

Gifted and Talented Program Review
Final report to the HVRSD Board of Education
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I would like to thank Superintendent Tom Smith for the opportunity to work with the Hopewell Regional School District on the K-12 Gifted and Talented Program Evaluation. Special thanks to administrators Lori Barnett and Amy Orlando for their support in facilitating meetings with teachers, parents, students and the GT Review Committee. It has been a privilege to meet and work with the teachers, administrators, parents and students of this school community. The Hopewell Valley Regional School District holds high educational standards, values the needs of all learners and recognizes the unique challenges of meeting the needs of gifted and talented learners. I believe that since December of 2009, we have accomplished the initial goals of this committee to evaluate the current GT program K-12. In this report, I will make recommendations on how HVRSD can move forward with what is considered to be a five year plan for development and implementation.

The District was specific in what topics they wished to be reviewed in the *Gifted and Talented Program Review Plan* set forth December 2009. This served to guide to the process and procedures of the evaluation. (See Appendix 1)

Understanding of “Giftedness” and “Best Practices”

Every evaluation of GT programming must deal with the complexity of defining “giftedness.” According to Gary A. Davis and Sylvia B. Rimm, authors of *Education of the Gifted and Talented*, 5th Edition (Pearson, 2004), “There is no one definition of “gifted,” “talented,” or “giftedness” that is universally accepted. Common uses of the terms even by the experts is ambiguous and inconsistent” (page 18).

Lest we lose heart that the goal of meeting the needs of gifted students is beyond our grasp because not even the experts can agree on one definition, consider what Davis and Rimm advise: “ Defining gifted and talented is both an important and complicated matter. First, the particular definition adopted by a school district will guide the identified process and thus determine who is selected for the special services of a gifted program” (p. 17).

Accepting that there is no one “right” way to meet the needs of gifted students, the critical variable in determining “best practice” is what is best for your community. Fortunately for your children, this community embraces the underlying philosophy that grounds all good gifted programs. Though the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) defines gifted as the top 2% of the population, your community — parents, teachers, administrators, children — recognize that this small percentage is the *profoundly gifted* — high genius range. It is abundantly clear from focus groups and surveys that this community believes that any GT program in your district should include a range of gifted and talented abilities.

The District’s intentions meet the NJ Administrative Code for Gifted (2005):

“Gifted and talented students” means those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content area, when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications or their education program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

Based on your own resources, as found in the 2004 GT Review report,¹ this community is aware that high achievement and giftedness need to be understood independently of each other. Joseph Renzulli, PhD, of the internationally renowned Neag School of Education and the Neag Center for Gifted Education and

¹ The district uses the comparison of “a bright child” and “a gifted learner” developed by Janice Szabos in the nomination materials sent to parents.

Talent Development at the University of Connecticut has coined the term “school house gifted” to describe students who are highly motivated to “do school well” — high grades, strong teacher-pleasing behaviors. Gifted individuals may be high achievers or they may be tagged “reluctant learners” by teachers for their lack of interest and participation in school studies, homework and, at times, disruptive behaviors. However, gifted individuals, even if they do not “do school” well, exhibit highly creative ways of thinking, problem solving and achieving their own goals.² Dr. Renzulli addresses this conundrum by identifying “gifted behavior” rather “giftedness.” Both high achievers in school and highly creative/non-academic types will display “gifted behavior.”³ To the credit of your community, the GT Review Committee and affirmed by the surveys maintain that learners exhibiting giftedness in school and beyond school should be included in the evaluation of giftedness.

This community is also well versed in the Theory of Multiple Intelligences,⁴ first put forth by Howard Gardner, PhD of Harvard in the 1980s. All educators now accept the idea that all healthy human brains house distinct “intelligences” — ways of knowing and doing — and that most individuals have two to three that are more dominant than the others. Indeed, what was a theory in the 1980s is now confirmed by the advancements in neuroscience from the 1990s onward. Evidence of the District’s commitment to meeting the needs of a range of “intelligences” is the extensive music, art, performance and athletic programs that are hallmarks of this school district.

As a public school in New Jersey, the District must be attentive to the intentions of the NJ Department of Education in regards to gifted education. Though the directives are in flux — and funding continues to be non-existent for GT education — the DOE remains committed to directing NJ schools to actively address the needs of gifted students. HVRSD has and the intent is that the schools will continue to meet the needs of gifted learners in accordance with State expectations. (See Appendix 2: NJ Administrative Code for Gifted, revised 2005)

It should be noted that NJ has entered into the Partnership for the 21st Century Skills and has adopted those shared standards to support global thinking and learning. HVRSD reflects these standards in the District Belief Statements and Mission Statement. Moreover, these Belief Statements and Mission Statement encapsulate the philosophy that grounds “best practices” set forth by NAGC and experts in the field of gifted education.

Intent and Methodology

Given that I believe, based on research and experience, that a gifted program must reflect the needs and values of the community — that being both Community, the town and its people and community, the school — my plan was to get to know the people and the culture of HVRSD in order to base recommendations on what would best serve all the stakeholders of this district. I have been attentive to the needs of administrators, teachers — both GT and classroom — parents as well as taxpayers. Before the fiscal crisis hit NJ hard — in particular, HVRSD — my intent was to recommend what could be fiscally and practically implemented.

Utmost, however, was a concern for the needs of gifted students. In this, I have a decided bias, which Dr. Smith was aware of before we began. I believe labeling gets in the way of meeting the needs of gifted children. I also believe that a strictly governed identification process misses some and creates an elitist

² In capturing this understanding, I facilitated the “Famous Genius Game” at the first meeting, December 15th, 2009. Musicians, mathematicians, artists, actors, authors, scientists were named and through discussion, the group recognized that our noted geniuses were most often not successful in school, and most often not successful in social behaviors that are important for school success.

³ Davis and Rimm devote a lengthy chapter to “Characteristics of Gifted Students, from which gifted behaviors are extrapolated, to wit: aware of creativeness, independent, risk-taking, curious, intuitive, abstract thinker, et al.

⁴ Verbal linguistic, math/logic, spatial, musical, naturalist, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and, though Gardner reserves confirmation as an intelligence as he defined the others, he discusses the moral/ethicist as well as a dozen other intelligences that “yield a product that societies value.”

atmosphere that is unhealthy for all. From the overview provided above, it is apparent that this bias has been fostered by my work with NAGC, Dr. Renzulli, my study of Gardner's work — among others — and years of experience with gifted students.

The methodology was to spend time in the schools and with parents to observe and listen in order to understand the culture of this community and to find shared values among all stakeholders on which to build recommendations.

Based on the shared values, the objectives were:

- To build on what works well
- To identify problems that impede effectively meeting the needs of gifted students
- To work towards a shared understanding for
 - Definition of gifted (that meets the needs of this district)
 - Identification (how to find them)
 - Program (how to serve them)

The intent and plan align with the “topics to be reviewed” as set forth by the district (Appendix 1.)

Refer Appendices 3 and 4 that delineate the dates of times of visits, which include GT Committee meetings, visits to each school where I met with GT teachers and observed in regular education classrooms, focus groups with students in each school as well as with parents and teachers.

I would like to note that these days, some of them quite long, were delightful. The school principals, office staff, teachers and students were welcoming, very open and thoughtfully engaged in extensive conversations with me. From these visits and candid conversations, I came to understand the unique needs of your District. As I am sure you are aware, the climate of your schools is very healthy and positively contributes to the notable successes of the District.

That said, most sincerely, I was charged with looking for how the needs of gifted students are addressed. To this, I applied standards that I've developed from research and experience. Succinctly put:

Gifted education should involve:

- Rigorous PACE
- Some element of student CHOICE
- Meaningful PURPOSE (with authentic assessment)

Gifted education should require:

(based on the standards set by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills)

- Research skills
- Critical thinking, analysis, problem solving skill
- Communication skills
 - With mentor and collaborative team members
 - In sharing a product/presentation

Findings

Definition of giftedness:

Before any district, as noted by Davis and Rimm, can determine what to do for gifted students, it must determine a definition of gifted. Good news from this review is that the data from all focus groups and corroborated by the survey responses, is that the District does have a shared understanding of the definition of giftedness.

- Giftedness is complex
- Giftedness is informed by Multiple Intelligence theory

- Parents believe that “levels” of giftedness should be considered (affirmed by teachers and students)
- Teachers have a shared understanding of “gifted behavior” based on training at the University of Connecticut with Dr. Renzulli and Dr. Sally Reis at the summer teacher institute known as Confratute. (Confirmed by parents who also expressed appreciation for the concept of “gifted behaviors.”)
- Gifted students may also have learning disabilities — the “twice exceptional.” As with the profoundly gifted, these are unique individuals who require identification and program adjusted to their unique circumstances.

The first recommendation (which follows) is for the GT Review Committee with administrators to establish the wording for the District’s definition of gifted.

Identification:

Concerns noted by some in the focus groups (teachers and parents) is that in the current identification process, parental nominations are heavily weighted in determining which children are in GT programs. Also, parents noted concerns that the nomination process is restricted to precisely stated times. Teachers, parents and some students noted that the criteria, particularly the test scores, are rigid. Students miss by “one point” and are excluded from the program, yet then are not challenged in regular classes.

My major concern is that the one voice not heard in the identification process is the student. Parent nomination, teacher recommendation, testing are the means currently used to identify students. My bias leans towards recognizing gifted behaviors, which, in part, is student expression of learning needs that go beyond the classroom or routine. No accommodation currently exists to include student expression of need.

As it stands, no one is comfortable with the means to identify gifted students. Recommendations that follow address this concern.

Exemplar program:

I was most impressed with the Concentrated Studies Program run by Dr. Bob O’Boyle at HVCHS, because it meets the standards for what gifted education should involve and should require.

What surprised me was that this program is not touted and is not well known in the District by other teachers and is not appreciated as an exemplar GT program. Interestingly, I believe one reason the program works so well is that it is NOT well known. Students, who have and demonstrate a real need to go beyond what HVCHS can offer in their particular field of interest or study, find this alternative. It is an exemplar GT program because it meets of the needs of “gifted behavior,” rather than being a required offering for identified gifted students.

In discussions with the GT Committee and the BOE committee, I began with the Concentrated Studies program because I believe this is the ideal the district seeks as they move towards improving the current GT program.⁵

Concerns that currently exist that impede fully meeting the needs of gifted students will be addressed.

⁵ As aside, Hopewell resident Grant Wiggins, noted curriculum designer, advocates the concept of “backward design.” That is, determine what you wish students to know and be able to do, and then plan the study and activities to work towards those goals. Having found an exemplar in place at the end point of high school, the task is to put into place the programs in K-early high school that develop the skills and behaviors that result in more students engaging in authentic learning such as the Concentrated Studies program provides.

High school, other positives:

Caveat: Gifted individuals need some time in their school life to interact solely with their intellectual peers (from an array of research including Jim Delisle, NAGC research, and more).

- Due to the self-selection of courses and activities at the high school level, students find their peers throughout their school day.
- High school provides a rich array of ways for students to fulfill their interests and passions, including the TV studio, performing arts, math acceleration, rigorous AP courses in all major academic areas, music and art.
- Students spoke of excellent elective courses; “an endless amount.”
- The semester courses are impressive and offer meaningful content as they allow students to “specialize” as they choose.’
- Extracurricular: student leadership, sports (outstanding), performing arts and music (important to the culture of the Community), travel abroad experiences, DECCA, Robotics, Model UN and other academically competitive opportunities.

High school concerns:

- Honors classes are too large.

This is a major concern. An “honors” course is intended to move at a faster pace and with a deeper level of thinking. With over 25 students in a class, the teacher can not provide the degree of attention with advice and support on written assignments, nor can teachers and students engage in meaningful discussion in class. Students and teachers expressed great concern that some students were at risk for being left behind, and therefore the teacher and class slowed the pace to accommodate all learners, thus inhibiting the gifted learners from moving at a pace appropriate to their needs, which an honors class should provide.

Focus groups identified several reasons for the size of these classes.

- Criteria for entrance into the course is “too easy”
 - “just need a 90%”
 - teachers make recommendations without full knowledge of the nature of the course
- Parents “waive” son/daughter into the honors course, overriding recommendations and grade criteria
- Students are consumed with “what must be done/courses taken” to build their college resume and miss or opt out of courses (e.g., semester courses) that would serve them well (the “doing school” syndrome)
- Homework is a serious issue (see related concerns below)

K-8 valuable programs

- Music and art programs are exemplary from K- high school and are appreciated by all stakeholders.
- The school newspaper that is student produced has elements of pace, choice, purpose and in particular, has an authentic and very real audience.

- Junior Great Books used in GT classes support critical thinking, communication skills appropriate to the needs of gifted learners.
- Structure is in place to develop a strong GT program: GT specialist in each elementary building and the ALR/ALM replacement classes are part of the schedule.

K-8 Concerns:

K-3 Current Program

Three main issues in regard to the elementary schools and the GT program were identified through focus groups with all stakeholders:

- The need for consistency in the schools
- The issue of the disruptive nature of pull out model
- The desire to meet a continuum of gifted needs

Parents, administrators and teachers expressed specific concerns about kindergarten.

- Testing in Kindergarten is too early**
- Testing for kindergarten is onerous — “long and stressful,” “too much.”
- Testing kindergartners may not “capture” all gifted students, and may only identify the linguistically precocious (early readers)

** Note that NJ Code says “identification” but not specifically “testing” K-12. This is addressed in recommendations

1st –3rd Grade Program

- Not enough time with GT specialist
- Inconsistency with meaningful work
- Inconsistency with programs between schools
- Parent nomination a leading indicator in identification process

4th –5th Grade Program

- Not enough time with GT specialist
- Inconsistency in program offerings between schools
- Confusion with purpose of ALM and ALR (not specifically for gifted, though gifted students may be in ALR and/or ALM classes)

Middle School

- No GT program in place, thus no time in the school week for gifted individuals to interact solely with their peers (unlike the high school where self-selection allows for this connection)
- After school offerings are not stimulating/enticing
- Honors classes suffer from the same issues at the high school (classes are too large, criteria for entrance not clearly defined, parental demands weigh heavily in the decision)
- Lack of transition for GT students from 5th into 6th (sixth grade students are “reassessed” before they are eligible to enter honors classes at 7th grade level)
- Curriculum lacks a depth of critical thinking, research/analysis, and need for communication skills
- NJASK is totally inappropriate to use in the identification of gifted or honors
(WRAP (writing assessment) can be used as a criterion)
- Homework is a serious concern (see below)

Other concerns across the District:

Though not under the auspices of the GT Review, three other concerns impinge on effectively meeting the needs of gifted students.

- excessive homework that often lacks meaningful purpose
(Prevents middle school and high school students from participating in extra-curricular activities in and outside of school, or in attempting intellectual challenges because of lack of time.)
- lack of differentiation in classrooms
(An ongoing concern being addressed by administrators with teachers)
- Parents are not comfortable with communication of information from the District, teachers and — in particular — the gifted program.

Recommendations:

The following addresses both identification and programming needs.

- Parent nominations will remain intact, but parents can nominate their child at any time
- No formal testing in kindergarten (observational with accommodations in place for profoundly gifted students)
- Media specialist serves as a resource for profoundly gifted students in K-2. These students will be able to use the library for reading and their own research studies under the guidance of the media specialist, who will maintain a log of their attendance and a check list of independently read books/subjects studied and anecdotal evidence of gifted behaviors.
- 1st and 2nd grade:
 - GT teachers will provide enriched activities in classrooms for all students. PUSH IN model. These activities will emphasize critical thinking, problem solving, and require communication skills within the group and with an authentic product to be shared with an authentic audience (parents, other students, Community).

Note: GT teacher will be observing students as she/he works with the classes. GT teacher will maintain a log of activities, noting students' responses and gifted behaviors.

GT teacher will also be working with the classroom teacher, which will encourage sharing of observations of gifted behaviors (a form of professional development.)

- GT Teacher, in his/her classroom, will provide UNITS OF STUDY for all interested students. (pull out model but refined as students self-select)

These units will incorporate beyond classroom curriculum topics, levels of thinking and problem solving, with appropriate pace for gifted students.

Note: Each unit will have a beginning and end point, with specific times for students to come. GT teacher will keep a log for each student, noting attendance and levels of participation (gifted behaviors noted in a setting that is designed for gifted students.)

Formal identification:

End of 2nd grade:

- All 2nd grade students will take a standardized achievement test (currently used, CTP4).
- Students scoring in a range (to be set by the District) will take the CoGAT, or a similar test of cognitive ability.
- Student's portfolio, kept by GT teacher with addendum from classroom teacher and from media specialist to be reviewed for evidence of gifted behaviors
- Parent nomination reviewed

Note: At the end of 2nd grade, all students will have had an equal opportunity to interact in the classroom and out of the classroom with the GT teacher. These interactions will serve to provide opportunities for the GT teacher and the classroom teacher to observe and formally note — the portfolio — gifted behaviors, which indicate a need for challenges beyond the regular curriculum.

The test scores are a necessary quantitative means to cross check observation AND to find students who may have high potential but who are under-performing (perhaps, the twice-exceptional, perhaps social-emotional needs.)

Parent nomination serves to provide insight into the nature of the child outside of school. Again, the parent nomination is a cross-check to testing results and teacher observations. If the parent input does not align with the other data, further analysis and consultation with the teachers and child and parent are needed.

3rd grade:

- Identified students in reading and math will take the replacement LA and/or math class called ALR and ALM (now truly accelerated classes in reading and math for GT)

4th and 5th

Gifted programs should involve:

Rigorous PACE

Some element of student CHOICE

Meaningful PURPOSE with AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

And gifted programs should require:

Research skills

Critical thinking, analysis, problem solving

Communication Skills

With mentor and collaborative team members

Sharing a product/presentation

- Introduce programs serving GT students. For example:

4th grade ALM: introduce Future Problem Solving (an international, non profit educational organization that has served students for over 40 years.)

5th grade: ALM: begin FPS competition at the Junior Level

4th grade: ALR: Introduce FPS scenario writing
Introduce Journalism

5th grade ALR: Scenario Writing competition
Production of the school newspaper (online)

Note: all students in the school can contribute to the school newspaper. The 5th grade ALR class serve as editors, as well as reporters. They learn these skills in 4th grade ALR.

Middle school

- GT specialist for the Middle School

This is the only added expense over what is currently offered in the District for GT. The Middle School needs a GT specialist, with a room. Principal Suozzo suggested that students could go to the GT room once a week during the PE period, as your middle schoolers have more than the NJ required PE time in their schedule.

This GT class must go beyond school curriculum. Utilize strong GT programs such as FPS (a perfect spiral up from 4th and 5th in team problem solving and scenario writing), as well as National History Day — a renowned program for over 30 years, now with ½ million students a year — encourages research by students that meets all the criteria of research, thinking, communication skills and is truly authentic.

GT should offer opportunities for a range of gifts and talents

- Revise the criteria for entrance into honors
- Reevaluate curriculum for Honors classes (check for research, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, as well as pace, choice and purpose.)
- Honors classes should begin in 6th grade (must be in place when students transitioning from revamped ALR and ALM.)
- Reevaluate use of after school time (for GT type activities such as Science Olympiad, Math Counts, etc.)

High School

- Revise the criteria for entrance into honors
- Reevaluate curriculum for Honors classes (check for research, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, as well as pace, choice and purpose.)
- Professional development and articulation time for teachers who make honors recommendations (to make the recommendation process more effective and equitable)
- Professional development for all staff regarding the Concentrated Studies program
 - Stipends and/or professional hours for teacher advisors of Concentrate Studies projects
- Community outreach to adults to mentor Concentrated Studies projects (though the student also must have a HVCHS teacher as an advisor)
- Administrators will pursue the legalities of the Practical Arts requirement with the intent to provide alternative ways for students to meet the state requirements without, specifically “seat time” in class. (Advanced study/independent study)

Time Line:

>By Fall of 2010 (If feasible, this work could be done this summer.)

- GT Committee to define gifted for Hopewell Valley Regional School District. This definition will delineate who is to be served and in what ways.

Sample wording as taken from GT Review Committee Focus Groups:

Philosophically, this community believes that the concept of giftedness is complex and therefore is committed to serving a CONTINUUM OF GIFTED NEEDS. This definition of giftedness is informed by Multiple Intelligence Theory (different ways of being smart) and reflects the shared understanding that levels of giftedness should be recognized including the profoundly gifted (top 2%), the twice exceptional (gifted with learning disabilities) and high achievers who are motivated to go beyond classroom curriculum. Incorporating an understanding of “gifted behavior” as defined by Joseph Renzulli, students will be identified as those who demonstrate high ability (through test scores) with creativity (parent input and teacher observation/portfolio) and task commitment (teacher observation/portfolio).

- Administrators with GT teachers will determine what services can be put into place to accelerate the profoundly gifted students in reading and/or math.

(Refer to work by Colangelo, Assouline, et al at the Belin and Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Iowa for a variety of ways to accelerate, besides just grade advancement.)

- Administrators will provide professional development for elementary media specialists as GT resource to oversee independent work by for highly gifted readers.
- Administrators along with Special Services will determine what services can be put into place to meet the unique needs of twice exceptional students.

(This can implemented by in-class activities and, if resource time permits, participation in GT class units.)

- GT teachers from all elementary schools, with administrative support, will work together to create in-class lessons/activities can will dovetail with and then extend 1st and 2nd grade level curriculum (for the “push-in” activities, perhaps one each quarter, rotating through classes once a week or as schedule permits.)
- GT teachers from all elementary schools, with administrative support, will work together to glean and refine pull out units currently used that will be offered to 1st and 2nd graders. (i.e., Junior Great Books, poetry with the Princeton Arts Festival, drama, bridge building, etc.)
 - It is understood that students will SELF SELECT to attend the units offered in the GT room. However, they may REVOLVE out, (a time frame can be set – 2 weeks?). They can come to the next unit, when it is offered.
 - These units should meet the criteria of rigorous pace, some element of student choice, and must have a meaningful purpose, which may be found in an authentic audience (performance, sharing within the school, publication.) The activities should involve students in research, critical thinking/problem solving and the need to communicate with the teacher and class members as well as to communicate the product.

The GT teachers could create units for the 1st half of the year (one every five weeks, that is, 2 units a quarter?) Then reconvene in November to plan for the remainder of the year.

- GT teachers from all elementary schools, with administrative support, will work together to create a checklist to be used with the classroom teacher that includes who in the class was present and level of engagement (e.g.: active, (doing what was) expected, hesitant; brief narration for extraordinary moments of gifted behavior.)
- GT teachers will also need to create a checklist for use within the GT classroom that is specific for each child noting attendance and gifted behaviors (e.g. engaged, expected, hesitant; keen observation; efficient memory; insightful comments; appropriate sense of humor, etc.)

- Administrators with GT teachers will create an “update” form to be sent to parents, as the District deems appropriate (at the end of each unit or at the end of the quarter with report cards.) This should be in a format that is easily completed by the GT teacher, and will not require a narrative statement.

e.g. Name of child attended (“all” or “give number of days”) of our five week poetry unit. (He/She) completed/chose not to complete the final product (describe, e.g. poetry booklet.) (Name) is invited to come to come to the next GT unit.

*****It needs to be noted that these instruments are being DRAFTED and PILOTED and will be continued to be refined as use dictates.**

>2010-2011 school year

- Administrators, with GT teachers, must set score range for CoGAT
Suggest analysis of scores for District over the past 3 to 5 years to determine the score range for the top 5% of District students.
- Administrators and GT teachers will develop a matrix for evaluation.
*The intent is to find confirmation of giftedness among parent, teacher input and observational data and test data. Test data might also include WRAP results or other district measures of abilities.
No one measure should outweigh another, and, if possible, the input and data should not be ranked.
** Note that re-testing is not necessary after 2nd grade, unless a student is new to the District and confirming data is needed. However, ongoing assessment of students should be part of the annual review process. Student portfolios, performance in ALM/ALR classes, student’s needs and expressed desires (to revolve out, or a student expressing the need for challenges beyond regular classroom), parent nominations should be considered in assessing students for GT programs. The idea is to be fluid, flexible, with the intent to include rather than exclude.*
- Curriculum Development: ALM and ALR for 3rd grade, with attention to scope and sequence for 4th and 5th
Review and refine curriculum to include research skills, critical thinking/problem solving and communication skills. Work should be appropriately paced for gifted learners, involved student choice and work towards a purposeful goal with authentic assessment.
- Honors classes Middle School and High School
 - Reevaluate the recommendations for entrance into Honors classes and review the recommendation process
 - Professional development/articulation for honors recommendations for all teachers involved in the process
 - Curriculum evaluation of honors courses to review and revise as needed for research, critical thinking/problem solving, communication, and appropriate pace for gifted learners, student choice and meaningful purpose with authentic assessment.
- Develop 6th grade honors classes
- Administrators will investigate the legalities and feasibility of high school students meeting the PRACTICAL ARTS requirements in alternative ways from classroom seat-time.
- High School professional development for Continuing Studies advisors. Professional credits given.
- Consult with Dr. Bob O’Boyle on how to incorporate community members as mentors

Not GT Review purview but connected:

- Review and revise homework policy district wide
- Continue to develop awareness of, appreciation and strategies for differentiation
- Review and revise kindergarten curriculum with an awareness of how to accelerate profoundly gifted students in reading and/or math.
 - Incorporated into this are strategies to observe behaviors and skills indicating profound giftedness

>Spring/June 2011 (if summer 2010 work can be done and the revise program put into place by 9/10)

- Implement the new identification process with 2nd graders rising to 3rd grade. Test, portfolio (data for only one year) and parent nomination.

>September 2011

- ALR and ALM classes — 3rd grade — for identified 3rd graders; curriculum in place
- Honors classes begin for 6th graders at Middle School; curriculum in place

>September 2012

- ALR and ALM — 4th grade — revised curriculum for rising 4th graders in place
- Begin Future Problem Solving program (team in ALM, scenario writing in ALR)
- ALR – journalism unit for all, year-long reporting and writing

>September 2013

- ALR and ALM — 5th grade — revised curriculum for rising 5th graders in place
- Begin FPS competition (team through ALM and scenario writing through ALR)
- ALR — editing/production of the schools online newspaper – student run

>During 2013-2014 school year

Develop at Middle School GT program, schedule and hire teacher.

>September 2014

- Middle School: add a GT facilitator position (to moderate incoming 6th graders with two years of FPS experience and to begin National History Day program – or other similar high level challenges that go beyond school, have authentic purpose and are authentically assessed.
 - Offer a range of opportunities for gifts/talents.

****** When fiscally feasible, explore Renzulli Learning Systems for elementary.**

Final thoughts:

The HVRSD has the people and the will to effect positive changes in the existing GT program. Though your fiscal resources are sorely limited, the intent of these recommendations is that steps can be put into place in September to show good faith in making substantive changes in the years ahead.

Appendix 1: Gifted and Talented Program Review Plan – December 2009

Topics to be Reviewed

- Programming (*addressed K-12*)
 - Continuum of Services — Is the depth and breadth of programs reflective of student’s needs (*addressed philosophically and practically*)
 - Entrance Criteria (*recommendations on how to revamp*)
 - Exit Criteria (*“revolving out” concept recommended*)
- Curriculum — Does our program provide students the opportunity to reach their potential? (*addressed*)
 - Professional Development — Instructional/curricular support our staff receives (*recommendations made*)
 - Programs effectiveness (*addressed through focus groups and survey*)
 - Student performance on tests
 - Long-term student success
 - Student feedback
 - Parent feedback
 - Staffing
- Structure — Are our staff used to optimum effectiveness? (*addressed through conversations and school visits, and conversations with administrators*)
 - Supervisory structure – building/district oversight of staff and programs
 - Staffing – Teachers
 - Support – Are our staff being supported adequately
- Vision — Is our overall program philosophy reflective of our student/community needs? (*addressed*)
 - Immediate program wants/needs – What needs to change now? (*addressed – timeline*)
 - Long-term program wants/needs – What is important to plan for 3-5 years away? (*addressed – timeline*)

Appendix 2: NJ Administrative Code for Gifted

Subchapter 3. Implementation of the Core Curriculum Content Standards

6A:8-3.1 Curriculum and instruction

(a) District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the Core Curriculum Content Standards and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for students with limited English proficiency, **and for students who are gifted and talented.**

6A:8-3.1(a)

5. District boards of education shall be responsible for identifying gifted and talented students and shall provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.

- i. District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identifications process {and appropriate educational challenges} for gifted and talented students {initiated in kindergarten and reviewed annually through grade 12} that includes multiple measures.
- ii. District boards of education shall provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students.

- {ii} iii District boards of education shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicated content, process, products, and learning environment.
- iv. District boards of education shall take into consideration the Pre-K –Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students.

Appendix 3: Dates of visits to the District

December 15th	first meeting GT Review Committee/public	3:00 —5:00	2 hours
January 12th			
	Toll Gate	8:15 —11:30	3 hours
	Stony Brook	11:45—3:15	3 hours
January 21st			
	Bear Tavern	8:15—11:20	3 hours
	Hopewell	11:30 —3:45	4 hours
January 25th			
	Timberlane	7:20 —3:30	8 hours
February 5th			
	Central High School	7:15—3:30	8 hours
March 23rd			
	Check in and Update GT Review Committee	4:00 – 6:00	2 hours
April 19, 2010			
	Check in and Update BOE Subcommittee	1:00 – 2:30	1.5 hours

Appendix 4: Focus Group Meetings

February 18th	High School students	7:45-8:45	1 hour
	Parent group	9:20-10:25	1 hour
	Stony Brook students	10:30 –11:20	1 hour
	Toll Gate students	11:30-12:15	45 mins
	Hopewell students	12:45- 1:30	45 mins
	Timberlane students	1:45- 2:30	45 mins
	Bear Tavern students	2:45- 3:30	45 mins
	K-12 teachers	4:00-5:30	45 mins **
	Parent group	6:00-7:00	45 mins
February 22 nd	High School teachers	4:00-5:00	1 hour
February 23 rd	Teachers	4:00-5:00	1 hour
March 8 th	Timberlane teachers	3:15-4:30	1 hour
March 9 th	GT teachers	1:00-4:00	3 hours
	Administrators	3:00-5:30	2.5 hours

(** Parents attended the teacher focus group session. The GT teachers requested another time to meet with me, which we accommodated on March 9th; 1:00-3:00 with the teachers and over an hour following with GT teachers and administrators.)