

# LOWER TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

ADVANCED SKILLS PROGRAM MANUAL



LOWER TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
GIFTED & TALENTED ADVANCED SKILLS SERVICES

CAPE MAY, NJ

*ADOPTED JUNE, 2015*



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## INTRODUCTION

### Lower Township Elementary School District

#### Advanced Skills Program: Gifted & Talented Enrichment Services

*Learning experiences for all students should be arranged so that whatever paths students travel, and whatever distances they travel on these paths, the experiences must be appropriate to their unique interests and learning styles.*

#### **How can our school district best meet the needs of the advanced skills (gifted and talented) students in Lower Township?**

This question has guided discussion, review, research, planning, and development over the past several years as the district has remained committed to improving the delivery of services, and instruction of all students, including those identified as academically advanced in the Lower Township Elementary School district.

The redesign of the Lower Township Elementary Schools Advanced Skills Program in 2014 began with recommendations from the enrichment review committee, and was followed by meetings with stakeholders.

This manual is designed to provide consistent, effective, and comprehensive information to the staff and community regarding the Lower Township Advanced Skills Program. This manual is a resource that will continue to evolve as the district continues to monitor and evaluate student performance, and achievement, and respond to all student needs.

The Lower Township Elementary School district believes that every child has the right to achieve at their highest potential, and is committed to recognizing the unique values, needs, and talents of each of our students. The purpose of our Advanced Skills program is to provide optimal development of the advanced student's intellectual, emotional, and social abilities, and honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated, and challenging curriculum.



## NJ DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: GIFTED AND TALENTED REQUIREMENTS

On June 1, 2005 the State Board of Education readopted with amendments [N.J.A.C. 6A: 8, Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement](#), which includes more specific requirements for gifted and talented programs. Changes to the regulations are highlighted below in **bold**.

The regulations define gifted and talented students as:

*Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.*

### Key Points

- All public schools must have a board-approved gifted and talented program.
- Students are to be compared with their peers in the local school district.
- District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes **multiple measures**, including but not limited to, achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, parent, student and/or teacher recommendation, and other appropriate measures.
- The regulations do not establish state-level criteria for giftedness (such as an IQ score or grade point average). Specific tests are not required to be used to identify gifted and talented students.
- Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology used is developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered (e.g., use math achievement to identify students for a math program).
- N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1(a)5 ii requires local district boards of education to **provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students**. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten.
- The rules require district boards of education to develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted students. Programs must address appropriate content, process, products, and learning environment.
- **District boards of education shall take into consideration the *PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)* in developing programs for gifted and talented students. The NAGC standards establish requisite and exemplary gifted program standards and can be accessed at [NAGC Standard](#).**
- Local school districts will continue to be monitored as part of the regular school district evaluation process. Board-approved policies and procedures must be made available.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF CAPABLE LEARNERS

### Respecting ALL Learning

The Lower Township Elementary Schools Advanced Skills program strives to meet the needs of all learners through tiered and differentiated instruction, using the school-wide cluster approach to ensure that bright and gifted learners in grades K-6 experience appropriate academic challenges and leadership opportunities in the classroom. Gifted students possess some common characteristics.

Recognizing these general traits is an important step toward working effectively with this unique group of children.

#### **The Highly-Able/Bright Learner**

**Knows the answers**  
**Is interested**  
**Is attentive**  
**Has good ideas**  
**Works hard**  
**Answers the questions**  
**Top group**  
**Listens with interest**  
**Learns with ease**  
**6-8 repetitions for mastery**  
**Understands ideas**  
**Enjoys peers**  
**Grasps the meaning**  
**Completes assignments**  
**Is receptive**  
**Copies accurately**  
**Enjoys school**  
**Absorbs information**  
**Technician**  
**Good memorizer**  
**Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation**  
**Is alert**  
**Is pleased with own learning**

#### **The Gifted Learner**

**Asks the questions**  
**Is highly curious**  
**Is mentally and physically involved**  
**Has wild, silly ideas**  
**Plays around, yet tests well**  
**Discusses in detail, elaborates**  
**Beyond the group**  
**Shows strong feelings and opinions**  
**Already knows**  
**1-2 repetitions for mastery**  
**Constructs abstractions**  
**Prefers adults**  
**Draws inferences**  
**Initiates projects**  
**Is intense**  
**Creates a new design**  
**Enjoys learning**  
**Manipulates information**  
**Inventor**  
**Good gesser**  
**Thrives on complexity**  
**Is keenly observant**  
**Is highly self-critical**

## RENZULLI'S FACTORS OF GIFTED BEHAVIOR

*“Gifted behavior occurs in certain people,  
at certain times, under certain circumstances.”*

*Joe Renzulli*

**Renzulli considers three factors important for the development of gifted behavior: Above average ability, creativity, and task commitment.**



Within the **above average abilities** Renzulli makes a difference between general abilities (like processing information, integrating experiences, and abstract thinking) and specific abilities (like the capacity to acquire knowledge, perform in an activity).

By **creativity** Renzulli understands the fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought, an openness to experience, sensitivity to stimulations, and a willingness to take risks.

Under **task commitment** he understands motivation turned into action (like perseverance, endurance, hard work, but also self-confidence, perceptiveness and a special fascination with a special subject). Renzulli argues that without task commitment high achievement is simply not possible.

Only if characteristics from all three rings **work together** can high achievement or gifted behavior be witnessed.

Recently Renzulli shifted his emphasis toward the background factors in his models, the personality and environmental factors influencing gifted behavior.



## PHILOSOPHY OF THE LTES ADVANCED SKILLS PROGRAM

The **Lower Township Elementary Schools Advanced Skills Program** strives to meet the educational needs of all students. Additionally, the program services identified students who possess or demonstrate superior levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers. These students require modifications of their educational programs as provided for by the New Jersey Administrative Code.

The philosophy of the program is to empower students to maximize their individual potential. The LTES Advanced Skills program creates a learning community where participating students can develop their potential through meaningful enrichment, resources, and services identified to nurture their special needs and strengths. All students in Kindergarten receive school-wide enrichment through special area programs in Art and Music. Advanced Kindergarten students are cluster grouped, and pulled out for advanced reading instruction. The Advanced Skills program uses a flexible approach to curricular differentiation in each student's regular classroom and also incorporates a pull-out program in grades 1-2 that includes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) enrichment. The Advanced Skills program offers students in grades 3-6 an accelerated Language Arts, and/or Mathematics program, and a pull-out program that includes STEM enrichment. The combination of cluster grouping, and pull-out services ensures that gifted and advanced students are provided with consistently challenging learning opportunities.

The vision of the LTES Advanced Skills program is to engage and challenge advanced students in high levels of inquiry, to build knowledge, and a passion for learning, and to discover the unique gifts, talents and interests as they grow into lifelong learners.





## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LTES ADVANCED SKILLS PROGRAM

Students have the opportunity to participate in learning communities that maximize their individual potential.

- Students will be engaged in learning experiences that allow them to use their creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, and logical reasoning skills.
- Students will demonstrate willingness and ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning experiences.
- Students will successfully interact with others in enrichment activities that expose them to a broad array of academic, social, cultural and technological topics.

Teachers have the pedagogical knowledge and resources to identify, develop, and deliver instructional differentiation.

- The LTES Advanced Skills committee was formed with representatives from each grade to support the program through identification of students, and to serve as primary resources to successfully maintain programs.
- Teachers are provided with a continuum of professional development
- Parents are partners in the educational process through a clear and consistent information system.

Effective communication among students, staff, parents, Board of Education, and community members will be established.

- Informational opportunities to understand the philosophy, process, and content of the LTES Advanced Skills program will be provided.
- Periodic assessments will be conducted to ensure program effectiveness.
- Formal and informal assessments will be used to evaluate the program goals and objectives to ensure successful identification and student outcomes.



# LTES ADVANCED SKILLS AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

## Tier 2

### *Enrichment for Advanced Skills Students*

#### **ELA & Math:**

Grades 3&4 Cluster Grouping

Grades 5&6 Cluster Grouping & Pull-Out Advanced Instruction

Problem-Based Learning

Accelerated Programming

\*5 days per week

#### **ELA-Reading**

Grades K-2:

Pull-out or Cluster Grouping for Advanced Instruction

5 days per week

#### **STEM Enrichment: Project Lead the Way**

Problem-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning

\*Grades 3-6: one extra advanced STEM module

Grades 1-2: STEM projects

\*pull-out program

\*2 days per week



## Tier 1

### *Schoolwide Enrichment for ALL Students*

#### **ELA & Math:**

Grades K-6: Differentiation and Enrichment through regular classroom instruction

#### **STEM Special Area: Project Lead the Way**

\*Grades 3-6: 1 day per week for all students

#### **Art and Music**

\*Grade K: 1 day each per week for all students



## LTES ADVANCED SKILLS & ENRICHMENT PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Lower Township Advanced Skills program meets the needs of gifted and advanced learners through a cluster-grouping structure as well as pull-out services. Once a student is found eligible, the following programs will be implemented:

**Kindergarten through Sixth Grade Enrichment:** Classroom teachers will support students within their classroom settings using differentiated instructional resources that will enrich and extend learning for students in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. Students receive special area instruction in music and art.

**First through Sixth Grade Advanced Skills STEM Enrichment:** A certified Project Lead the Way teacher will provide STEM enrichment through project-based learning for identified students. Once identified, students will meet with their advanced peers to engage in problem solving/investigative activities that will extend their ability to think critically and explore the world around them.

**Third through Sixth Grade STEM Enrichment:** All students will receive schoolwide STEM enrichment from a certified Project Lead the Way teacher. Students will engage in problem-based learning projects that promote critical thinking.

**Third through Sixth Grade Accelerated ELA Advanced Skills:** Students who have been identified as having the ability and need for further enrichment in language and writing, through multiple measures and skill assessments, will have an opportunity to participate in an accelerated Advanced Skills ELA program, which includes project-based learning activities to address extensions aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

**Third through Sixth Grade Accelerated Mathematics Advanced Skills:** Students who have been identified as having the ability and need to be accelerated in mathematics, through multiple measures and skill assessments, will have an opportunity to meet with their advanced peers in accelerated math programming, which includes project-based learning activities to address extensions aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

\*Students must meet all eligibility criteria in order to be accepted into the LTES Advanced Skills Program. Nominated students will be assessed in Kindergarten, First, Third, Fourth and Fifth grade only. All students will be assessed in second grade using the CogAT assessment.



## ADVANCED SKILLS SCREENING PROCESS: REFERRAL, IDENTIFICATION & PLACEMENT PHASES

*“Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered-either by themselves or others.”  
-Mark Twain*

### SCREENING PROCESS: 3 PHASES

1. Initial Referral Phase
2. Identification Phase: Testing
3. Selection and Placement Phase

1. **Initial Referral Phase:** Students with a potential need for advanced programming are identified through a process that is initiated by the student’s classroom teacher. The initial referral phase is a pre-assessment stage that involves collecting student data from multiple sources to document possible need for advanced programming. **The purpose of the referral is to submit existing information as evidence of a student’s potential.** Please be reminded that referral does not guarantee gifted services. The Initial Referral Phase occurs at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> marking period.

### GRADE 2

All grade 2 students are administered the full CogAT battery in May. Teachers will follow the same referral guidelines to submit data in the Initial Referral Phase, and CogAT scores will be analyzed for any student that meets the criteria in Initial Referral phase.

2. **Identification Phase:** The Initial Referral Phase is a pre-assessment stage which identifies a large pool of potentially eligible students. Further screening and evaluation is needed to narrow the field of students to those who have demonstrated gifts and talents.

If the student referral data evidences that he or she may require advanced programming, further testing will be conducted to determine the scope of the need. During the Identification Phase, all data is



gathered into a matrix format to ensure that each student's strengths may surface.

Students whose data indicates a considerable possibility of high innate cognitive ability/academic strength, task commitment/intrinsic motivation, and creative/productive thinking will be invited to take the CogAT screening designed to measure aptitude, the innate ability to learn.

- 3. Selection and Placement Phase:** Students with strong intellectual aptitude have strengths in areas often associated with ability to learn rapidly and apply academic knowledge. The advanced cognitive development of gifted children enables them to learn and understand more advanced cognitively complex material than their non-gifted age peers. The goal of the identification process is to find students, whose abilities and talents, and potential for accomplishment are so *outstanding* that they require special provisions in the form of an appropriately challenging curricular program to meet their educational needs. During the Selection and Placement Phase, each individual matrix is reviewed, and the Advanced Skills Committee makes programming recommendations.

Upon completion of the screening and identification process, parents/guardians, and school principals are notified, in writing, via U.S. mail of eligibility results.

### **TRANSFER REFERRALS/STUDENTS NEW TO THE DISTRICT:**

Students who are new to the district will be reviewed after one marking period in a regular classroom upon a teacher's referral. This allows our district time to collect relevant data for the Initial Referral Phase. When a student is identified as gifted and talented by a previous district, and transfers into the district, the student's records will be reviewed by the Advanced Skills Committee to determine the appropriate placement.



## REFERRAL GUIDELINES

### Initial Referral Phase:

- Grades 1-5: Journeys Benchmark
- Grades 1-5: GOMath! Benchmark
- Grades 1-5: Math Critical Area Performance Tasks
- Grades 1-5: Writing Benchmark
- Grades 1-2: Learning Characteristics Scale
- Grades 1-2: Renzulli Math Scale
- Grades 3-5: Renzulli Scales
- Grades 3-5: New Jersey Standardized Test Scores (if applicable)

### Identification Phase:

- Grades 1 & 3-5: Administer the CogAT Screening
- Grade 2: Review CogAT full battery scores

### Selection and Placement Phase:

- Complete Eligibility Matrix
- Advanced Skills Committee will review the matrix and determine programming

*“A mind once stretched by new ideas never regains its original dimensions.”*

*-Oliver Wendell Holmes*