

CHAT Seminar: “How Gifted Education Works in BSD7”

Summary Meeting Minutes - October 15, 2018

Speakers: Lena Wessel (Gifted Education Office), Karen Neff (Data Specialist) and Darren Schlepp (Principal, Morning Star Elementary)

- Goal of the presentation is to share a district-wide perspective on gifted education
 - The district gifted education website has been completely re-done, and now houses all information related to giftedness and gifted education for parents and educators, all in one place to promote consistency in knowledge and understanding.
- I. Overview of Gifted Education in BSD7
- The district sees Gifted learners as having unique developmental and social-emotional needs
 - The Gifted Education office has implemented 3 main changes in their roles/responsibilities this school year:
 - Added parent-liaison to Lena’s responsibilities to better support parents
 - Initiated Fall transition meetings between the Gifted Education office and the schools to allow for better year-to-year communication about each gifted learner K-8 in the district, giving the educators (teachers in elementary & the counselors in middle school) a better picture of the gifted learner at the beginning of the school year
 - Facilitating group discussions in elementary and middle grades to help gifted learners develop a greater understanding of themselves and what it does and doesn’t mean to be gifted
 - Communication: district strives to promote open and direct communication with parents for shared goal of meeting student needs. 3 different pathways for parents to initiate communication with the district about their gifted learner, parents can choose whichever avenue for support they feel most comfortable with:
 - Classroom Teacher
 - Principal
 - Gifted Coordinator
 - See the Gifted Education website for more information
- II. The MTSS Framework – Multi Tiered Systems of Support
- MTSS is a framework for individual needs-based differentiation of instruction and intervention
 - All gifted students fall under this umbrella and receive support via MTSS
 - parents receive notification of ongoing Tier 2 interventions
 - an “MTSS” meeting occurs when considering Tier 3 support
 - Pyramid model with tiers to describe the supports your child may need
 - Tier 1 & 2 include methods employed ***within a particular unit of study*** (so students can move in & out, depending on the unit)
 - Tier 1 at the base of the pyramid, hope that 85-90% of the gifted students needs are met here through regular classroom instruction & differentiation inside the classroom
 - Tier 2 instruction means there are some specialized things happening through the differentiation model, some of which could be in small group outside the classroom
 - Tier 1 & 2 could include the following:

- Pre-assessment data
 - Curriculum compacting (moving thru some units faster)
 - Independent studies or other instruction
 - Grouping strategies (ability based, or interest based)
 - Behavioral support
- Tier 3 – more intensive targeted interventions that are **year-long**, and parents are involved at this point. Actions taken could be single-subject acceleration or grade level acceleration. This is a relatively small percentage of the gifted population.
- Identification Process
 - Winter for 3G & 5G students, look at multiple screening criteria (see website)
 - Screening may occur in other grade levels in specific circumstances outlined in the ID flowchart (website)
 - GATE (Gifted & Talented Education) screening at BHS, open to any student interested in the GATE courses offered freshman year
- See the Gifted Education website for more information

III. STAR Testing

- STAR testing is used to assess achievement and growth for all students (including gifted) – administered 3x per year, K-10G
 - Adaptive, computer-based assessment – like a choose your own adventure story that starts in the Fall at grade level. It normalizes to the student’s level within approximately 3-4 questions
 - A snapshot perceptible at a point in time
 - 3 useful scores that come out of the STAR test:
 - Scaled score is the number of correct responses multiplied by a weighting factor based on the difficulty of the questions
 - Percentile rank is the scaled score normed for that grade level nationally, like the pediatric growth chart compared to their age nationally
 - Student growth percentile – normed measure looking at students in one grade level that started out with a similar score to your child nationally at the beginning of the year and compares how your child does to how that subset of kids nationwide does over the course of the year
 - Reading – 0-1,400 scaled score range possible on the STAR test, but within a certain score – even say 1,400 – the student could still experience growth because the student is most likely not getting 100% of the questions correct. There may still be a lot of growth that can be experienced within that score. In all of last year, only one 10G student achieved a 1,400 with 100% of the questions correct. Evaluating the percentage of questions correct is something that the Gifted Education office can do if needed to help teachers understand what is going on with a particular student.
 - The Math range of scaled scores is the same as for Reading, but because of the step wise nature of math, it is much harder for students to get to the top of the scale. They have only seen a handful of scores in the 1,300’s.
- See the Gifted Education website for more information

Q&A:

- What are the Smarter Balance tests? Smarter Balance is a statewide assessment administered in the Spring – the tool that the state uses to hold districts accountable for the instruction they are providing. It is a test that only measures a student’s understanding of the grade level curriculum. It does not push beyond that.
- How are the social-emotional groups of students going to work? Social-emotional groups will be formed with 4-5Gers starting this Fall. The number of meetings needed will be determined once it starts. They plan to add 3Gers in the Spring post-identification. They are also doing them with middle school students, but timeframe is TBD. The focus of the discussions will be on the ways in which the students are wired differently, and learning things that may be part of their personal picture such as asynchronous development and intensities/overexcitabilities. The goal is to give them a better understanding of themselves. Parents, teachers and counselors will be provided with information shared with students in the sessions to further student support.
- Who receives the Gifted newsletter? It goes out to all district employees and parents of identified gifted students in the district.
- How many identified gifted learners are there in BSD7? Typically around 450-475 students are identified gifted learners in BSD7
- I heard there is a CHAT Facebook Group, how do I find it? Answer provided by a CHAT representative: search “CHAT Southwest Montana Gifted Community” and request to join. It is a reasonably active group, and a great way to share information that other parents might find helpful. Note that members include parents, but also other members of the community.
- Funding for Gifted Education – how can parents help? Answer provided by a CHAT representative: AGATE is organizing a “day on the hill” with legislators in February for parents to come meet with their legislators over lunch, raise awareness, discuss the issues and push for more funding. The overall budget picture in the state is tight. CHAT is also considering what it can do to raise funding locally to enable the district to offer more. In the immediate term, CHAT will also be looking for individuals to help fund registration fees at the AGATE conference which is being held this year in Bozeman for teachers who would like to attend. If you are interested in these topics and in helping with funding generally, please contact us at chatswmt@gmail.com.