

## CHAT Meeting Minutes – October 11, 2017

### How the BSD System Works for Gifted Learners & the MTSS Process

**Speakers:** Lena Wessel & Wendy Morical – Gifted Education Office, Bryan Ayers – Principal at Chief Joseph Middle School, and Robin Arnold – Principal at Morning Star Elementary School

These minutes reflect the key takeaways / notes from a member of the CHAT Leadership Team.

- The mission of the Education Office is to serve students whose academic talents & abilities differ from those of their peers such that additional opportunities are needed to help them develop
- There are currently around 425 identified Gifted students in the district (typically ranges from 5-7% of the student population in BSD7)
  - Each child is different; differences guide the work that the Gifted Education office does
- MTSS Pyramid – Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
  - A pyramid that is often used in academic circles
  - Makes it easier for administrators & teachers to understand how to deal with gifted learners
  - Is contained in the OPI Planning Guide for Gifted Education (link to this is on the CHAT website)
- There are 3 levels of the MTSS pyramid in terms of the types of interventions that are needed:
  - Tier 1 – All Gifted students need “Classroom Differentiation Level” – examples include flexible grouping, different materials, student choice. When & how things need to be shorter, faster, deeper, more complex is key. Most gifted kids stay in this part of the pyramid
  - Tier 2 – Based on a body of evidence, Tier 1 interventions are still not helping this child work at the level we’d like to see, maybe just in 1 part of the curriculum. Some kids fall here – outliers within the gifted cohort. “Strategic Targeted Intervention Level” – examples include Pull-Together or Send-Out Options, cluster classes, seminars
  - Tier 3 – very limited set of the Gifted population for whom it is not feasible to meet their needs inside the classroom. This is the “Intensive Targeted Intervention Level” – examples include single subject acceleration, and mentorships
- Note: these tiers are not labels. Students move within the tiers depending on need. Lena & Wendy split the schools in terms of their responsibility – they do the following:
  - Provide support for the schools (Professional Development “PD” & instructional support)
  - Collaborate with school counselors
  - Provide general resources for the district – like the gifted newsletter
  - THE PARENT’S RESOURCE = TEACHER + PRINCIPAL (not Lena/Wendy). This is a shift that is new this year, and important because the schools need to own gifted education
- Gifted Education Office went out to staff & teachers to get feedback on how gifted education is addressed in the district and came out with 4 common goals:
  - Need a consistent, district wide framework
  - Need to align support for Gifted Education with the MTSS model that is used across the district
  - Need to increase PD and instructional support for teachers
  - Need to address social & emotional needs
- They developed the “MTSS Parent Pathway” – which describes How You Should Interact with The School / The District and how discussions escalate if needs aren’t met as you move through each state of the pathway:
  - First: Talk to your child’s teacher – connecting with them about a specific issue
    - Needs/perceptions
    - Data (teacher will have some, you may have some from home)
    - Maybe they try a tweak in the classroom - Tier 1 classroom interventions
  - Second: MTSS Meeting (at many schools – MTSS type discussions are taking place within the teacher teams, and then may escalate to a formal MTSS meeting with parents)

- When the student demonstrates an additional need that isn't being met
    - There is a focus on problem solving
    - Team approach: Principal attends, either Lena / Wendy attends, the school counselor, any other professional who has relevant input, the parents
    - Note that teachers don't want the first discussion to be a formal MTSS meeting – there should be a lot of conversations between the teacher & the parent first. The parent can initiate those, or the teacher will, like you are a team trying to figure out how to best serve your child's needs.
  - Third: Individualized Response is developed
    - Alteration of Tier 1 intervention
    - Move to a Tier 2 or 3 intervention
    - Specific to the need of the student
    - **KEY POINT:** The System is intended to be uniform, but the response / action plan are tailored to the individual child
- Comments Regarding Gifted Education in Middle School
  - There are teams, so there is a shift from 1 core teacher to 5. A student will probably have 7 teachers in a given day. For those with rising middle schoolers, this Spring – you may want to reach out to the counselor at the middle school & request to get on calendar during the first two weeks of school, 30-45 minute meeting with your child's prospective teachers where you are the expert on your child, teachers listen, share what you have learned about your child. Teachers would appreciate it, and it would put your child on their radar screen ahead of time, rather than waiting until there is a problem
  - Independent study – not a place where kids do homework. Modeled after Google's Genius Hour – 1 hour each week for them to pursue their passions, and it has also become a social outlet. Finally in a setting with kids who "get" them. Not very directed, but there is a staff member who oversees it. Have recently expanded it to 3x per week using part of the advisory periods
  - Math pathways (with compacted / faster pace math classes for gifted) – place students in clusters essentially, and they do try to keep the gifted kids together in all core classes. But they don't believe in differentiation just by scheduling – each child still needs individualized focus. CJ is very much an inclusive school – so even special ed kids aren't pulled out, they want the kids in the classroom & push more staff in. They are careful not to put Gifted kids in the Co-Lab classes because the range becomes too large, unless it is appropriate for the Gifted child (as an example if the child is twice exceptional)
  - Middle School model emphasizes the "whole child" – each student has 2 electives (band / orchestra, 6G – exploratory courses, languages, etc.). Had a student not identified as gifted, but was gifted in art. Teacher set up a mentorship at MSU for this student to do art & reconnect with school. And there are other opportunities - Science Olympiad, select choir, etc.
- Comments Regarding Gifted Education in Elementary School
  - Greater challenges because each grade is a max of 90, and the largest amount of gifted kids that Morning Star Elementary (as an example of one of the larger schools) has ever had in one grade is 10, so not a critical mass
  - Music teachers as an example are shared across elementary schools – which drastically complicates the scheduling
  - There is no common planning time – have to be pretty creative to find time for teachers to collaborate and brainstorm, and discuss ways to meet children's needs
  - Main areas of focus in elementary school in every MTSS meeting: math, reading, writing & behavior. Don't spend time looking at giftedness outside the core academic areas. STEM initiative should help with the sciences & hands-on project learning. Social studies covered more indirectly via reading & writing
- Measuring Gifted Student Growth & Achievement
  - Gifted students are held to the same goals as all students:
    - Appropriate annual growth
    - Continued gains in achievement

- Data Sources:
  - STAR Reading & Math – given 3x per year for K-10G (K is pre-literacy – they have to achieve a certain score before they jump to the STAR Reading)
    - Started being used in the district in 2014-2015
    - Adaptive test – like a choose your own adventure
    - 1<sup>st</sup> test of the year – the test is at their grade level but they aren't limited to that grade's questions – within 3 questions, the test moves to their level
    - Subsequent tests start at the level they ended at in the last one
    - Scaled score = # of correct responses multiplied by the difficulty level. Growth is measured by comparing the student's scaled score through time; can be some variability due to the adaptive nature of the test
    - Percentile Rank (PR) – comparison of SS relative to students in the same grade, nationally. Like pediatric height/weight measure
    - Student Growth Percentile (SGP): comparison of SS relative to students in the same grade, nationally, who had similar prior scores (like an academic peer group). Creates a conditional expectation of where your student should be.
    - Important to look at all 3 dimensions as a measure of achievement, and only 1 data point in the overall picture
    - Now have enough data to know that there are outliers who max out on Reading. The top Scaled Score on both tests is 1,400. No one has come close to that in math, but some have hit it in Reading. The district is now looking at alternative ways to measure progress for kids who max out on Reading
  - Smarter Balanced – state assessment 3-8G in the Spring
  - ACT – state assessment for 11G
  - Classroom information – probably the most important measure of achievement, there are a lot of variables that can affect a student's performance on any given test day, particularly in elementary school

THANK YOU TO LENA, WENDY, BRIAN & ROBIN for an informative session.