

Mason City Schools

Elementary Gifted Program Curriculum Overview



MASON'S VISION

Empower students and foster personal excellence by creating a collaborative learning culture that inspires innovation, leadership and global connection.

MASON'S BOLD STEPS

Global Learning

By 2020, students will have opportunities to tackle real-world problems with students and businesses from around the world. Every student will have the opportunity to participate in a global experience without leaving Mason.

Student Leadership

By 2020, every student will have the opportunity to practice and demonstrate leadership and service through structured activities. Students will have the opportunity to create an online portfolio which showcases their leadership skills and service to others.

Anytime, Anywhere Learning

By 2020, Mason City Schools will offer learning opportunities both inside the school setting and beyond the schools' walls, including online learning opportunities and internships. Students will use their own technological devices to access instructional materials and to complete assignments.

Individualized Learning

By 2020, each student will have an individualized learning approach that shares goal development, progress monitoring and extension opportunities to offer evidence of his or her strengths and opportunities for improvement.

MASON'S GIFTED SERVICES – CONNECTION TO BOLD STEPS

Students participating in Mason's Gifted Curriculum will experience learning through each of the bold steps. Each year the outcomes for the programming will build upon the year before. Students leaving Mason City School's elementary gifted program will have had the opportunity to expand on each of the bold steps in a unique and essential fashion.

MASON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT GIFTED EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

We believe that all children are entitled to an education commensurate with their particular needs and should be provided opportunities to progress. High ability and gifted children have a right to an appropriate education grounded in the recognition of their individual differences and unique learning needs. Children with high ability and those who are gifted should be identified as such early in their school experience so that they have the opportunity to flourish. Children of all races and socioeconomic levels must be provided equal access to gifted identification and service opportunities so that every effort is made to create a dynamic and diverse learning environment. Gender, race, cultural, and socioeconomic differences must be embraced and treated equally, including in the development and implementation of the curriculum for high ability and gifted students. Children with high ability and those who are gifted and profoundly gifted need a curriculum that is responsive to their individual learning rate, style, and complexity. The gifted learn best in an instructional environment that encourages and nurtures inquiry, flexibility, and divergent thinking. High ability and gifted students need a continuum of services available to them which nurtures their academic achievement, creativity, and critical thinking skills to help them reach their fullest potential. As part of the continuum of services, students who have intellectual and creative gifts need to be in a setting at least part of the time where they can be challenged by their intellectual peers and develop their capacities even further. The unique social and emotional needs of gifted children, including the profoundly intelligent, must be recognized, valued, and supported through a continuum of services, including counselors and teachers trained to understand and support them. The distinctive characteristics of gifted should be understood and fostered through an appropriate level of challenge that provides them the opportunity to excel and achieve.

STUDENT OUTCOMES BY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO

- Critically examine the complexity of knowledge: the location, definition, and organization of a variety of fields of knowledge.
- Create, adapt, and assess multifaceted questions in a variety of fields/disciplines.
- Conduct thoughtful research/exploration in a variety of fields of study.
- Think creatively and critically to identify and problem solve around real-world problems inclusive of
 - Generating supportive arguments from multiple perspectives of a complex issue.
 - Analyze the relevance, reliability, and usefulness of data to draw conclusions and forecast effective problem solutions.
 - Use and evaluate various problem-solving methods to determine effectiveness in solving real-world problems
- Assume leadership and participatory roles in both gifted and heterogeneous group learning situations.
 - Accept divergent views.
 - Recognize and personally explore leadership skills which can positively impact group organization when working to achieve project goals.
- Contemplate, begin to identify and set personal, academic, and career goals.
- Develop and deliver a variety of authentic products/performances that demonstrate understanding in multiple fields/disciplines.

(Adapted from Florida's Frameworks for K-12 Gifted Learners, 2007.)

GOALS FOR GRADUATES OF ELEMENTARY GIFTED PROGRAMMING

Mason City School District has identified a series of goals for graduates from the elementary gifted program within a broad range of curriculum areas, inclusive of Mason's learning standards (primarily English Language Arts) and the National Association of Gifted Children standards. The Mason City Schools Gifted Program has aligned its curriculum to help students achieve those goals in a manner commensurate with their exceptional talents and abilities.

The specific student goals of the Mason City Schools Gifted Program are as follows:

Goal I: Information Processing

To develop the ability to gather, organize, analyze, and apply information.

Goal II: Problem Solving

To develop the ability to identify, define, analyze, develop and assess possible problem solutions.

Goal III: Critical Thinking

To develop the ability to use critical/reflective thinking focused on deciding what to do or believe. This includes supporting ideas with facts and/or logic and explaining relationships.

Goal IV: Communication

To develop the ability to plan, create, and present verbal, visual, and written information in order to effectively share thoughts and ideas with others.

Goal V: Responsibility

To develop the ability to work productively and independently as an individual, to be a positive and productive group member, and to demonstrate effective leadership skills.

The program's performance skills are the outgrowth of these goals and form the basis for the program's scope and sequence.

ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE TALENTS (ACT) CURRICULUM

GRADES 1 – 6

GIFTED CURRICULUM ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:

How is the Mason work connected and aligned?

The units of study for the gifted students in Mason are formatted into major units through a designated framework. Each framework builds upon the previous year's ACT curriculum through enhancement of research and exploration guided by key essential questions. Connections are also made throughout the scope and sequence of the work so that students experience the breadth and depth of understanding in research, global issues, design, citizenship and the world around them.

Ultimately students in Mason will leave sixth grade with a strong sense of how our world was impacted by critical thinkers, as well as how each student can contribute to the world in multiple ways. Major units are strongly connected to state and national standards. The standards do not supplant the classroom experiences or grade level standards, yet they do serve as a foundation of support for the learning at each grade level. There is a strong emphasis for research and exploration at each grade level and the standards are heavily connected to English Language Arts.

What is a major unit?

A major unit is a thematic, interdisciplinary course of study focused on a real world question or challenge. Within each unit, students learn advanced level content and skills in order to develop expertise in an area and to help solve or alleviate the key issue being addressed. Toward that end, students access numerous primary and secondary documents, conduct original research, and interact with professionals in the community who have relevant training and experience. Students also tap into a wide array of computer programs and multimedia technology. At the end of each unit, students share their insights and recommendations with relevant audiences, including agencies, businesses and media outlets. In so doing, students learn how to use their talents, knowledge, and skills to impact key issues and make a difference in the world.

What is a unit framework?

The ACT curriculum is organized into major units through a designated framework which builds upon the curricular focus tiered across all grade levels, inclusive of the learning standards, goals and objectives, and levels of depth/complexity. This framework is the guiding document that outlines the work and establishes the guidelines for the ACT curriculum and course of study. It consists of several parts, including overarching themes/big ideas, topics for study, primary learning standards, essential questions, expectations for learning, instructional strategies, instructional resources and, most importantly, the evidence of student learning and growth.

GIFTED PROGRAMMING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Primary goals of the ACT program are to ***build upon, enrich, and extend*** the state of Ohio's learning standards and the National Association of Gifted Children standards. In addition, emphasis is on developing

- information processing skills, specifically the ability to gather, organize, analyze, and apply information
- problem solving skills, specifically the ability to identify, define, analyze, develop and assess possible problem solutions
- critical thinking skills, specifically the ability to use critical/reflective thinking focused on deciding what to do or believe. This includes supporting ideas with facts and/or logic and explaining relationships
- communication skills, specifically the ability to plan, create, and present verbal, visual, and written information in order to effectively share thoughts and ideas with others
- self-discipline and responsibility, specifically the ability to
 - work productively and independently as an individual
 - demonstrate the ability to be a positive and productive group member
 - demonstrate effective leadership

The ACT Curriculum is primarily, but not solely, English Language Arts based with quantitative and mathematical reasoning/problem solving applications integrated in grades 1 – 4 ACT classes. Advanced mathematical instruction at grades 5 and above takes place in Honors math classes and/or accelerated programming.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW/UNITS OF STUDY:

Across all units of study, instruction in the ACT classes take Mason's learning standards to a greater degree of depth and complexity, differentiating instruction and providing curriculum that is responsive to the students' individual learning rates, styles, and complexity and that encourages and nurtures inquiry, flexibility, and divergent thinking. The skills and concepts incorporated into the gifted curriculum are vertically aligned, building upon learning standards presented in preceding grade levels. Through the ACT curricular units of study, students access numerous primary and secondary documents, conduct historical or original research, and interact with professionals in the community who have relevant training and experience. Students also tap into a wide array of software and multimedia technology. At the end of each unit, students share their insights and recommendations with relevant audiences, including peers, parents, agencies, businesses and media outlets. In so doing, students learn how to use their talents, knowledge, and skills to impact key issues and make a difference in the world.

Ultimately the students will leave sixth grade and transition to the middle school with a strong sense of how our world was impacted by critical thinkers and problem solvers, as well as how each student can contribute to the world in multiple ways. While the standards supplement **and extend** the classroom experiences and grade level standards, they also serve as a foundation for integrating what they have learned into future studies and independent pursuits.

OVERARCHING THEMES BY GRADE LEVELS:

- **Grade 1 – Global Citizenry**
 - Students study and discuss the characteristics of a global citizen through reading and being exposed to informative texts, literary works such as “Letters from Felix”, and online resources pertaining to specific countries of study.
 - Students are introduced to and begin developing a basic understanding of the research process through instruction in the 7 Step Problem Solving Process.
 - Students participate in teacher guided research projects which address and apply appropriate study skills and affective characteristics required to complete independent investigatory projects.
 - Students identify and evaluate personal growth goals.

- **Grade 2 – Great Thinkers**
 - Students are exposed to and read informative texts and digital sources, craft written products, and conduct research, building on research and problem solving skills/concepts presented in grade 1.
 - As a class, students research “Great Thinkers” such as Archimedes, Benjamin Franklin, Leonardo da Vinci, Shakespeare, and Maya Lin. They will research, organize, and evaluate primary and secondary resources related to “Great Thinkers”. For each Great Thinker, students identify key details in the text and identify evidence of “great thinking”. Students share the results of their research with an authentic audience.
 - As individuals, students research a Great Thinker and create a written product or give an oral presentation to an authentic audience. Students will identify the characteristics of “Great thinkers” and analyze themselves to determine what characteristics they, themselves, exhibit.
 - Students identify and evaluate personal growth goals.

- **Grade 3 – Characteristics and Strategies of Great Thinkers as Problem Solvers**
 - Students are exposed to and read informative texts and digital sources, craft written products, and conduct research, building on research and problem solving skills/concepts presented in grade 2.

- As a class, students learn and apply problem solving skills and critical thinking skills as they research issues that challenge our society, including: Protecting our Resources, Health and Exercise, Safety and Sports, Daylight Savings, and Rules and their Purpose.
- In small groups, students research a given problem. Students will complete a problem-centered research project along with learning how great individuals solve problems. Students will
 - Introduce new essential questions – passion, mistakes, risk-taking, critical/creative thinking, revision
 - Review how real students solve problems
 - Brainstorm age-appropriate problems
 - Choose a problem to individually research and solve for Independent Study project
 - Review research methods and skills
 - Review criteria list for overall Independent Study project including a bibliography, research, problem solving process and solution, product, written essay on individual opinion (stating claims and evidence), presentation skills, self-evaluation
 - List and evaluate the pros and cons of their problem
 - Prepare and present final product
 - As a class, students are introduced to and/or review affective goals and issues of gifted students and how past and present Great Thinkers have dealt with these same issues.

- **Grade 4 - Great Thinkers Become Effective Decision Makers, Collaborators and Contributors**
 - Students are exposed to and read informative texts and digital sources, craft written products, and conduct research, building on research and problem solving skills/concepts presented in grade 3.
 - As a community... Students investigate team building skills, diversity of talents, individual traits, and how to apply what they have learned to make good decisions in a community.
 - As consumers...Students learn how to evaluate the claims and evidence in the real world and make good decisions through the study of consumer science, advertising, and money. Focus will be on determining whether the evidence supports or opposes the claims or view of the author or product developer.
 - As thoughtful readers...Students learn how to analyze and evaluate the claims and evidence in text. Students will investigate news articles and texts on given topics and evaluate articles for accuracy and bias.
 - Students identify and evaluate personal growth goals.
 - Students identify positive character traits and analyze character development through literary text, (short stories and a novel), information text, classroom simulations, and narrative writings. Students conduct a self-analysis of their own traits in relation to traits identified through their reading and class discussions/simulations.

- **Grade 5 – Characteristics, Elements, and Strategies of Design**
 - Students are exposed to and read informative texts and digital sources, craft written products, and conduct research, building on research and problem solving skills/concepts presented in grade 4.
 - Students investigate the basic elements of art, design, and architecture and utilize the steps of the design process. Integrated in this unit is the study of *The Odyssey*.
 - Students examine the characters in *The Odyssey* using historical context to analyze and evaluate the characters' decisions and actions.
 - Using primary and secondary sources, students apply critical and creative thinking skills as they research and engage in problem based and project based learning. Three examples: (1) Elements of Design Applied in Everyday Life, (2) a Create the Perfect School Research Project, and (3) an Architectural Challenge Design Lab.
 - Students investigate design disasters and failures and analyze, evaluate and discuss how designers learn from failures.
 - Students identify, self-assess, and reflect on personal growth goals.
 - Students develop a personal portfolio in order to self-analyze their academic and personal growth over the course of the school year.

- **Grade 6 – Global Problem Solvers**
 - Students are exposed to and read informative texts and digital sources, craft written products, and conduct research, building on research and problem solving skills/concepts presented in grade 5.
 - Students investigate the traits and obstacles of heroes, drawing evidence from print and digital resources to support analysis, reflection, and research.
 - Students participate in “Passion Projects” of their choice, gathering relevant information from multiple sources.
 - Students apply the 7 Steps of Problem Solving Process, building upon introductory exposure in earlier grade levels.
 - Students present the outcomes of their research to an authentic audience.
 - Students listen closely to the comments of others, thinking critically for themselves, and articulating their own reflections in response to feedback.
 - Students use the engineering design process and study the history of transportation and the car industry.
 - As a class, the students research the auto industry and the demands of the consumer in order to design a car of the future.
 - Students identify and evaluate personal growth goals.
 - Students learn to work cooperatively and to question intelligently through group activities, such as daily critical thinking/logic problems, the Stock Market unit, and the heroic problem solver unit.