

BGA Event – Oct. 30, 2018

Parent Questions and Advanced Learning Office Answers

1. Why are there two testing dates for 1st grade testing?

At 1st grade, Bellevue schools are not required to provide the STAR Reading and Math assessments. Because we collect STAR Reading and Math scores in addition to the CogAT scores, we ask that 1st grade students join us on two different test dates. Since 1st grade students are quite young, completing both tests in the same day can be quite challenging. The STAR assessments can be completed within approximately one hour, so we ask that parents remain at the testing site in the multi-purpose room until their child has finished.

2. Are you planning to connect gifted children to Mensa or other organizations?

Parents are certainly welcome to connect their children to outside organizations, and we are happy to provide supporting documentation with their permission. However, because we are not allowed to share information about our students with outside organizations nor do we make recommendations for organizations, we do not make this connection for our students.

3. How are the high school GPAs and Advanced Learning Program linked?

Because the Advanced Learning IB Program courses prepare students for the IB exams and diploma as well as for AP exams, teachers know that students will not be successful on the exams nor receive their IB diploma if they are not performing well in class. Therefore, teachers will invite students to tutorial and may even reach out to parents in the event that a student is not receiving high grades. Recent research on grades of Advanced Learning high school students revealed that approximately 95% of them are receiving As and Bs, with the majority of those students (over 70%) receiving A's in each core content course to include English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

4. What is the difference between the Advanced Learning high school program and the regular high school program?

Please see the Sequence for Advanced Learning Students leaving Odle or Tye document, which explains the courses offered. The program at Interlake offers the IB Diploma Program. All other high schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

5. How do you make sure curriculum is implemented by the school district?

Through professional development and teacher collaboration sessions, teachers gain an understanding of the curriculum resources and share instructional ideas. For each course, the district has created an accompanying One Note that contains the curriculum. School administration has access to the course One Notes and works collaboratively with central office leadership to learn and understand what should be presented in the classroom.

6. How does the Advanced Learning Program compare to project-based learning in Big Picture and International in Bellevue?

The Advanced Learning teachers utilize project-based learning for specific lessons and units, however the foundation of advanced learning services is the critical thinking model. At Big Picture, the foundation for learning is the project-based learning model. You can learn more by visiting <https://bsd405.org/bigpicture/about/what-is-big-picture-learning/>. International School fosters intellectual, social, creative, physical, and emotional growth through year-long themes, in a rigorous academic climate and nurturing environment. You can learn more by visiting <https://bsd405.org/international/about/>.

7. Is all testing done on the computer?

Currently, the CogAT assessment is not offered on the computer. Students use test booklets and provide answers on answer documents or in the test booklet. As we pilot the CogAT Screener, we will provide this assessment online. This is a screener that it only being conducted at Lake Hills Elementary and Sherwood Forest Elementary in 3rd grade this year. The STAR Reading and Math assessments are given on the computer in the regular classroom at school, with the exception of 1st grade.

8. How can resiliency in academic and general problem solving be improved?

In the advanced learning classroom, we provide challenging learning activities that often take more than one attempt in order for a student to succeed. Because we know that it is important for students to learn from unsuccessful attempts, we talk about failures, try to learn from them, and then have students apply their learning to further attempts. We promote a safe learning environment, where it is okay to be unsuccessful and where students can collaborate and discuss mistakes with peers to help them improve performance. Teachers often refer to elements of reasoning from the Critical Thinking Model to help students think through both academic and personal problems.

9. Will the assignment of advanced learning students from Wilburton continue to be Spiritridge?

Currently, Wilburton students are either assigned to Medina or Spiritridge based upon their address. Each year, the district demographer looks at enrollment patterns to determine the school to which students will be assigned. This year, the district's Growth and Planning Committee is studying school and program enrollments district-wide to make recommendations for the future. If any changes are made to Advanced Learning enrollment patterns, parents will be notified as soon as they are made, however there are no plans for change at the current time.

10. Is anxiety common during the first year of the IB Program?

Some students become anxious at different times during their school career. If this is the case with your child, we suggest that your child speak with his/her counselor at school. Advanced Learning students often put a great deal of pressure on themselves, are often perfectionistic, and can be competitive with peers. Talking objectively with your child about their fears and worries can help them better examine what makes them anxious. You might want to seek more information about this topic through our current books list at the end of this document or via the websites listed here.

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

11. Due to the change in entrance criteria from Prism to Advanced Learning is there a drop off in participation and success after 9th grade?

The population at Interlake has actually grown each year, and the first class of students identified under the more recent criteria are now in 11th grade. This class has held steady numbers since they entered the program in grade 9. Each year, we have some students leave the self-contained model, while new student or returning students enter. The number of students who leave are few and have remained about the same in both Prism and Advanced Learning. So far, we continue to see successful participation/achievement by students in grades 9-11.

12. How do kids who joined Advanced Learning in a higher grade fair compared to kids who are there from the beginning?

This likely depends on each individual student and their readiness for the pace and rigor the services provide. Sometimes when students enter in middle or high school and have not been accelerated or appropriately challenged in their previous school environment, they find the first ½ to full year fairly challenging. However, most students adjust to the pace and thinking demands quickly, and we would never know they hadn't been in the program since the beginning.

13. What are you focusing on while developing curriculum for advanced learners that is different than general education?

Our goal is to move students beyond facts and procedures, so they develop conceptual understandings. Concept-based learning is about big transferable ideas that transcend time and place. They provide students a way to organize and make sense of their learning as well as view the world from a more flexible, open minded viewpoint. Often learning is about facts and procedures, but our students come to us with a great deal of knowledge. It is our job to present them with big ideas, support them to find information they don't know, and then provide them opportunities to utilize their critical reasoning skills to create their own understandings. As an example, we may not teach the events that led to a conflict in history but instead provide students with information about the conflict itself. Then students can fill in those events that led to the conflict and create their own understanding of why the conflict came to pass. The expected outcome is that students will learn some important concepts, such as power and authority, and then apply this conceptual understanding to future situations.

14. Are the advanced learner teachers qualifications different than regular teachers?

The state of WA does not require an endorsement/license to teach students in need of services. We recruit and hire teachers in the same fashion we do for all open positions, as a good teacher will do well in any classroom. That said, we do provide professional development and collaborative planning, so that teachers gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of these students and pedagogy methods that meet their needs. Collaborative planning allows teachers to share ideas that work best to promote the level of depth and complexity that we want children to experience.

15. How can we find sources to support these students at home?

You can visit the National Association for Gifted Children website's resource page for parents, <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>, or the Hoagies Gifted Education site, <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>, for starters.

16. Why is there less emphasis on homework in 2nd grade?

Homework decisions are made by each teacher. If you have specific questions about homework, we recommend talking with your child's teacher.

17. How does BSD Advanced Learning Program compare to others in the region?

Though we know some information about the surrounding districts, we cannot speak to the differences in the experiences of students who enroll there versus students in BSD, other than to say that we offer the accelerated IB Diploma Program, which is not offered in nearby districts. The state of Washington first began requiring services for students deemed highly capable in 2013, so some school districts began providing services at that time. BSD has provided services for more than 20 years to students in elementary and middle school and for over a decade for students in high school.

18. Will there be a focus on computer science in this program?

BSD as a whole is focusing on computer science for all students. Currently, a P-5 pathway is being created to ensure students have computer science instruction integrated into learning. At middle and high school, integrated lessons are being created and field tested for inclusion in the near future.

19. Will OSPI (online academic class approved by BSD) be a good learning opportunity for advanced learning students over their summer breaks?

This is a decision that each family will want to make based upon the strengths and wishes of their child. Certainly, if your child is feeling under stress during the school year, a break from academics during the summer may help him/her to relax. If your child is enrolling to advance in mathematics, the course is likely shorter and does not contain the level of depth of the full-year course offered through Advanced Learning. Any student who is approved for enrollment in an online course is required to take the BSD Advanced Learning end-of-course assessment, so that parents are aware of the level of preparation their child has for the next course in the math sequence.

Great options for students to have an enriching learning experience without the pressure of completing an accelerated course are BSD's Operation Exploration for students entering grades 1-5 and Operation Ideation for students entering grades 6-8.

<https://bsd405.org/programs/summer-programs/operation-exploration/>

<https://bsd405.org/programs/summer-programs/operation-ideation/>

20. What kinds of trainings are provided for teachers in choice schools or home schools to provide differentiated curriculum?

As domain-specific services roll up each year, teachers at each grade level receive professional development to meet students' needs. Additionally, the Advanced Learning Office offers several professional development sessions throughout the school year for teachers to attend. Several schools also enlist our help in providing professional development at their school site for either the entire staff, groups of teachers, or individuals. We are always available to support teachers as needed to meet the needs of students in their classroom by sharing ideas, modeling a lesson, co-teaching or co-planning with them.

21. Time is wasted in organizing worksheets for math groups. Are there textbooks to help them practice?

In grades 2-4, students use the Math Expressions text. Teachers may use some online features of this curriculum in the classroom with students, but students do most of their practice from the textbook or accompanying worksheets. For IMT1 and beyond, students have access to either an online textbook or a One Note Notebook, which contains the course materials. If you feel your child needs access to the textbook to help him/her practice at home, please reach out to the teacher to see if this is a possibility.

22. How can 4th and 5th grade students be made aware of their summer acceleration options or math clubs at school?

The BSD Advanced Learning website contains information on math acceleration options for students at the following link. <https://bsd405.org/services/gifted/gifted-math-placement/>. Additionally, each spring, schools are provided with information about summer math acceleration options and asked to distribute the information to parents of students enrolled in 5th grade AL math (usually 4th grade students), because the summer after 4th grade is the first availability for students to enroll in summer school. Each year, parents can begin to check the BSD Summer School accelerated math page in February to determine when summer courses will be offered. <https://bsd405.org/programs/summer-programs/accelerated-math-summer-program/>

Each school provides clubs based upon student and staff interest. Announcements about math clubs are made at school and students are encouraged to sign up for them. Please contact your child's school to determine if there is a math club.

23. If a child leaves the self-contained program to attend their neighborhood or choice school, can he/she return?

As long as your child has continued to receive differentiated services in the neighborhood or choice school, he or she can come back to the full-time program. If a student withdraws from services completely, after 1 year, he or she may be required to test again. If a student wishes to return to full-time services, parents should meet with the counselor at the current school to gain advice as to the most opportune time to make the change. Once a decision is made, parents need to complete a Change of Service form, and send it to the Advanced Learning Office, so that we are aware of your child's status. <https://bsd405.org/wp-content/pdf/advanced-learning/advanced-change-of-service-form.pdf>

24. Currently, if a student has auditioned and been selected to be in a zero-period music group, he/she is also required to enroll in a regular music class like orchestra, band or choir. Could AL students request a waiver from enrolling in the music class but still continue to participate in the zero-period music group?

The requirement for students to participate in a large ensemble class to be in a zero-period ensemble is a consistent policy at all of our high schools. The educational reasons include that fundamental core musical concepts are taught in the large music classes during the school day, but not in the before school classes. (It is assumed students get this necessary knowledge from the other class.) The logistical reason has to do with the fact that the teachers of the large ensemble classes are the teachers who teach the zero-period classes. If students are allowed to opt out of the large ensemble classes, we will no longer need to hire staff to teach the large ensemble classes, thus we will not have teachers to offer zero-period classes.

25. What is Bellevue School District doing for twice-exceptional students outside of following an IEP? How can their needs be better met?

Each student has very different needs, so support for teachers looks different for each student. Special Education teachers work with classroom teachers, and there are also support teams from the district available as needed. To ensure that your child's accommodations are appropriate, please work with the IEP Team at your child's school.

26. I am hoping to receive the PowerPoint of the elementary school presentation. Please add it to the website.

The presentation has been forwarded to BGA and will be posted along with this document.

Recap of questions answered during the BGA event:

1. Why did you change the program name?

Each year as we conduct focus groups with students receiving advanced learning services, our students ask us why they have to be called *gifted*. Each year, without fail, students ask that we not refer to them as gifted. In order to reduce labeling, we held a naming challenge in the spring of 2017, in which many of you suggested different naming conventions. Many of your recommendations referred to advanced or accelerated learning. Then during the fall of 2017, OSPI recommended that districts move away from offering a gifted program to providing advanced learning services. Because this name aligned with many of the recommendations received as well as with the fact that we now offer different types of services in addition to the centered programs, and it removed a label from our students, it made sense to change the name.

2. How do students qualify for services?

All students in grades K-1 are considered for domain-specific services in their neighborhood/choice school through a collection of data from assessments and classroom performance in the classroom. Parents of students showing achievement levels two years beyond grade level are then contacted to request that their child take further assessments to determine a need for services.

For students who will be in 2nd-12th grade next year, an application for testing must have been completed by October 31st. Students whose parents applied for testing will be invited to take the CogAT assessment, STAR Reading and Math (1st grade BSD and private school students in grades 1-8), and/or the IOWA Reading and Math Assessments (BSD and private school students in grades 9-11.) These assessments along with state assessment scores, other district-level achievement scores and parent rating scales are considered by a multidisciplinary team, who determines if a student is in need of services. For more information on identification please visit the following link.

<https://bsd405.org/services/gifted/identification-process/>

3. How do you ensure consistency of curricula across sites? Are students in Algebra 1 at Odle and Tyee achieving the same learning goals?

Please see number 5 above. Additionally, BSD piloted and adopted new Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2 curriculum last year. Beginning last spring, teachers have been invited to numerous professional development events, which are continuing throughout this school year, so that they can gain a better understanding of the new materials and work to ensure that students are appropriately challenged.

4. Are more students leaving the high school program? Is there any plan to change IB to AP like at other schools?

The numbers at Interlake are actually growing and we anticipate adding another 80 students to Interlake's Advanced Learning IB Program next year. Every year, we have students who leave the self-contained service model to return to their neighborhood high school or attend a private school. These numbers have not increased. However, with the addition of the differentiated service model, students who choose not to participate in the IB Diploma Program, may take accelerated and AP courses in their neighborhood high school and even at Interlake, if this is their assigned school.

5. As the number of students increases, how do you maintain staffing of highly qualified teachers who know about highly capable pedagogy, especially in IB?

Through the BSD hiring process, the district does an outstanding job of recruiting and hiring high quality teachers. When possible, we hire teachers with experience in gifted education. As mentioned above in number 14, we provide professional development and collaborative sessions. Interlake also ensures that teachers receive training for the IB program.

CURRENT BOOKS ABOUT GIFTED CHILDREN

BOOK TITLE	AUTHOR(S)
Gifted Children: Myths and Realities	Winner, Ellen
Guiding the Gifted Child	Webb, James
Parenting Gifted Kids: Tips for Raising Happy & Successful Children	Delisle, James;
Parent's Guide to Gifted Children, A	Webb, James; Gore, Janet; Amend, Edward, DeVries
Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good	Adderholdt-Elliott, Miriam
Raising Gifted Kids: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Exceptional Child Thrive	Klein, Barbara S.
Smart Girls, Gifted Women	Kerr, Barbara
Smart Talk: What Gifted Kids Say About Growing Up Gifted	Delisle, James; Schultz, Robert
Social & Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know?	Nancy Robinson; Neihart, Maureen; Reis, Sally; Moon, Sidney;
Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids	Walker, Sally Y.
When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers	Galbraith, Judy & Webb, James
Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades	Rimm, Sylvia