

*Preparing Advanced
Children to Excel
Program*



Policy and
Procedures

Van Buren School District

PACE Program Policy and Procedures Handbook

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The PACE Program is comprised of gifted education, the Advanced Placement program, and academic competitions.

Mission Statement

The faculty members of the Van Buren School District PACE Program believe that:

1. Giftedness must be encouraged and nurtured to enable the gifted child to develop his or her abilities to the fullest potential.
2. Gifted students require a *differentiated* educational program to foster advanced skills and to develop an attitude toward learning as a lifelong process.
3. Gifted students need guidance with their unique social and emotional needs to develop into an intellectually and creatively capable, productive, and compassionate human being.
4. Gifted students' needs are diverse and ever changing.
5. The community will best be served if our gifted students are prepared for responsible and productive adult roles in life.

Philosophy

The ultimate goal of the Van Buren School District is to provide an environment in which all students may have the opportunities to develop to their fullest potential. We believe all students can learn, that students both acquire knowledge and apply it in different ways, that the responsibility for education is shared by all of us (including the community), that diverse instructional strategies and environments can improve and expand learning, and that learning is lifelong. We believe the curriculum and school experience should address the breadth, depth, complexity, and pace of learning needed by individual students as well as their special interests and talents. The PACE Program provides the opportunities for the intellectually, academically, and creatively talented whose abilities, needs, interests, and readiness require a learning program differentiated from that of their peers. The emphasis of the program is on experiences and learning that prepares these students to be effective, actualized, contributing members of our community and of society.

General Program Goals

1. The student will develop advanced higher-level and creative thinking skills through content that is accelerated, involves greater depth and complexity, is authentic to the disciplines, incorporates problem-solving, and provides choices in study.
2. The student will develop the ability to relate to self and others including understanding of won strengths and weaknesses and best methods for learning.
3. The student will develop habits of mind and emotional intelligence in order to make the best use of intellectual skills.
4. The student will develop skills in oral, written, and artistic expression.
5. The student will develop the necessary skills for in-depth research and guided independent study.
6. The student will develop competence in the use of technology.
7. The student will develop an awareness that the future is one that is capable of being shaped and of their contributory role in that future.
8. The student will develop leadership capabilities.

1 Student Identification

1.1 Definition

The Van Buren School District utilizes the definitions of giftedness as proposed by the US Department of Education, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the Arkansas Department of Education.

Gifted learners are children and youth with outstanding talent who perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. US Department of Education

Giftedness is that precious endowment of potentially outstanding ability which allows a person to interact with the environment with a high level of achievement and creativity. Council for Exceptional Children

Gifted and Talented children and youth are those of high potential or ability, whose learning characteristics and educational needs require qualitatively differentiated educational experience and/or services. Possession of these talents and gifts, or the potential for their development, will be evidenced through an interaction of above average intellectual ability, task commitment and/or motivation, and creative ability. Arkansas Department of Education

1.2 Nomination

Information regarding the characteristics of academically gifted students will be disseminated annually to all appropriate staff members.

All first grade students must comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients of gifted education services; thereafter, any student may be nominated.

Nominations for services will be accepted from any source (teacher, parent, student, community member, test scores).

Nominations may be made at any time during the year using the nomination form and forwarding it to the GT tester.

Public information about the nomination process will be available through appropriate media.

1.3 Equity

Selected assessments are culturally fair including a non-verbal assessment.

Identification for gifted and talented services employs a student profile review process with multiple scores from a variety of instruments; this process assures equal access to all students without discrimination due to ethnicity, cultural, socioeconomic background/environment, religion, or handicapping condition. Student scores are labeled with an arbitrary number (no names included); low SES (as determined by free/reduced lunch status) and minority students will be noted on score matrix so that decisions will be made in light of these additional considerations.

All forms for parents will be available in their native language as needed and as practicable.

Examination of demographics of identified students will be conducted annually; adjustments of identification process to assure equity of access will be made as needed.

The district complies with College Board open access policy to pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement classes. Any student willing to undertake the rigor of these classes is encouraged to enroll.

1.4 Assessment Process for Identification

Testing of students will occur twice each school year, once in the fall and once in the spring.

Parents will be notified of a nomination and be provided information on the identification process and program confidentiality. An informed consent form must be signed by the parents in order to proceed with the assessment.

Multiple assessments will be used in order to obtain a comprehensive profile of the student's academic potential and to meet state criteria. Formal assessments include objective measures (standardized school achievement indicators, a cognitive abilities test, a nonverbal ability test, an exercise in creative thinking) and subjective measures (grades, home/school rating scales that measure general intellectual ability, specific content ability, creativity, and leadership). Assessment instruments will be selected based on validity, reliability, and match with program goals. Other achievement data (e.g., DRA scores for first grade students and NWEA MAP scores for other students) may be included in the profile.

Assessment instruments will remain consistent across all grade levels and utilize the form appropriate for the student's grade level.

A placement committee will be comprised of representative GT-licensed teachers and administrators from various school levels. Each student's profile is assigned a number. The placement committee will review each profile by number only (with an identifying name); low SES (as determined by free/reduced lunch) and minority status will be noted. The committee recommendations of students for placement will not utilize cut-off scores but will consider each student's comprehensive profile.

The gifted program will aim to serve 5-10% of the district enrollment.

Parents will be notified in writing of all test results along with the placement decision. Parents of qualifying students and their child are scheduled for a conference with the GT tester to discuss the program and obtain a written consent for placement.

If a parent or teacher disagrees with a decision of non-placement, an appeal form may be completed and submitted to the GT test examiner. An alternative form of assessment and/or an individual intelligence assessment may be administered. Results will be presented to the placement committee without identifying information for review. The decision of the committee on the appeal will be the final decision for that year. Students may be re-nominated and retested in subsequent years.

To assist regular classroom teachers in providing differentiation, student scores from identification assessments will be placed in the student's cumulative district folder.

Placement of students will be noted on their cumulative district folders and student electronic state file (APSCN).

1.5 Program Participation

Evaluations for performance in the PACE Program grades 2-6 will appear on quarterly PACE progress reports. PACE teachers will judge the student's progress in the attainment of program goals. These progress reports will be sent home with students for parent review and signature, and a copy will be placed in the student's PACE file. Self-evaluation by students on projects is also encouraged

An annual review will be conducted at the end of each school year to determine whether the student evidences need to continue in the program. Parents will be informed of this decision.

Yearly participation in the PACE Program will also be marked in the cumulative district folder. Transcripts of graduates are stamped with "Gifted and Talented Program."

Occasionally a parent, teacher, or child may feel that the student's placement in the program does not meet his/her educational needs. Before exiting a child from the program, at least two conferences with the parent, teacher, and building principal will be held to evaluate the child's needs. The student may be asked to participate in the conference. A plan for success will be formulated. If the student's performance and/or motivation do not improve within the time frame discussed in the conference, an appropriate exit form will be signed by the teacher and parent listing the cause for removal. The form will be placed in the student's PACE file. Students who have been exited from the program but wish to reenter will go through the identification process again.

1.6 Advanced Placement Participation

The program will inform students and parents of the benefits, rigor, and expectations of pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement courses as well as work with teachers to provide reasonable levels of class demands. Students and parents will be reminded that challenging classwork and homework are expected in all classes. They will also be informed of the district's weighted credit policy.

Students will be encouraged to enroll in as many pre-AP/AP classes as they are capable taking into consideration:

- Abilities
- Needs
- Interests
- Outside activities/time available

Enrollment decisions will be assisted by parents, counselors, teachers, and prior achievement data.

Students, after advisement, will be allowed to enroll in any pre-AP/AP class selected. Students may take a pre-AP class without having a prior pre-AP class in that content area unless specific pre-requisites are necessary. Parent signature on the standard enrollment form suffices for evidence of parent information and consent.

Students will be encouraged to remain in a pre-AP/AP class throughout a full semester in order to promote perseverance. Students will be allowed to exit a pre-AP class at the end of a quarter in special cases decided on an individual basis after consultation between student, teacher, parent, counselor, and building principal if:

- Student is failing (D or F) the class, and /or
- Student's ability is far below class expectations and student is struggling beyond norm of other pre-AP students.

Before exiting any child from a pre-AP/AP class, the teacher should make every effort to provide additional support for the child to succeed and should have contacted the parent at least twice about concerns and consequences of exiting. Parent consent (as evidenced by a signature) is required for any schedule change. Students who exit a pre-AP class one year may enroll in a pre-AP/AP class in the same content in a subsequent year.

Students who are failing (D or F) an AP class will not be eligible for state funding of the AP exam. The student may self-pay for the exam.

2 Personnel

2.1 Qualifications of Personnel

All GT identified students will be served by teachers who hold licensure (or actively pursuing course work for licensure) by the state in gifted education.

All pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement teachers will hold (or actively pursuing) certification by College Board in the content area to which they are assigned.

The district coordinator of the PACE Program will hold state licensure in gifted education and administration.

Academic competition coaches will be knowledgeable in the content and format of sponsored competition and willing to devote time outside of the standard school day for the benefit of students.

2.2 Job Descriptions

GT/AP Teacher

- Advocate for the needs of advanced students
- Develop and implement lessons that are appropriate for individual students based on the adopted GT Frameworks
- Utilize a variety of resources (materials, people, technology) to enhance learning opportunities
- Stay current in research regarding advanced students and apply researched strategies
- Include strategies to meet the social-emotional development as well as the cognitive development of each student
- Assess fairly students' academic progress and frequently communicate that progress with students and parents
- Serve in work groups to further the district vision for its advanced students

GT Test Examiner

- Notify school personnel requesting nominations
- Assure all paperwork is completed and filed
- Administer and score accurately and without bias a variety of assessments
- Prepare matrix for placement committee
- Convene and provide professional development for placement committee
- Notify parents, students, and school of placement decisions in a timely manner
- Conference with parents regarding placement and program
- Maintain complete and organized records in locked storage
- Update APSCN data regarding student placement
- Assist work group in selection of appropriate assessments

Academic Competition Coach

- Be knowledgeable in content and format of sponsored activity
- Recruit student participants and parent volunteers if needed
- Facilitate growth in knowledge, skill, and character of student participants
- Schedule adequate time for practice and feedback so that students are prepared for the level of competition
- Make timely requests of program coordinator for registration and travel for competition events
- Supervise student behavior during all practice, travel, and competition activities
- Inform program coordinator of material needs and results of competitions
- Will be provided a stipend based on district schedule for duties performed outside of standard school hours as coach

Program Coordinator

- Advocate within the district, local community, and state for the needs of advanced students in class and extracurricular activities
- Facilitate development of the district vision for advanced students
- Consult with various stakeholders in making program decisions
- Create links between general education and gifted education in coordination with district curriculum directors
- Recommend and implement systemic changes to improve program delivery and student achievement

- Assure that the identification process and placement decisions are based on valid, reliable, and equitable measures
- Oversee the budget and expenditure of funds in alignment with district goals
- Assure that all staff are properly credentialed
- Be responsible for provision of professional development related to advanced students; actively pursue professional development for self in the area of gifted education
- Assure that district staff are meeting GT Frameworks in the lesson plans and program services
- Communicate as needed with parents, local school board, community members, other school districts, state department of education, and national organizations to gain and share information (including updates on district web site)
- Be responsible for annual program evaluation
- Communicate student and staff accomplishments within the district, to the school board, and to the broader community
- Serve as advisor to the PACE Parents group
- Follow district and state policy including the completion of state reports and documentation
- Serve on district work groups as assigned by the Superintendent

2.3 Professional Development

Professional development needs will be assessed by the program coordinator and individual staff members. Professional development offerings will address identified needs and new developments in gifted education and be provided in a variety of methods/media.

Teachers of gifted enrichment services will attend at least one professional development activity annually designed specifically for teaching gifted learners.

Pre-AP and AP teachers will receive appropriate College Board training every five years.

Regular classroom teachers with gifted students, counselors, and administrators will receive information on characteristics of gifted students, strategies to address their needs, and resource lists.

Programming

3.1 Program Options

Students participate in program options based on evidence of intellectual and social-emotional needs, interests, and goals.

Cluster classrooms will include a minimum of five (5) GT identified students.

K-1 Enrichment

Monthly enrichment lessons prepared by a GT-licensed teacher are provided to K-1 teachers. GT-teachers serve in all K-1 classrooms a minimum of one-half hour each month to observe for identification and provide assistance in differentiation.

Elementary K-4

Two options are available: a magnet school and pull-out at home school.

- **King**—students are placed in cluster classrooms taught by GT-licensed teachers. Students receive differentiation throughout the day as they taught alongside non-identified students. Identified students also participate in GT-only enrichment sessions for one hour each day.
- **Pull-out at neighborhood school**—students attend a 150 minutes per week enrichment session taught by a GT-licensed teacher.

Middle School (5-6)

GT identified students are placed in cluster classrooms where they receive pre-AP aligned skills in all core content areas. Students participate in a GT-core content class daily. All core content teachers at middle school are pre-AP trained to provide differentiation to any student capable of advanced study.

Junior High and High School

Students select from pre-AP classes offered in all core content areas. AP classes are offered at the high school in all core content areas, music theory, and studio art.

Academic Competitions

Beginning in fourth grade, any interested and capable student may participate in academic competitions to develop intellectual skills, creative thinking, and character. Competition offerings will span broad interests.

3.2 Academic Competition Support

A stipend will be paid to any teacher who serves as an academic competition coach when time outside of the regular class schedule is required to coach students. If more than one coach is needed due to the number of students participating, each teacher will receive a stipend. Elementary and middle school Quiz Bowl teachers who share coaching responsibility will split the coaching stipend.

The district will provide the following related to academic competitions:

- Mileage when coaches need to attend coop planning meetings
- Bus transportation for competitions within and outside the district
- Meals and housing for students and coaches when an overnight stay is required (limited to a maximum of two events per year per competition)
- Mileage and housing (when required) for parents when a single, individual student from a school qualifies for a competition outside of the district

All travel requests for competitions must be approved by the school principal and the Director of Special Programs.

4 Curriculum and Instruction

4.1 Curriculum Frameworks

District lessons in GT enrichment and the Advanced Placement program meet the Gifted and Talented Frameworks developed by the Western Arkansas Educational Service Cooperative. These frameworks provide a scope and sequence in these areas of differentiation:

Content

- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Affective development
- Personal interests

Process

- Acceleration of content and/or pace
- Breadth, depth, and complexity
- Authentic practice and career guidance

Product

- Research/independent learning
- Communication

A district constructed scope and sequence for presentation skills/expectations and pre-AP/AP vertical alignment will also be utilized.

4.2 Curricular Resources

Supplemental materials (e.g., consumable supplies, instructional books, reference books, and electronic resource lists) will be provided to the teachers to accomplish program goals and meet GT Frameworks.

The district will assure that students have access to necessary technological equipment.

Teachers are encouraged to utilize resource people from the community as presenters, informational resources, mentors, chaperones, and audiences.

4.3 Homework Policy

PACE teachers will follow the general district homework policy to assure that assignments are meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

Pull-out students are responsible for learning the concepts covered during instruction missed while participating in GT enrichment, but they are not required to complete class work missed during that time. Teachers need to assure that students have in-class opportunities to learn the concepts and make adjustments in their grading systems to account for missed work.

5 Student Recognition

5.1 Advanced Placement Recognition

For class rank purposes and other purposes of district recognition, the grade point value for pre-Advanced Placement and approved honors courses will be one-half (.5) point greater than for regular courses with the exception that an F will be worth zero (0) points.

Grade point values for Advanced Placement courses, provided that the student has taken the exam, will be one (1) point greater than for regular courses with the exception that an F will be worth zero (0) points.

Beginning with the graduating class of 2010, the following diploma requirements will be:

College Preparatory Diploma

English	4 units
Math	5 units
Science	3 units
Social studies	3 units
Physical education	½ unit
Health	½ unit
Fine arts	½ unit
Oral communication	½ unit
Foreign language	2 units of same language
Technology	1 unit
Electives	6 units

A minimum of 4 units must be pre-AP from any core subject area with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 by the conclusion of seven semesters.

College Preparatory Diploma with Honors

College preparatory diploma with...

8 units of electives

A minimum of 10 units must be pre-AP/AP from any core subject area with at least two (2) of these being AP classes and with a cumulative GPA of 3.50 by the conclusion of seven semesters.

College Preparatory Diploma with High Honors

College preparatory diploma with honors and...

A minimum of 12 units must be pre-AP or AP classes from any core subject area with at least three (3) of these being AP classes and with a cumulative GPA of 3.90 by the conclusion of seven semesters.

5.2 Academic Competitions

All students who participate in an academic competition will receive a certificate of participation. National History Day students must be selected at the local level to compete at the district/regional level to be considered part of any recognition award.

Beginning in 6th grade, students may earn a letter in an academic competition by:

- Participating in a minimum of 85% of regularly scheduled practices, and
- Competing for at least two (2) years in the same academic competition.

Students will be presented a letter the first year of eligibility; thereafter they will receive a bar to attach to the letter for each year of participation. Certificates, letters, and pins will be presented to the students by their academic coach.

An individual or team who wins first place in a regional or state competition will be recognized at a meeting of the school board.

6 Program Effectiveness

6.1 State Approval

Annually, the program coordinator will submit a complete and accurate application to the state department of education providing evidence for program approval.

When permitted (due to triennial rotation) by the state department of education, the district will apply for the Act 56 Recognition Award as Outstanding Program in the state.

6.2 Program Evaluation

The program coordinator will be responsible for annually collecting and analyzing information regarding the program's effectiveness. All aspects of the program will be considered in the evaluation plan including identification, program options, community involvement, program expenditures, professional development, curriculum, and evaluation process. Student achievement data (from sources such as nationally standardized tests, AP exams, state benchmark exams, and district administered assessments) will be examined as an element of the evaluation process. Additional information will be solicited from stakeholders through a variety of means (e.g., student reflections, questionnaires, focus groups, work groups, administrative meetings, and individual conferences).

A summary of evaluation results will be shared with teachers, administrators, school board members, and the state department of education through a variety of communication methods.

Professional Development Provision Plan (possible):

- Communicate with school board and broader community an overview of the program and district initiatives, needs of gifted students, and progress on achieving program goals
- Dialogue with parents and students to determine their needs and explore methods to meet those needs
- Print and distribute PACE Handbook to all parents of identified students and teachers/counselors who work with advanced students
- Host annual retreat for GT enrichment teachers to build content knowledge, gifted education pedagogy, and program ideas
- Fund registration and travel expenses for appropriate staff to attend AAGEA, AGATE, and NAGC and other worthy conferences
- Fund registration and travel expenses for all core content middle school teachers and appropriate secondary teachers to receive College Board approved pre-AP and AP training
- Provide all district staff serving advanced students with information on nature and needs through workshops and/or media
- Provide ASCD videos on differentiation through district media library
- Purchase supplemental curricular materials and educational pedagogy for PACE staff as needed to meet GT Frameworks and AP program
- Facilitate pre-AP and AP vertical alignment
- Produce and distribute quarterly newsletters with research, application information, and reflective questions to all PACE staff, school curriculum coaches, building principals, and district administrators
- Via e-mail, distribute to teachers, counselors, and principals information and notices of professional development offerings, resources, and grant opportunities
- Subscribe to gifted education journals for current research and programming; have journals available for check-out
- Attend educational cooperative meetings for coordinators
- Guide curriculum documentation through small group meetings
- Review and give feedback on all AP course syllabi drafts
- Visit classrooms with written feedback and reflective questions by coordinator
- Meet with stakeholder groups as needed to discuss program issues in identification and programming
- Integrate needs of and strategies for gifted into professional development provided by curriculum coaches coordinated through curriculum directors