

The ACCESS program

Prepared by the ACCESS School Task Force
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SYNOPSIS

The Portland Public Schools (PPS) ACCESS alternative program is a grade 1 through 12 educational option. ACCESS is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of highly capable students to reach their personal best. ACCESS provides a challenging, open-ended arts and academics program that elicits the full potential from highly capable students by supporting both intellectual and personal growth. The rigorous, highly individualized program recognizes different learning styles and talents within a nurturing environment that emphasizes integrated studies, creative arts and social-emotional learning. ACCESS will place Portland in the forefront of academic innovation and provide a haven for highly capable students in the Portland metropolitan area. As proposed, ACCESS will open in September 2002 to approximately 112-140 students in 4 (or 5) classrooms in grades 1 through 6. Each subsequent year, more students will be added to the program reaching a maximum in year four (2005-06) of approximately 500 students in grades 1 through 12: 336 students in grades 1 through 8, and 140 students in grades 9 through 12.

Students possessing unusual intelligence do not necessarily possess effective coping skills. One of the greatest challenges to teachers of gifted students is to enable students to use their abilities productively. Unfortunately, many students who are gifted and talented do not have the benefit of such guidance.

Identifying gifted students who may be at risk of failure or underachievement, is as important as maintaining the academic continuum in the classroom.

ACCESS:

Accelerated curriculum

Cultivation and development of skills, abilities, and creativity

Character and social development

Exploration and personal discovery

Self-directed, self-paced challenges toward excellence

Service to the community and society with tolerance and wisdom

"Many years of research have shown that when gifted students are grouped with intellectual peers, who share similar levels of emotional and social maturity, and have like abilities and interests, the feelings of salience and difference disappear, or are severely moderated. Deliberate underachievement for peer acceptance virtually disappears." (Miraca Gross)

*"The difficulty with highly gifted children in school may be summarized in three words: **they don't fit**. The highly gifted child is many ages. In addition, highly gifted children may have trouble establishing fulfilling friendships with people of their own age when there are few or no other highly gifted children with whom to interact.*

For most highly gifted children, social relationships with age peers necessitate a constant monitoring of thoughts, words and behavior. One of the greatest benefits for a highly gifted child is the chance for them to spend time with others like themselves. Rather than feeling like oddballs, they suddenly feel normal."
(Stephanie Tolan)

Executive Summary

In Portland Public Schools today there are 5,300 students identified as Talented and Gifted. Of these, 1,200 are in the 99th percentile and classified as Highly Capable. The 1,200 student figure includes the 960 students identified by Research and Evaluation using the data from PALTs (district academic tests at grades 4, 6 and 7) and OSAs (state academic tests at grades 3, 5, 8), as well as the students that are tested with TAG staff-administered cognitive and academic tests (grades K through 12). Many Talented and Gifted students are successful in a traditional school environment, some of these Highly Capable students struggle for academic and/or social reasons. Some Highly Capable students have trouble establishing fulfilling friendships with people of their own age when there are few or no other highly capable children with whom to interact. For most Highly Gifted children, social relationships with age peers necessitate a constant monitoring of thoughts, words and behavior. One of the greatest benefits for a highly capable child is the chance for them to spend time with others like themselves. "Rather than feeling like oddballs, they suddenly feel normal."

The purpose of the ACCESS program is to provide an environment for Highly Capable students to develop a lifelong love of learning, and encourage them to become full and productive participants in our rapidly changing global community. ACCESS will develop an open-ended curriculum to meet students' desire to learn at an accelerated rate with fewer repetitions, and to provide social-emotional learning skills specialized to address the needs of the Highly Capable student and his/her family. ACCESS will create an environment where students do not feel isolated because they are not in step with their classmates.

ACCESS will be integrated into an existing school. Partnerships will be developed within the school community. Activities will be designed to offer all students the opportunity to participate in special events and celebrations and interact with each other. ACCESS will offer a model to explore best practices for meeting the needs of other talented and gifted students. ACCESS will develop curriculum that can be shared throughout the district and state. The model will carefully assess the effectiveness and develop a plan for progressive yet moderate growth in future years.

The first year plan is for 4 to 5 classrooms serving 112-140 students enrolled in grades one through six. Support will be through earned FTE and increased enrollment in the host school for additional school support.

Students will be eligible for transfer from their neighborhood school if they score in the top 1% on a nationally-recognized test of cognitive, reading and/or mathematics ability. Students who show the potential to perform at this level, or who demonstrate a need for instruction at least three years above grade level, are also eligible. Such students are recognized to be at risk of dropping out before graduation or experiencing difficulties because of a substantial asynchrony between age and cognitive or academic development. Principals and staff will follow district transfer procedures.

"Young gifted people between the ages of 11 and 15 frequently report a range of problems as a result of their abundant gifts: perfectionism, competitiveness, unrealistic appraisal of their gifts, rejection from peers, confusion due to mixed messages about their talents, and parental and social pressures to achieve, as well as problems with unchallenging school programs or increased expectations."
(Thomas Buescher and Sharon Higham,
Helping Adolescents Adjust to Giftedness)

"No one here thinks I'm weird or strange. People accept me." He paused, and then added, "When I'm here, I don't think I'm weird or strange either."

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Enclosure:

"Proposal: The Portland ASCCESS School for Very Gifted Students"

INTRODUCTION

"The relatively few gifted students who have had the advantage of special programs have shown remarkable improvements in self-understanding and in ability to relate well to others, as well as in improved academic and creative performance. The programs have not produced arrogant, selfish snobs; special programs have extended a sense of reality, wholesome humility, self-respect, and respect for others."

Sidney Marland, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Education of the Gifted and Talented, Report to the Congress of the United States, (US GPO,1972)

The idea of a school for the highly capable is not new either to Portland Public Schools or to many other school districts throughout the nation. In 1994, PPS recognized that the unique academic, social and emotional needs of this population were not being met. PPS staff visited Seattle to learn about its highly gifted program and commissioned Jennifer Jasaitis to research best practices and exemplary programs nation-wide. This study, entitled "Alternative Accelerated Program: Research and Recommendations for Full-Time Classes," incorporated research on best practices and information about successful programs for gifted students. The research showed that full time programs for these children were effective.

The report stated, "It is clear that where these full-time programs exist, school districts are acknowledging the validity of meeting the needs of the entire range of their students, encouraging even the most talented to reach their potential." The Jasaitis report recommended that a school for the highly gifted be established in addition to broad-based TAG services in regular classrooms.

The need for an accelerated, individualized program for this unique population persists. Twice in recent years, the TAG department returned to the APP school in Seattle for more information. Following the most recent visit, in the spring of 2000, Amy Welch, the PPS TAG Administrator, sent a memo to the Superintendent, Dr. Benjamin Canada, proposing a "university school" for very gifted Portland TAG students. Last fall, Dr. Canada asked Dr. Margaret DeLacy, the Chair of the TAG Advisory Committee (DTAC), to convene a task force to carry out additional research and make recommendations on this proposal.

MISSION STATEMENT

The ACCESS program allows highly gifted children to thrive socially, emotionally and academically; helps them develop a lifelong love of learning; and encourages them to become full and productive participants in our rapidly changing global community.

VISION

This challenging, open-ended arts and academics program elicits the full potential from gifted students by supporting both intellectual and personal growth. The rigorous, highly individualized program recognizes different learning styles and talents within a nurturing environment that encourages the development of the whole person.

ENTRANCE CRITERIA

Attendance in the ACCESS program best serves the student who meets one or more of these traits:

1. The district believes that the student's educational interests and needs are best met in an alternative setting.
2. The student has met or exceeded all, or a majority of, benchmarks or standards for their age.
3. The student is not benefiting from a regular educational program.
4. The student exhibits, or has the potential to exhibit, substantial underachievement in relationship to ability.
5. The student exhibits erratic attendance, low self-esteem, and/or difficulty with peers.

ACADEMIC NEED

The PPS mission statement says that PPS will support ALL students in achieving their very highest educational and personal potential." The "core values" state that individuals should have equitable and just access to opportunities and satisfied basic needs. Furthermore, the objectives say that 100% of our students will ... show significant academic growth every year, will set ambitious learning goals, persist in pursuing those goals, and demonstrate evidence of progress..." These goals are not being met for highly capable students.

Investigations by the State of Oregon have found that PPS is not in compliance with the TAG mandate. The most recent investigation found that "not all teachers ... were able to demonstrate appropriate application of the principles of rate and level learning for TAG students ... All TAG students therefore, were not receiving appropriate TAG services."

Some people believe that if students' test scores are high enough, that students are then showing acceptable "achievement." But a single score offers almost no information about whether a school system is actually doing a good job of teaching. It may tell more about what a student has learned at home than in school.

If a student enters third grade with a given achievement test score, and leaves at the end of the year with the *same* or comparable score, then the student has not made "significant growth" or, in fact, any growth at all, no matter what the score was at the beginning of the year.

To understand whether students are showing growth one must compare student scores from one year to the next year. This *gain* in student test scores is a better measure than absolute scores of how much highly capable students are actually learning in school. This information is available in a report prepared annually by the Research and Evaluation Department.

PPS does not regularly provide achievement test data for TAG students. However, it does compile achievement test data for "very high achieving students." These students make up about 6% of all district students. According to this data, "very high achieving students" are not making average gains on the district's achievement tests. They are not learning, growing, or achieving as much as other PPS students.

NEXT STEPS

Several sites have been tentatively identified by PPS, Sabin Elementary appears to have the greatest potential in terms of school receptivity, space availability, Director support, and geographic location. The north/northeast area currently has few Special Focus, Magnet or Alternative programs within its boundaries. Representatives from the Talented and Gifted Office have been directed to speak to Director Harriet Adair and Principal Deadra Hall about ACCESS being placed at Sabin beginning school year 2002-03. Dr. Adair feels very strongly about the need for ACCESS, as well as the siting being appropriate at Sabin. Principal Hall has spoken to her staff about the possibility of 4-5 classrooms being housed next year at Sabin, and although the staff is understandably hesitant about another program being housed at their school, there do not seem to be major objections. The one word of caution, is Hall's request that a full-time principal or head teacher be appointed to lead ACCESS for reasons of accountability, evaluation, discipline, and long- and short-term planning. Principal Hall requested, too, that upon Board approval, if not before, that there be community meetings both with Sabin staff and with general parent and community groups.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

ACCESS seeks a diverse pool of applicants, and plans serious efforts to reach families, community groups and school staff throughout the city.

The ACCESS Task Force has received regular information, meeting notices, and minutes. Some of these individuals have attended one or more meetings; while some members have chosen to "stay informed" by requesting that their names be added to an email list.

ACCESS information has been posted on two websites: the PPS website, in the section maintained by the TAG department, and the website Margaret DeLacy maintains for Portland area TAG parents. The PPS website contains minutes of ACCESS meetings.

An article about the program appeared in the *Portland Tribune*; there is a link to this article on the PPS website, in the section for the TAG program. The ACCESS committee has met with Lew Frederick to discuss the most effective ways to inform the

community about its plans. A regularly scheduled DTAC meeting, at which Dr. Canada was guest, included an extensive discussion of plans for the program. In addition, ACCESS has discussed the plans for the program with numerous individuals. Advice and information was sought from people associated with similar programs throughout the country including the P.E.G.S. program in St. Louis, the Highly Capable program in Seattle, the Evergreen School District in Washington State, and the Tucson (Arizona) School District. ACCESS has also researched many programs across the country. Information about some of these programs appears in a separate section of the ACCESS research notebook, which also includes other information about best practices for such programs. The ACCESS Task Force continues to seek advice from experts across the country.

ACCESS has carried out "focus group" meetings with parents, teachers and students. The consensus of the parent meeting was that they strongly supported the idea for this program. ACCESS also gained some valuable information about what they felt was important in such a program. A videotape of the meeting is available. An unexpected benefit of this meeting was that parents were very excited to meet each other. They requested an additional meeting. The teachers and administrators requested research data to explain the need of this school for highly capable children. Teachers and administrators recommended an interdisciplinary and flexible curriculum in a non-graded program.

ACCESS has planned further outreach efforts to include a list of community groups, especially youth groups serving students in North and Northeast Portland, in order to better inform their families about the program.

ACCESS has sent a survey to 2,500 families in PPS with children who have achieved high test scores. A copy of the survey is available.

Responses were received from eighty-nine students.

--Fifty-three students (60%) responded that they would be interested in attending a school for very gifted students

--Twenty-four students (27%) responded "no"

--Twelve students (13%) did not respond.

Students saw the opportunity for greater learning and meeting people like themselves to be the greatest benefit from the school, but listed the possibility of increased competition from other students, a lack of sports programs and a perception of "elitism" as possible disadvantages.

ACCESS received responses from one hundred twelve parents.

--Seventy-four parents (66%) responded that they would be interested in sending their child to a school for very gifted students

--twenty-five parents (22%) responded "no"

--thirteen parents (12%) did not respond.

Parents saw the greatest benefits from the program to be an opportunity to work at an appropriate level and to meet students who shared their interests and did not make their children feel like "nerds" or "freaks." They cited increased "competition" among the students, a lack of diversity in the program and a loss of neighborhood friendships as disadvantages.

The parents' ideal program serves a diverse group of students and offers a range of activities such as music, arts, sports and languages. It fosters tolerance and social responsibility among the students, has a warm friendly atmosphere and provides mixed-age and/or ability grouped classes. Several parents were concerned that the program have a central location.

IMPACT ON EXISTING PROGRAM

Sabin has been host to several special programs in the past few years that have had varying degrees of success in integrating their program with the host school. Principal Hall requested that ACCESS locate itself within the main building, and not in the portables, in order to mix with the general school population. Partnerships will be developed within the school community. Activities will be designed to offer all students the opportunity to participate in special events and celebrations and interact with each other.

LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

Learner outcomes for gifted students differs from the typical learner. The William & Mary College professor Joyce Van Tassel-Baska, explains that typically the major differences lie in the scope of the outcome, the stage of development at which it is expected, and the implicit proficiencies necessary to achieve it at an exemplary level. Below is a set of sixth-grade English curriculum outcomes for all learners juxtaposed with outcomes that were developed specifically for gifted students at the same grade level.

Generic

1. Comprehends a variety of materials.
2. Is familiar with the structural elements of literature.
3. Develops an understanding of the chronology of American literature.

Gifted

1. Evaluates diverse materials according to a set of criteria or standards.
2. Creates a literary work in self-selected form, using appropriate structural elements.
3. Analyzes and interprets key social, cultural, and economic ideas as expressed in the literature, art and music of America at 40-year intervals.

The examples in the gifted set are consistently more challenging, broader in scope, and more focused on specific higher level thinking tasks. They imply that students have mastered the basic underlying skills necessary to undertake required tasks (e.g., that students can basically comprehend what they read), and demand the development of multiple perspectives within and across areas of knowledge. These aspects of differentiation are central in comparing generic and gifted outcome statements. ("Developing Learner Outcomes for Gifted Students," Joyce Van Tassel-Baska)
http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/learner_outcomes.html

"It can be seen that gifted students are at risk of under-achievement and failure to fulfil their potential if their personality and environment do not combine to facilitate the process of learning, training and practice that is necessary for the translation of giftedness into talent." (Gagne)

"Kate, with an IQ score of 170, may be six, but she has a mental age of ten.... Unfortunately, Kate, like every other highly gifted child, is an amalgam of many developmental ages. She may be six while riding a bike, thirteen while playing the piano or chess, nine while debating rules, eight while choosing hobbies or books, five (or three) while asked to sit still. How can such a child be expected to fit into a classroom designed around norms for six year olds?" (Stephanie Tolan)

"The influence on the gifted student of salience, the awareness of being different (the consciousness of asynchrony), and the pressure to underachieve for peer acceptance, can hardly be overestimated. Research suggests that the more highly gifted the child, the greater becomes the social pressure to moderate his or her achievements." (Hollingworth, 1926; Silverman, 1989a; Gross, 1993, 1994).

"Precocity unavoidably complicates the complexity of social adjustment. The child of eight years with a mentality of 12 or 14 is faced with a situation that is almost inconceivably difficult. In order to adjust normally, such a child has to have an exceptionally well-balanced personality, and has to be well nigh a social genius. The higher the IQ, the more acute the problem." (Burks, Jensen and Terman, 1930)

DIFFERENTIATION FOR HIGH-ABILITY LEARNERS

1. Provisions for acceleration and compression of content

Curriculum skills and concepts are organized on a sequence from "easy to difficult" concepts that would allow for easy teacher adaptation to students' individual instructional levels.

2. Use of higher order thinking skills

The curriculum includes activities and questions that require learners to think at the levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

3. Integration of content by key ideas, issues, and themes

The curriculum is organized according to broad-based concepts in language arts; such as change, patterns and systems.

4. Connection of ideas to other disciplines

The curriculum illustrates how language arts ideas have salience in other content areas such as music, art, social studies and mathematics.

5. Opportunities for advanced and broad-based reading

The curriculum provides students selected activities and materials that are sufficiently challenging and interdisciplinary for advanced learners.

6. Use of multiple teaching resources

The curriculum encourages the use of multiple media, multiple readings, and multiple activities from other materials to teach skills and concepts.

7. Use of diagnostic-prescriptive teaching

The curriculum provides an assessment approach that allows for pre-testing and post-testing as well as on-going assessment of learners' mastery of skills and concepts.

8. Attention to instructional pacing

The teacher's guide notes that some learners can master the basic language arts content at a rate faster than other learners.

9. Advanced reading level

The curriculum readability index is pitched at least one or two grade levels beyond the given designated level.

10. Opportunities for students to develop advanced products

The curriculum provides suggestions for teachers to support student projects that involve original investigation.

11. Opportunities for independent learning based on student ability and interest

The curriculum provides extension activities to be undertaken by students alone in various settings.

12. Use of inquiry-based instructional techniques

The curriculum is based on a model of questioning that promotes the role of the student as investigator.

"Gifted students who are anxious to fit in with their classmates may mimic their academic and social behaviour so successfully that the teacher who is relying only on behavioural indicators of possible giftedness may have little chance of detecting their remarkable abilities." (Miraca Gross)

CURRICULUM AND GOALS

The curriculum will cover the "scope and sequence" requirements of the Oregon Department of Education and Portland Public Schools but at an accelerated pace and with advanced materials where appropriate. The ACCESS Task Force has not yet found a satisfactory "off the shelf" curriculum for these students. A draft of the curriculum philosophy to guide the staff in curriculum development is included in this application. However, the Task Force believes that specific curriculum is best created by classroom teachers. Following approval of this proposal, the Task Force will apply to the Portland Schools Foundation and other organizations for funding to enable a group of teachers to plan curriculum over the spring or summer. This curriculum will align with state standards and benchmarks. The Task Force believes that this proposal will be a good candidate for funding because the curriculum that this group of teachers develops will provide a resource to other schools throughout the district and the state. There is no pre-service training in Oregon on ways to modify curriculum and instruction for gifted students, even though such modifications are required by state law, so there is clearly a great need for resources in this area.

Among the students in this school, there will be many students who are highly capable in one field and not capable (possibly even learning-disabled) in others. There will also be some exceptionally gifted students whose instructional needs might not be met even with this highly accelerated curriculum. In any classroom there still will be a wide range of interests and abilities that will require individualized curriculum and instruction. The demands of this population will necessitate teachers who are flexible and who like working with high ability students.

Exceptionally gifted students who are likely to be completely isolated in neighborhood schools and are at risk for severe depression in normal school settings will find a more accepting and supportive atmosphere that will nourish their intellectual and emotional development.

Math.

Guiding philosophy:

The curriculum will be structured to stress skills and understanding equally. Memorization should be confined to the very basic arithmetic skills (in particular addition and multiplication). Rote drilling beyond these skills should be minimal, particularly for bright students inasmuch as studies show that even modest repetition for bright students is counterproductive.

Learning goals:

1. Students should be challenged by a broad pre-calculus curriculum (percentages and interest, logic, probability and statistics, graphs and analytic geometry, classical geometry, trigonometry, axiomatic arithmetic, set theory, elementary vectors, algebra, logarithms, number theory, exponents and exponential notation, use of programmable calculators) before being exposed to calculus and higher mathematics.
2. Arithmetic skills should include estimation techniques. A student should know how to determine if the answer derived with a calculator is reasonable. Basic computational skills can be addressed at successive grade levels with incrementally advanced treatment. (E.g., multiplication tables up to 12 x 12 in the first pass, double digit multiplication in second pass, multiplication of polydigits, decimals, and fractions in third or fourth pass.)
3. Students should acquire a basic understanding of the nature of mathematics (it's not a science), the nature of numbers (not empirical), and, most importantly, the nature of a proof.
4. Students should be given ample opportunity to apply mathematics to real world problems. Solving word problems and mastering problem solving strategies are paramount long term goals of computational mathematics, as is the ability to use simple mathematics in everyday decision-making, from shopping in the supermarket to financing a new car or building a house.

Science.

Guiding philosophy:

1. As in mathematics, there should not be a choice between teaching facts and principles. Principles seem arbitrary and abstract unless one already has some facts in hand that can be given order and structure by those principles. On the other hand, the facts without the principles are not science.
2. Much of the science curriculum should be inquiry-driven. Students should have the opportunity for hands-on laboratory experiences that teach them to ask and answer relevant questions.

3. Laboratory experiments should open the doors to structured lectures on various scientific principles. Simple but carefully chosen experiments can provide the basis for a wealth of instruction.

Learning Goals:

1. What is science: what is its goal; what is the scientific method; what are facts, hypotheses, theories, and models; what is scientific knowledge and what other kinds of knowledge are there (empiricism vs rationalism); the role of variables and controls; signal and noise (uncertainty, precision, accuracy); falsifiability and verifiability; what problems can or can't be addressed by scientific method; why does science work (and when doesn't it); how do scientific ideas (paradigms) influence other aspects of society.

2. What are the principle branches of sciences; how do some build on others.

3. What are the differences and relations between science and technology. What are the socio-political issues in a technological problem and how does one distinguish the science from the politics. What are the ethical and moral aspects of scientific and technological problems. [Potential issues in biology and biochemistry: food additives, pharmaceutical testing, species preservation, pollution, natural resource utilization, etc.]

4. What are the major goals of the principle sciences today?. What have they accomplished and what remains to be learned? [E.g., how has environmental awareness changed the goals of chemistry?]

5. What do scientists of different disciplines do in today's world? What are the opportunities and rewards? Where do they work?

6. Units for various physical quantities; SI (*System internationale*) units.

Communications Skills

Communication skills comprises what is traditionally called language arts but as part of a broader discipline that includes other forms of communication.

Guiding philosophy:

A complete secondary education includes a familiarity with the traditional use of language, fluency in the use of contemporary language and other modern communications media, and an understanding of how the former affects the latter.

Learning goals:

A. In their primary language (English), goals include:

1. Mastery of reading by whatever methods seem appropriate. Appropriate levels of comprehension (and therefore vocabulary) are also necessary.

2. Mastery of the essentials of formal English: grammar, spelling, punctuation, and composition.

3. Familiarity with the four purposes of written language: expository, persuasive, narrative, and descriptive and the differences among them, and fluency in each. Narrative and descriptive language includes both prose writing and poetry. Persuasive language knowledge includes being able to recognize common flaws in persuasive prose (logical flaws, ad hominem arguments, insinuation, appeal to emotion); and the ability to use good persuasive language in both written (editorials, advertising, propaganda) and oral (debates) media.

4. Understanding of the differences between formal and informal language, knowing when each is appropriate, and ease in using both.

5. Familiarity with reliable reference sources, including libraries, encyclopedias, dictionaries, other written reference works; and on-line sources; recognition of the advantages and potential liabilities of each.

6. A rudimentary knowledge of the historical linguistics: the larger structure of the English language and its relationship to other languages.

7. An appreciation for other aspects of communication, particularly oral: body language, how to listen, how to carry on a conversation.

8. Because a thorough mastery of contemporary English communication skills requires an understanding of the historical use of English, a familiarity with classic works of English (and other) literature is essential.

9. An early goal should be keyboarding (i.e., typing) skills, in particular for those children whose motor skills are not sufficient to permit total reliance on longhand writing as a primary communication medium.

B. Because language acquisition is an ability that rapidly diminishes as students enter adolescence, training in at least one second language should begin as early as possible in the curriculum. The second language should be the focal point for a broad instruction in intercultural awareness: the ways in which different societies communicate and the relations between language and other aspects of society. A third language could be some form of signing.

C. Music, art, theater, and dance can be studied as forms of communication, but not to the exclusion of their treatment as media of abstract expression.

Social Studies

Social Studies includes history and geography.

Guiding philosophy:

An understanding of contemporary society and relations among peoples requires a familiarity with history and an appreciation for how geography influences the development of civilization. Because students of different ages will be able to assimilate information and relationships to varying degrees, it may be appropriate to revisit particular subjects repeatedly with successively deeper levels of exposition. Memorization of dates, events, and geographic features is important only to the extent that it facilitates understanding of societies and social change, and should be kept to a minimum.

Learning goals:

1. What is history: how we choose what to study (and remember) and how that may change as other goals of society and education change; how social, religious, political, and moral values influence what we choose to recognize as "history"; the dependence of our knowledge of history on our ability to communicate (do other species have history?); how we know about the past (oral, written, and archeological history) and how objective our knowledge is or can be; the use of historical novels, literature, songs and ballads, newspapers, and diaries as documents; different kinds of history (national, regional, and social).
2. The major periods of world history; with the salient features of different societies (structure, government); with the influence on past cultures on our own.
3. How religion, social structure, and belief systems affect relations between nations.
4. The beginnings and development of the United States: its history prior to European settlement; the factors that led to its colonization, the motivations for independence, and the causes and consequences of various wars and major social movements.
5. The essentials of United States civics and government structure.
6. The history of the Pacific Northwest, Oregon, and Portland as special topics in U.S. history.
7. How geography affects the development of a society in terms of agriculture, architecture, social structure, and international relations.
8. The importance of natural resources and the consequences of their use or abuse (environmentalism, sustainable agriculture); how societies can change geography and how that in turn affects those societies. (Intersection with biology studies)
9. The history of science, medicine, and technology with emphasis on how these disciplines change society.
10. The fundamentals of economics, the history of major socio-economic movements, and the relation of economics to other aspects of society and government.
11. World geography and how national boundaries have changed; how natural features affect national boundaries.
12. Maps: what they show and how they are constructed; different projections and their uses.

Other Life Skills

Students will be instructed at age-appropriate levels in nutrition, health, and social skills, and will be required to perform some community service. Any District guidelines in these areas will be followed.

OPERATIONS

The first year plan is for 4 to 5 classrooms serving 112-140 students enrolled in grades one through six. Support will be through earned FTE and increased enrollment for school support. Several staffing and budget options are examined later in this proposal: from budget neutral to additional funding requested for a head teacher/curriculum specialist and part-time counselor.

STUDENT BODY

ACCESS will serve the needs of students in the top one percent; as measured by test scores in reading, mathematics, or general aptitude. ACCESS best serves students who have met or exceeded all, or a majority of, benchmarks or standards for their age. Additionally, ACCESS is designed to reduce the level of unhappiness and risk of undesirable outcomes that highly capable students sometimes experience because of a significant mismatch between their academic abilities and their chronological age.

School staff are encouraged to recommend highly capable students for transfer when they believe it is in the student's best educational interest and need to be placed in an alternative setting. See page 13, "Admissions," for further clarification.

In the event of more applicants than space allows, ACCESS will follow the district's Student Transfer policy for admission selection. Currently, if there are more applicants than space allows, applicants are placed in a lottery for selection.

A student in the top one percent generally is ready for curriculum that is three or more years above grade level, and needs instruction that has almost no repetition and is much faster-paced than is appropriate for students of average ability.

The PPS Research and Evaluation Department's preliminary estimate is that 960 of PPS's 50,000 students might be eligible for this school on the basis of reading or math scores on PALT and OSA tests administered in grades 3 through 8. The Department found that there is almost no overlap between students who gain scores in the top one percent in math and those who are in the top one percent in reading. The differing strengths and weaknesses of students, even among the top one percent, spans a wide variety of abilities and talents. The program could also expect to draw some applicants from outside the district--those students who are being presently home schooled, attending private schools, or attending public schools in other districts.

SIZE

Each subsequent year more students will be added to ACCESS, reaching a maximum in year four (2005-06) of approximately 500 students in grades 1 through 12: 336 students in grades 1 through 8, and 140 students in grades 9 through 12. ACCESS requires full funding and staff as provided for comparable PPS schools. ACCESS decided against offering kindergarten because of the difficulty of accurately assessing young children. Instead, where appropriate, some students could be assessed for early entry directly into first grade.

In year four (2005-06), the high school program serving approximately 140 students would open, most likely as a "school within a school" in one of our existing high schools. Or perhaps the ACCESS High School program would be located in a local community college (an approach the University of Washington is pursuing). Some middle school students would move into the high school program when their instructional needs exceed the services that the ACCESS middle school program could provide. Students in the high school program would be able to share classes and activities with other students in the host high school, and, conversely, advanced students in the host high school program could enroll in some of the advanced classes in the ACCESS High School program.

It is unlikely that any district or even any neighborhood school within our district, would experience a significant loss of enrollment because of ACCESS, given its overall size and the admission criteria of enrolling students in the top 1% who fit the admission criteria.

"If highly gifted students display the true level of their abilities and achievements, and show themselves clearly to be "out of synch" intellectually and emotionally with their age-mates, they place themselves seriously at risk of peer rejection. However, if their need for social acceptance is greater than their drive for achievement, then they must conceal their remarkable intellectual abilities, their unusual interests, their accelerated reading development, and their atypical play preferences, in a continuing effort to win peer approval." Gross, 1989

ADMISSION

Overall, the ACCESS alternative program best serves highly capable students who have met or exceeded all, or most, benchmarks and standards. Students who have demonstrated at-risk behaviors will be given special consideration: substantial underachievement or those students who exhibit an asynchrony between aptitude and age.

The ACCESS Admissions Committee will take into account both abilities and the needs of the applicant. Test scores will not be the sole criterion for admission, although applicants are expected to have test scores in the 99+% in either: general intellectual ability, mathematics or reading. The Committee will consider other evidence of giftedness that demonstrates the applicant's need for modified curriculum instruction at this level; including, but not limited to: early reading, teacher observations, advanced mathematical skills, sophisticated work, depth of thought, or unusual creativity. The admissions process will comply with all federal and state statutes and regulations.

In the event that there are more qualified applicants than space, ACCESS will follow the Student Transfer admission policy. <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/depts-c/transfer/>

The application package may include:

- principal or teacher recommendation;
- evidence that the student meets the criterion for TAG identification (Oregon Administrative Rules 581-022-1310);
- evidence that the student meets the criterion for Alternative Education;
- evidence of accelerated performance;
- a statement of student and family commitment to the program;
- work samples or portfolio;
- school transcripts or evaluations.

The Admissions Committee may also consider and/or request:

- tests or assessments administered by licensed professionals;
- interviews of both applicant and family;
- observations of applicant;
- a classroom visit.

In the event the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of available spaces, other factors may be taken into account:

- preference for applicants currently residing in the Portland Public Schools district.

581-022-1350(5) (b) "Placement of a student in a public or private alternative education program may be made only if the program has been determined....to best serve the student's educational needs and interests, within district and state academic standards;..."

The ACCESS School complies with ORS 336.615; 335.635; 336.655; ORS 339.250(9) and OAR 581-022-1110(5); 581-022-1350. These statutes and regulations define alternative education programs and the student needs served. 581-022-1350(5)(a) states that, "Students placed in alternative education programs are those whose educational needs and interests are best served by participation in such programs..." and will include but not be limited to students identified under student discipline and "exceeding all standards" laws.

STAFFING

Portland Public Schools staffs and budgets ACCESS as any other Portland Public School alternative program, including but not limited to general fund staffing, consolidated budget, TAG funds and Local Option Tax funds. Additionally, it is assumed that the host school will benefit from additional staffing because of the increased student body count. Consideration should be given to ACCESS to receive a proportionate share of the increased FTE and funding.

There are several options from budget neutral to incremental costs based on support staff.

The FTE is distributed as follows:

Year 1- 112 students (28:1 student ratio)	4 teachers	Grades 1-6	2002-03
Year 2- 168 students (28:1 student ratio)	6 teachers	Grades 1-7	2003-04
Year 3- 252 students (28:1 student ratio)	9 teachers	Grades 1-8	2004-05
Year 4- 336 students (28:1 student ratio)	MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STUDENTS		2005-06
	12 teachers	Grades 1-8	

and

Year 4 - 140 students (28:1 student ratio) - MAXIMUM NUMBER	5 teachers	Grades 9-12	2005-06
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residing in a current PPS HS or Community College

The criteria for hiring staff:

All applicants must possess a valid Oregon Teaching Certificate and be approved by Portland Public Schools - ORS 336.635(5). Hiring priority is given to teachers with experience in gifted education, a specific middle school- or high school-level specific subject matter endorsement, have worked in an alternative education setting; and can demonstrate an open, supportive and positive attitude toward students, who are excited about performance-based and experience-based education, who like to work in teams and who see the role of teacher as one of guide and facilitator. Teachers with experience teaching Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate, and who fluently speak a second language, may be given first priority in hiring. *Optional:* The curriculum specialist is a teacher-on-special assignment (TOSA) who mirrors the hiring criteria listed above and who works with teachers to adjust curriculum, coordinate instruction, and facilitates communication between teachers and students, and school and community. The School Counselor is one with documented successful experience in working with highly capable students and their parents. The counselor is one who counsels students and parents individually and in small group, during- and after-regular school hours.

TRANSPORTATION

PPS does not provide transportation for any Special Focus or Alternative programs. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that transportation may be available to a limited number of students should ACCESS be located at Sabin. As Sabin is an Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) with transportation available to those students, should there be space available and if the other factors such as routing and timeliness apply, there may be a limited amount of transportation to Sabin for ACCESS students.

STUDENT EVALUATION

ACCESS students will participate in the regularly scheduled State and District assessments. The Oregon Department of Education will assess ACCESS students in the following subjects and grade levels:

- reading/literature multiple-choice: grades 3, 5
- mathematics multiple-choice: grades 3, 5
- science multiple-choice: grade 5
- writing assessment: grades 3, 5
- math problem-solving: grade 5

Portland Public Schools will assess ACCESS students in the following subjects and grades:

- reading/literature multiple-choice: grades 4, 6
- mathematics multiple-choice: grades 4, 6

It is anticipated that ACCESS students will continue to exceed the Benchmark performance standards in their subject of giftedness. In grade level and in each year, it is anticipated that ACCESS students will show, as a group, multiple-choice RIT gains that exceed the district average in reading/literature and mathematics. While high performance is anticipated from ACCESS students participating in the state performance assessments in writing and math problem-solving, the scores given for performance assessments are ratings and not subject to discussion of change scores. While the Research and Evaluation department can calculate a change score for multiple-choice science tests, students do not take a science test each year, so it is not meaningful to use this particular growth as a measure of program efficacy.

BUDGET

ACCESS will be funded through earned FTE (112 students = 4.0 FTE at current 28:1 ratio) and additional school support because of increased enrollment at the host school. The principal of the host school will oversee staff and activities. Optional is a request for supplemental 1.5 FTE for a head teacher or principal and part-time counselor. Majority of classroom textbooks will be donated or discards from other schools in the district. Other supplies, curriculum and activities will be supported through the normal per student allocation awarded all schools or programs in the district.

Option 1 is budget neutral. No additional requests will be made for funding the ACCESS program.

Option 2 includes a head teacher.

Option 3 includes a head teacher and half-time counselor.

OPTION 2 2002/03 School Year

Head Teacher (inc salary, fringe, H/W, Estimated 2% CPI)	\$ 67,341	
Extended Responsibility (inc fringe)	4,007	
Total Additional Funds		\$ 71,348

OPTION 3 2002/03 School Year

Head Teacher (1.0 FTE)	\$ 67,341	
Extended Responsibility (inc teacher + counselor)	5,775	
Counselor (.5 FTE)	33,671	
Total Additional Funds		\$ 106,787

Rationale for Head Teacher or Principal, and Part-Time Counselor:

Starting a new program will bring together many issues from curriculum development to long- and short-term planning.

In addition, ACCESS will showcase best practices in meeting the needs of gifted students, both academically and emotionally. Because of the uniqueness of the school it is conceivable that the program will elicit many phone calls and visits to view the program. A Head Teacher or Principal is necessary in order to relieve the host school of the burden with this start-up program.

A part-time counselor is important to work with both students and parents in order to better understand the uniqueness of these students. It is crucial that the parents and students who indicate an interest, are able to utilize the counseling process, either through family therapy, parent education, or other support services.

"If they learn easily, they are penalized for being bored when they have nothing to do; if they excel in some outstanding way, they are penalized as being conspicuously better than the peer group...The culture tries to make the child with a gift into a one-sided person, to penalize him at every turn, to cause him trouble in making friends and to create conditions conducive to the development of a neurosis. Neither teachers, the parents of other children, nor the child peers will tolerate a Wunderkind." (Margaret Mead, 1954)

CLOSING COMMENTS

ACCESS is a resource for the Portland metropolitan area. Highly capable students are expensive and difficult to serve adequately when they are isolated; consequently, it is the belief that the program will provide a welcome service to districts in the Portland metropolitan area. ACCESS expects that the program's curriculum and instruction will serve as a learning center for teachers throughout the State of Oregon and provide opportunities to create partnerships with other districts, colleges, and schools of education. ACCESS will attract outstanding teachers to the district.

Should ACCESS receive the "green light" to proceed, PPS needs to direct a strong planning and recruiting process.

ACCESS will not replace the services and functions of the PPS TAG program. There will still be in excess of 4,500 TAG-identified students remaining in our schools. These remaining students are entitled to services under Oregon's TAG mandate. Moreover, the support of the TAG office staff is essential for community outreach, technical assistance, and student curriculum and assessment for the school.

ACCESS is a unique program for highly capable students who have met or exceeded most benchmarks or standards for their age. These students may also demonstrate, or have the potential to demonstrate, at-risk behaviors: underachievement, school phobia, drop-out, poor self-esteem, or poor interpersonal relationships because of their difference.

The ACCESS Task Force believes that this school will play a significant role in enabling Portland Public Schools to carry out its mission "to support all students in achieving their very highest educational and personal potential, to inspire in them an enduring love of learning, and to prepare them to contribute as citizens of a diverse, multicultural, and international community."