GATE Program
Board of Education Presentation
May 1, 2014

Parent Questions

1. The presentation by ECRA gave RAW findings. The summary/next steps pointed primarily to the need for better "tagging" and more research.

   A coordinated effort is underway to clarify which students should be "tagged" and which subgroups best describe individual learners. Several definitions exist concerning the types of services being provided and the differences among them. Going forward, data will assist in more clearly identifying students and the services they receive.

   The ECRA presentation provided to the Board on May 1, 2014, provides additional information. GATE Program Audit ECRA Presentation 5-1-14
   Additional information regarding GATE service delivery options can be found at:
   http://www.davidsongifted.org/dg/Articles_id_10173.aspx

2. What <u>insight</u> does the data provide about the quality of the current program?

   The ECRA audit provided the following insights regarding the quality of District 33's current GATE program:
   - *A better system is needed to identify students for the District's GATE program (changes to identification procedures began taking place during the 2013 – 2014 school year).*
   - *Students in the District's elementary replacement math program demonstrated significant levels of growth.*
   - *GATE students' growth in math exceeded that of their growth in reading (Note: GATE services were provided to elementary students in math—but not reading— during the period studied by the ECRA report).*

   The GATE presentation provided to the Board on May 1, 2014, provides additional information. GATE Program Presentation 5-1-14

3. How does this benchmark against other districts in our area?

   Because ECRA data is not usually shared across school districts, it is difficult to use the results of the ECRA audit to compare District 33 with other area districts. The committee being formed to study the District's GATE program will, however, be able to use other methods to explore how our service delivery model compares to those being used in other districts.

4. What "use cases" did you uncover of successful teachers/classrooms that can be replicated?

   Because the ECRA audit analyzed the GATE program as a whole and did not explicitly focus on individual classrooms/teachers, use cases of successful teachers/classrooms were not uncovered.

5. How did they get GATE reading scores for the audit when there were no GATE classes in 3-6 grades during those years?

   GATE reading scores were obtained for students labeled or "tagged" as gifted despite GATE reading services not being explicitly provided to students in grades 3 – 6 during the time period studied by the ECRA audit (labels/tags were linked to students rather than to services being provided). Going forward, the tagging system will be improved and expanded to address both student characteristics and services that are provided to students.

6. At what point (%) do we stop expanding the GATE program before we include students who are not truly Gifted and do harm to those students because they are not truly Gifted?

   Students at the elementary level are currently being identified for replacement math classes if they have scored at or above the 90th percentile on multiple measures. The committee being formed to study the District's GATE program will seek to more clearly define giftedness (as it relates to District 33's students) and gifted programming criteria and options at the middle school level in order to ensure that students receive appropriate and beneficial services.

7. What do the GATE teachers think we should do?

   The District's GATE teachers believe the District should consider creating two programs, a replacement program for gifted students and an enrichment program for high-achieving students. These educators also believe that the findings of the committee being formed to study the District's GATE program should help shape the program's future. As such, they are looking forward to participating in this process.

8. Who predicted where the students in the study "should" be?

   Students' growth rates were predicted by ECRA's analysis of student data. ECRA determines a unique growth rate for each student based upon his/her past performance and previous academic gains. Similar growth is then predicted for and expected in the current academic year. ECRA is also able to combine individual students' growth rates in order to study the effectiveness of a specific program (in this case, the GATE program). More effective programs reflect student growth rates that exceed these students' previous growth rates.

9. Why was a change announced previously when the data seems to say our GATE program is "very effective" and there was consistency across the years?

   While the ECRA audit did highlight specific areas of strength in the District's GATE program, it also noted areas that could be strengthened. All programs benefit from continuous review in order to determine areas for such growth and improvement.

10. Why are students with similar propensity <u>not</u> in the GATE program?

    Identifying gifted students is a difficult process in many school districts. In District 33, the ECRA audit confirmed what the District's GATE teachers had already observed— that not all students were being correctly identified for the GATE program. The District acknowledges that—during the time period studied by the ECRA audit—there may have been a small number of students in the gifted program who were misidentified as being gifted and, conversely, there may have been a small number of gifted students who were not identified as such. The District has already taken several steps to improve its gifted identification procedures. Going forward, these procedures will be reviewed regularly and amended as needed.

11. An accelerated math program is not the same as Gifted services, district wide.

    The District's administration and GATE teachers agree that accelerated math services are only a small part of a comprehensive gifted program. As additional district resources become available, further discussion will determine the allocation of these resources.

12. Gifted students require services from the earliest point possible. Why are services not provided from kindergarten on?

    Gifted students do benefit from services from the earliest point possible. Advanced literacy instruction for high achieving students will become more explicitly provided starting in kindergarten next year in all 6 schools. As additional district resources become available, further discussion will determine the allocation of these services.

13. What are the various service models in reading that were referred to?

    During the time period studied by the ECRA audit, reading services for gifted students were minimal and inconsistent across grades. Changes made for the 2013 – 2014 school year did, however, allow some elementary GATE teachers to begin providing enrichment and/or replacement literacy services to high-ability students.

14. Current practice recommends identifying at least the top five percent in every sub group using local norms in order to have a defensible program that allows all demographic groups to be fairly included.

District 33 is mindful of the importance of considering students' demographics throughout the gifted identification process. Because of this, the District made the decision to adopt a language-neutral assessment tool (the NNAT2, or Naglieri) that more fairly assesses students from all ethnic and racial backgrounds. The use of this assessment tool, which was first implemented in District 33 during the 2013 – 2014 school year, is supported by current research on best practices in the field of gifted education.
Additional information on this topic is available in an article entitled "Nonverbal Testing for Minority Students" which can be found at:
http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/displayArticle/?id=132
http://www.davidsongifted.org/dg/Articles_id_10173.aspx

15. Has the Board reviewed the comprehensive gifted education plan that was in effect until 2009?

    The Board has not reviewed this plan in recent years. The ECRA audit presented at the May 1st Board Meeting is part of a larger, comprehensive review of the District's GATE program that is currently underway.   The committee being formed to study the District's GATE program will, however, have the opportunity to review this comprehensive gifted education plan.

16. Enrichment is not the same as a comprehensive accelerated language arts service format. All students benefit from access to enrichment; not all students would benefit from a Gifted Language Arts program.

    The District agrees that enrichment is not the same as acceleration and that all students benefit from access to the former while not all students necessarily benefit from the latter. Part of the work of both the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) and the committee being formed to study the District's GATE program will be to more clearly define "enrichment" and "acceleration" and elucidate the differences between these terms. The District also acknowledges that a comprehensive gifted education program includes both enriched and accelerated services.

17. The Gifted Education Seminar is available for training <u>classroom</u> <u>teachers</u> about the needs and characteristics of gifted learners.

    As the District's professional development plans are generated, consideration will be given to the Gifted Education Seminar—as well as other resources—in order to expand and improve teachers' knowledge and instruction for all learners.

18. Thank you for the presentations tonight and what looks like a long-term thoughtful and deliberate process. Coming into tonight and not knowing what the details or pace of change, or whether items would be voted on tonight is what led to some of the communication frustration. I am glad to see the steps are being taken slow and the Board is interested in vetting ideas. I would like to serve/participate on the Task Force as a parent or community member.

The committee being formed to study the District's GATE program will be assembled in late summer or early fall of 2014. Information regarding how to serve on this committee will be shared with all stakeholders as it becomes available.