

## ~ **Advanced Academics Program** ~

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

(Please note the AA Center/Program was previously known as the Gifted & Talented-GT Center/Program.)

**Q – I think my child is a great candidate for the AA program, but he wasn't selected. Is there a process in place to have my child re-evaluated?**

**A –** Parents/guardians of students enrolled in and attending FCPS may request one re-test in grades three through seven. This test may be administered during the fall testing cycle. Additional testing may be obtained from George Mason University Psychological Clinic (703-993-4200, <http://psyclinic.gmu.edu/page42/gt.html>). For more information on required tests, please refer to <http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/gt/identification.html> or contact Eva Bousbouras, Mantua's AA Resource Teacher, at [Vaitsa.Bousbouras@fcps.edu](mailto:Vaitsa.Bousbouras@fcps.edu).

**Q – My child is having difficulty assimilating to the new environment and challenges presented by the AA program. Are there resources I can access?**

**A –** It is not unusual for children to have some anxiety when beginning a new school and/or new academic program. You should always feel free to talk to and work with your child's teacher if you feel your child's assimilation into the program is not progressing as it should.

In general, if your child's problem is subject specific, you will work with the appropriate teacher to devise a plan that will get your child up to program expectations for the subject material. If your child's problem is more general to the program, your child's teacher will probably recommend a group approach. This approach will include both grade level teachers, the grade appropriate Guidance Counselor, and the parents working together to help the child become more comfortable in the new environment and confident in their ability to handle the program material.

**Q – My child has many strong friendships with children that are not going to be in the AA program with her. How much interaction will she be able to continue to have with her base school friends?**

**A –** Fortunately, your child will have many opportunities to interact with her friends. The structure of the AA Center Program at Mantua Elementary School has been designed to allow for the fostering of a "Whole School" concept, not a "School of Centers". Taking our cues from the outside world, the Whole School concept encourages each child to see their entire grade as their peer group. To this end, the AA program students interact with the general education students during PE, Music, lunch, recess, field trips and grade level events.

**Q – I am new to the area and my child is entering the AA program as a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader. Are there resources we can use to help him get up to speed with the curriculum?**

**A –** Please contact us as soon as possible if you know that your child will be enrolling at Mantua ES. If we know at the beginning of the summer that your child will be enrolling effective September, we can provide you with the appropriate textbooks and study guides to have your child up to program expectations at the beginning of the school year. In addition, as a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader your child has two assigned periods per week called “Enrichment”. If your child is identified as needing extra assistance in any subject area, Enrichment periods will be used as a tutoring session until he is on track.

**Q – What types of special training are our newest teacher’s receiving to help them address the educational needs of the AA students?**

**A –** Per FCPS mandate, AA Center teachers are selected by the school principal. All FCPS teachers must hold a valid Virginia Teaching License. AA Center teachers are required to receive an endorsement in Advanced Academics Education within five years of accepting a AA Center assignment.

In addition to these county-wide requirements, Mantua’s newest faculty members are participating in monthly in-service courses and have enrolled in several Professional Development courses. The Professional Development courses are based on the teachings of Carol Tomlinson and the Parallel Curriculum Model and on course work being offered by The College of William and Mary: GT Studies. We are also supporting a system of peer mentoring for all faculty at Mantua ES. All teachers new to Mantua have been assigned a peer mentor. New AA Teachers will also receive additional support and mentoring from Cheryl McCullough, AA Program Specialist from Fairfax County AA Central Office.

**Q – I would like to understand more about the educational requirements and goals of the AA program? Are these posted anywhere?**

**A –** A general education elementary school offers instruction in the core curriculum as defined by FCPS Program of Studies (POS) and Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). The AA Center program for students in grades 3 through 8 offers identified students a highly challenging instructional program that follows the FCPS Program of Studies. Differentiation in the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction, along with a strong emphasis on higher level thinking skills is designed to meet the needs of advanced learners with a strong emphasis on higher level thinking skills. Adaptations are made to the curriculum in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for gifted learners with a strong emphasis on critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and decisionmaking.

**Q – What is the intent of “Enrichment” for the students?**

**A** – Enrichment is two 45 minute periods per week that have been created to serve two purposes. The first purpose is logistical. By having these periods, we are able to offer the students participation in Specials (PE, Music, Band, Strings, Art and Health) in a manner that allows grouping across the entire grade, regardless of their academic program and allows the school to provide academic blocks of teaching time that are uninterrupted. The second and more important reason is that Enrichment gives each child the opportunity to have their special needs and interests addressed.

**Q – My child seems to have an inordinate amount of homework. Does a guideline exist which states how many hours of schoolwork are appropriate and expected each evening?**

**A** – The AA Center follows the same regulation guidelines as the general education program. FCPS regulation number 2450.2 states, “On average, homework across disciplines should not exceed 0.5 hours for primary level, 1 hour at the upper elementary level, 1.5 hours at the middle school level, and 2 hours at the high school level.”

**Q – How much involvement should I have in the review of my child’s homework assignments or project work?**

**A** – As a parent, you should always be involved in your child’s work. However, your involvement should be limited to monitoring and supporting. You should not be involved in the completion of the work. Homework is a useful tool for teachers to evaluate a child’s comprehension and understanding. Too much participation on the finished product by a parent will skew a teacher’s ability to fairly evaluate your child’s progress.