appropriate media based upon available resources, technology, audience, and time available, for the most effective communication of information. When possible, the student will be able to utilize multiple-media for transmission of information, appropriately modifying the presentation based upon the specific media.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS/SUB-CATEGORIES

- * demonstrate good listening skills
- * identify propaganda techniques
- * identify the point of view of the speaker
- * identify the personal bias and/or hidden agenda of the speaker
- * demonstrate the ability to distinguish fact from opinion
- * demonstrate the ability to argue both sides of an issue
- * demonstrate the ability to respond spontaneously to a question about an area of intense interest or a recent investigation
- * demonstrate effective speaking skills
- * demonstrate effective writing skills
- * demonstrate creative writing skills
- * demonstrate the ability to develop and present a persuasive presentation
- * demonstrate the ability to effectively utilize technology to retrieve available information
- * demonstrate the ability to effectively utilize technology to disseminate information
- * demonstrate the ability to critically analyze what is presented regardless of the medium

In conclusion, it is important to remember that these outcomes are suggested, not mandated. The list is not all inclusive, rather it is a place for district personnel to begin critically analyzing what occurs in classes for academically gifted students. District personnel should identify those skills that can reasonably be integrated into a class and reflect those skills in the Instructional Management Plan for that class for the 1997-98 school year.