

PACE Program Evaluation Summary 2009-2010

In prior years, the program evaluation has focused on achievement data. Gifted students have consistently remained high in their scores, so focus this year was on stakeholder input tied directly to the elements of the GT Frameworks and Program Standards. A few additional pieces of data were also included. Survey results must always be qualified with the understanding that these were opinions and perceptions.

Surveys completed:

Parents-115

Elementary students-75

Middle school students-96

Junior high students-1078

Senior high students-969

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Charts of data are linked below. Click to view.

[Parent Survey graphs](#)

[Advanced Course Enrollment graphs](#)

[Student Survey graphs](#)

Parent Surveys

Overall results were positive for all elements. While most parents felt that the identification process is fair and reasonable, the small percentage who felt it is too restrictive is nearly equal to the small percentage who felt it is too broad. What was surprising is that the highest number (40%) of parents who marked that they are unfamiliar with the process are those in 2nd-4th grades who have most recently been involved in the identification procedures. Individual conferences with parents to explain the test results are conducted (along with a written description of the various tests) with these newly qualifying students. The GT Test Examiner and GT Coordinator will consult on additional means of making the testing more comprehensible. Communication with parents was best at the middle school level and weakest at the high school level—although few marked “poor” at any level. Parents can see evidence that there is a distinct difference in the degree of academic elements (critical thinking, creative thinking, pace, etc.) between a regular classroom and the PACE classes—an indication of strong differentiation. The lowest area of difference, though, was at junior high. Areas with somewhat lower overall rankings for PACE classes were opportunities for choice and independent study and leadership development (especially in upper grades). Teachers will be encouraged to include these aspects in their plans.

Student Surveys

Some areas of lower scores may not reflect so much a deficit as not understanding when that element is being addressed in lessons. Teachers have been encouraged to identify for students when such skills as leadership and research are being taught, especially in non-standard contexts (such as creativity or research in mathematics). For learning expectations to be at the correct challenge level, equally low scores in the lessons being “Too Difficult” and “Not Challenging” are ideal.

Individual teachers received their specific course responses for personal reflection and instructional modifications.

Only two areas of elementary-middle academics were below 60% of marking as “Definitely”—those being reasoning and leadership at Central. Challenge levels and meeting social-emotional needs were strong in elementary and middle school. While King students noted that the lessons were not

challenging enough, it is uncertain if students in those grade levels understood the question well in responding.

Responses were amazingly consistent between the two junior highs. The higher scores in reasoning shift from English and social studies in junior high to math and science in high school. While research is not a common expectation in math classes, due to the lower scores in this area, teachers will be encouraged to address this skill through assignments of applications of math in the real world and biographical research of noted mathematicians. Presentation skills were also lower in math. Work in reasoning and advanced material rated very high in all secondary schools. While scores on the level of work at junior high were similar, the number who marked that it was not sufficiently challenging is a concern. Even at high school, both AP and pre-AP courses had a moderate percentage of students who claimed that the work was only somewhat challenging. While few students indicated that they did not feel the need to hide their intellect/abilities, when including those who felt this "Somewhat," the range is about 13-30%. This is another indication that some needs in the challenge level are not being met, even in accelerated classes such as math. In meeting the social-emotional needs of these advanced students, acceptance by the teacher ranked high across all grade levels but slightly lower in junior high math and science courses. This may be a reflection of the increased expectation of independence in work over middle school.

On the open response, some responses appeared frequently across all grade levels and course contents: request for more hands-on activities and projects and growth in literacy, reasoning, organization and work habits, working in a group, research, and making presentations. While students sometimes complain about doing a National History Day project, this also came up frequently as a favorite activity and one through which much growth occurred.

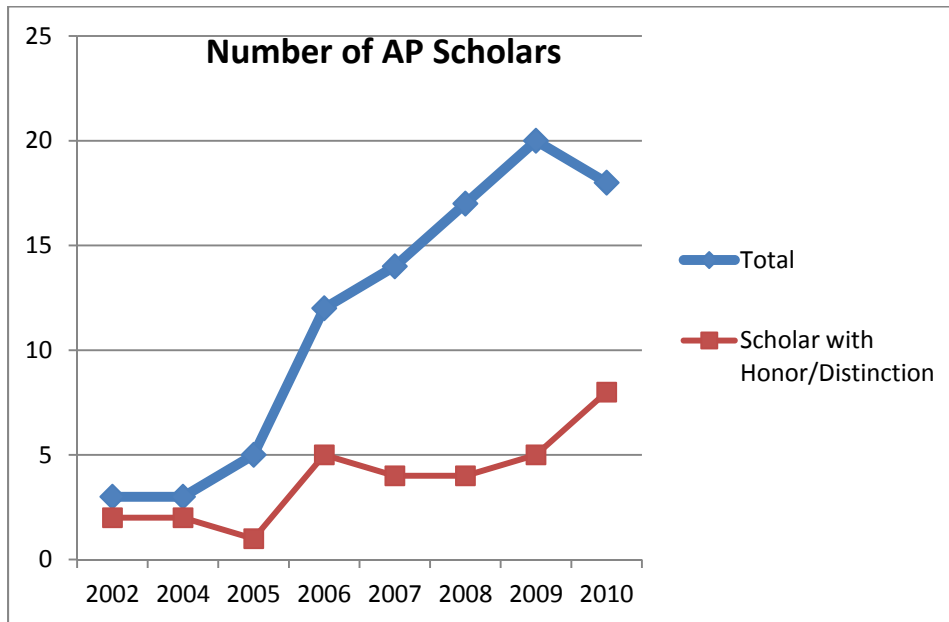
Advanced Course Participation

Interestingly, participation in pre-AP/AP courses in social studies shows the greatest gain from junior high to high school followed by English. While the percentage of total population who are GT-identified is 7% district-wide, it would be anticipated that the make-up of pre-AP classes would be higher. What the figures indicate is that the pre-AP/AP program is providing significant opportunities for other advanced students to participate and benefit. High school ratios of class composition (GT-identified and non) are fairly consistent between the content fields. Areas for recruitment into courses and encouragement of students to push themselves are indicated by school (such as math at Coleman). The black bar on the chart for minority participation indicates the district's minority demographic. This also indicates a need for recruitment and encouragement of under-represented students into courses which will prepare them for college. Minorities appear to be taking advantage of advanced math and science courses more than social studies.

High School

While 57% of the Arkansas ACT Council Awardees on the PLAN test were GT-identified, 29% of sophomore GT students did not qualify. This is a high percentage of GT students who were not prepared for the rigor of the ACT test.

In contrast, the number of student qualifying as AP Scholars (based on exceptional performance on the exams) continues to remain high. While there were two fewer AP Scholars in 2010 than the previous year, the numbers who were Scholars with Distinction rose from an average of two in prior years to seven. This is reflective of the increased number of students taking AP courses (from 279 in 2009 to 347, an increase of 24%). The number of exams taken rose from 432 to 582 for an increase of 26%.



Active Minds continues to provide valuable services to high school students. Around ten students participated in leadership training, around 100 attended the speakers' presentations, and around 100 utilized the access and assistance on research projects. Thirty-five competed in Mind Games in the spring—a popular activity.

Academic Competitions

310 total students participated in academic competitions; 40% of those were GT-identified. Out of current students who have lettered in an academic competition, 62% are GT-identified. This signifies that academic competitions are an important component of enrichment for gifted students, yet it also means that opportunities are available for advanced and motivated students who are not GT-identified. The breakdown of GT to non-GT students in both National History Day and Quiz Bowl participation is 51% to 49%; for forensics, the ratio is 19% to 81%. With 7% district-wide identified as GT, these data again indicate the need to provide academic competitions as an enrichment option for GT students.