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GATE Differentiation

What Differentiated Curriculum for GATE Students Means



by Kathy Bradley

Francis Scott Key takes pride in striving to meet the needs of all its students. In each classroom, every day, the standard curriculum is adapted, modified, and/or enhanced according to the needs of the individual student.

Beginning in third grade, students are formally identified as gifted or high potential. Identification continues throughout a student's academic career. Although informal curricular adaptations have been made since kindergarten, formal GATE differentiation begins in fourth grade, after the first round of identifications has taken place.

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Differentiated instruction can be delivered in three basic methods, acceleration, depth/complexity and novelty. Each teacher utilizes the methods best suited to the student, the classroom environment and the assigned task. Methods and their articulation may vary from classroom to classroom, and assignment to assignment.

The fourth and fifth grade teachers at Francis Scott Key have identified several common ways of delivering appropriate, differentiated curriculum for their gifted and high potential students. In general, expectations are higher for the quality of the student's work and not necessarily for the quantity. However, depending on the assignment, a higher quantity of work may also be expected.

Acceleration

- In math, students who have shown the ability and the initiative may work ahead of the rest of the class, taking on more than one lesson a day and therefore moving through the curriculum at a faster pace.
- In spelling, students who score over 80% on a pretest select their own words to learn, based on the week's spelling pattern.

Depth/Complexity

- More complex reading for literature circles, higher-level books
- Different spelling lists/challenge words
- Challenge math worksheets
- Challenge reading response worksheets
- Junior Great Books Discussion circles
- Independent projects

Novelty

- Sudoku puzzles
- Logic puzzles
- Mensa activities
- Owl pellet dissection