

Notes for JAGC Board Meeting with Cindy Stevenson 4/30/07

1. Alameda Articulation Area IB Project

- JAGC supports the concept of a K-12 approach in Alameda articulation area
- Mackintosh Academy as good example of Primary Years & Middle Years program (most of their students matriculate to LHS for IB)
- Talk of a new HS program inspired our group to wonder if there was a chance to engage the administration in a dialogue about the need for a GT HS option in the district.
 - Our goal is to positively advocate for options for GT HS students for whom the IB program(s) and/or home school with AP/Honors classes aren't enough to keep them engaged and help them reach their full potential.
 - As parents we need the schools to work with us to give these students the tools and educational experiences they need to be successful.

2. IB Is Not the Best Option for some GT Students

- IB programs are designed to give students international perspective, college-prep., originally for diplomat's kids.
- IB programs are designed to be very logical, sequential, much of the focus is on writing papers. Strong organizational skills are required for success.
- IB programs are well-suited for highly academic students (some GT, some not)*
- IB is very structured in class selection. If you soar in math and struggle in foreign language there are very few alternatives.
- IB is perceived as 'the best option' for GT students in the district, BUT
 - Approximately 50% drop rate at Lakewood IB (with admissions process)
 - Approximately 50% drop rate at Littleton IB HS (open enrollment)
- Within a family with more than one identified GT child, there are often some siblings who are 'IB' kids and some who are not.

*All but a handful of Creighton GT students apply and are accepted to LHS IB yet LHS says in no uncertain terms that the key to IB is "a good work ethic and good organizational skills" and GT is really not the important factor!!! (At Creighton this is considered the standard progression.)

3. Reasons to Start a GT HS Program

- "All Means All" The needs of some of our best and brightest GT students are not being met with the current HS choices in the district.
- AP and Honors courses, alone, rarely meet the needs of GT students in the areas of leadership, creativity, or visual or performing arts.
- Differentiated program options (problem-solving, higher-level thinking, independent study, flexibility for students to pursue areas of interest, acceleration to accommodate high degrees of content mastery) would provide good choices for GT students as well as other students in the district.

- Research on Visual Spatial Learners reveals that students with the highest IQs (160+) are more likely to be strongly VSLs (41%) as compared to IQ of 100 (34% strongly VSL. Over 60% of students in our schools are VSLs. Yet much of our teaching is Auditory-Sequential. (Gifted Development Center)
- Also consider the needs of students with high abstract reasoning ability and discrepancies between verbal IQ and performance (known as Twice Exceptional)
- Twice Exceptional students might also be much more successful in GT HS.
 - The district has made huge strides in identifying these students and helping them focus on their strengths, rather than their weaknesses.
- As identified GT students move through the system into high school, we owe them a supportive environment to help them continue to thrive. The level of support in the typical HS is not enough to keep these students on track.
 - Many of the students who were identified early in elementary school and who have had great success in the Center programs (or with ALPs in their home schools) are now entering high school.
 - Some of these students who have been doing well with the support of teachers who ‘get’ GT students are struggling when they enter HS classes with teachers who don’t understand (or may be unwilling) to augment their teaching to meet these students needs.
 - As parents, we see evidence in wildly uneven grades—they get A’s in classes where the teacher’s style is a match and they do poorly in classes where the styles clash.
- GT students are very good at compensating for weaknesses and can appear average when in reality things are not going well. Also they often are labeled as lazy or just check out when things are not going well.
- Preparing students for competitive careers (Technology, Science & Engineering) in addition to Liberal Arts would meet the districts goals for rigorous, relevant coursework.
- A well structured GT program at the HS level helps students use and develop talents that might otherwise be ignored or discounted by the students and the community.
- Benefits of these approaches to all advanced learners, not just GT students.

4. Cost of Limited Options for GT Students in HS

- 10-20% of HS drop outs are GT students (Nyquist, 1973) (try to find a more current citation on drop out rate of GT Students)
 - How many students do we lose to Denver School of the Arts?
 - How many students do we lose to the Sci-Tech program at Stapleton?
 - How many students are home schooled through HS?
 - How many students drop out?
 - How many students go the route of a GED and then community college?
 - How many students are not reaching their full potential because they don’t get the support that they need in HS to understand what it is?

5. Components that a GT HS Program Might Include:

- Music, Performing & Visual Arts
- Computers & Technology
- Focus on intellectually gifted and creatively talented students (with appropriate counseling to address their affective needs, keep them engaged, and help them find creative program choices.)
 - Recognize and reward Creative-Problem Solving Giftedness as well as School House Giftedness (Renzulli, 1986).
- Context-Based--make HS curriculum relevant to students' unique interests, (We need to help them understand the WIIFM)
 - Often their interests are outside of school; they have an Internet business or are avid and talented in a sport.
 - Innovative programs teach by engaging students through their interest areas. For example, DU Computer game design program is developing HS curriculum that teaches Math & Science through game design <http://gamedev.cs.du.edu/news.html>
- Mentorships
- Autonomous Learner Model
- Independent Study
- Real-World Tasks (create authentic products or services)
- Competitions
- Provide adequate training for teachers to implement differentiated instruction where needed.

6. Unique Strengths of Jeffco:

- Jeffco is a leader in GT research and implementation.
- We have nationally recognized leaders in our GT department (2X and VSL in particular)
 - How can we leverage what they know across the district?
 - How can we get all teachers in the district trained at a faster pace? There are still some who 'don't get it' and they can cause harm to students without realizing it.
- Center programs are doing a great job in K-8.
 - How can we leverage what we know about supporting GT students academically and their affective needs into 9-12th grades?
- We have a philosophy of "All means all".
 - How do we extend it to provide the best possible options for our GT students in HS?

References:

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