

G . A . T . E G A Z E T T E

NOVEMBER 2007

What is GIFTED?

According to the National Association for Gifted Children

"A gifted person is someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression."

GIFTED EDUCATION IN THE AESD

This is the first publication of our G.A.T.E. Gazette, a newsletter for parents of G.A.T.E. students in the Atwater Elementary School District. This newsletter will be published twice a year.

The Atwater Elementary School District Gifted and Talented Education Program is implemented in each of the district's eight schools. Each site operates its own GATE program, as delineated in the school's **Single Plan for Student Achievement**. The *Recommended Standards for Programs for Gifted and Talented Students* is used as a guide for designing programs at each site that best meet the needs of their diverse student population. The instructional groupings in the schools are flexible, with the primary structure being the GATE cluster grouping by grade level. The cluster model allows for maximum positive interaction among GATE students and provides an atmos-

phere conducive to social/emotional, as well as intellectual growth.

Services for GATE students are provided through differentiating instruction in the classroom. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as, compacting the curriculum, acceleration of the content, and providing higher-order thinking and enrichment activities. Some sites also provide after-school activities and field trips.

In August we received notification that our 2007-2008 District GATE Plan was approved for 3 years. Each year the plan will be reviewed, evaluated and revised.

If you have questions about the GATE services provided at your child's school, please contact the principal or Site GATE Coordinator.

A Myth About Gifted Children

Gifted kids are so smart they do fine with or without special programs They may appear to do fine on their own but without proper challenge they can become bored and unmotivated. As the years go by they may find it difficult as work becomes more challenging, since they were not challenged before.

CHARACTERISTIC OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Gifted children can exhibit many unique characteristics. Characteristics commonly found in gifted children range from being intensely sensitive to a perfectionist, and from underachiever to high achiever. Young gifted children present special challenges because they are often not able to explain how they feel, while gifted adolescents often feel that they don't fit in and try to hide their giftedness.

Gifted children's behavior may differ from that of their age peers. Although each child is unique, following are some characteristics that are common to gifted students:

- Gifted children commonly learn basic skills better, more quickly, and with less practice.
- They take less for granted, seeking the "hows" and "whys."
- They often have seemingly boundless energy, which sometimes leads to a misdiagnosis of hyperactivity.
- They usually respond and relate well to parents, teachers, and other adults.
- They like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive.
- Gifted children often read widely, quickly, and intensely and have large vocabularies.

RESULTS OF GATE PARENT SURVEY

Each year we use multiple tools to evaluate our programs. One of those tools is a Parent Survey. Last month, 268 Parent Surveys were mailed to parents of our GATE students. Approximately 78 were completed and returned to the district office. Following is a summary of those results:

- 50% of the parents are aware of the GATE objectives and program activities.
- 35% have been informed of their child's progress in the GATE classes, while 46% have not been informed.
- 53% feel that the GATE cluster class challenges their child academically & creatively.
- 69% feel that their child is enthusiastic about school.
- 51% would like parent training.
- 22% are interested in a self-contained GATE class at their school site.
- 5% are interested in a self-contained GATE class if it must be held at another school.
- 32% feel that GATE students should be grouped by curriculum area.
- 42% feel that weekly GATE sessions should be held after school.
- 42% feel that weekly GATE sessions should be held during the school day.

IDENTIFICATION OF GATE STUDENTS

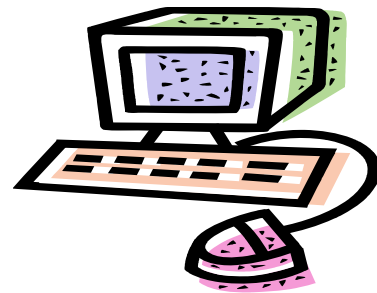
An assessment/identification process is in place to ensure that all potentially gifted students are appropriately assessed for identification. The Atwater Elementary School District uses a GATE Qualification Grid to determine eligibility. The qualification grid requires evidence from multiple sources, such as the California Standard Test, district benchmark assessments, parent and teacher surveys, and intelligence/cognitive ability tests, to determine student eligibility. The school GATE Committee makes final determination for program eligibility, with input from the District GATE Coordinator. The grid is updated annually.

Although a student may be identified as a potential GATE student in grades K-2, formal identification does not take place until third grade.

Many parents had comments and suggestions. Following are some of the comments that were stated more than once:

- My child had to choose between GATE and Band (gr. 7-8)
- My child is doing well in GATE.
- My child is not being challenged; no different instruction from regular students.
- Space Camp and Field trips were great last year.
- I don't know what is happening with my GATE child—not informed.
- I think current structure is best.
- I like the after-school program.
- GATE students are being left behind.
- I don't want them in a self-contained class if they have to go to another school.
- I don't know what GATE activities are going on in the cluster classroom.
- We need more communication.

These results have been shared with staff and will assist us in improvement of the GATE program. If you have any further suggestions, please contact the GATE Lead Teacher at your school.



RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

We are currently developing website information for parents of GATE students. You can access this information by going to the Atwater Elementary School District web page at www.aesd.edu. Under **District Information** you will find a link titled **GATE**. Documents and links for resources will be added as they become available.

2007 CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST RESULTS FOR AESD GATE STUDENTS

Another tool that is used to evaluate the success of programs in the district is the California Standards Test (CST). The charts below show how GATE students in our district performed on the CST in English Language Arts, Math, and Science.

In 2004, 241 GATE students in grades 3-8 took the ELA CST. 40.25% of the GATE students were Advanced; 41.08% were proficient; 15.35% were Basic and 3.32% were Below Basic. The number of GATE students increased over the next three years and in 2007, 373 GATE students took the ELA CST. More students

scored Advanced and less scored in the Basic and Below Basic Band.

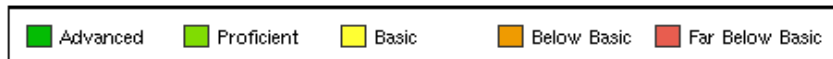
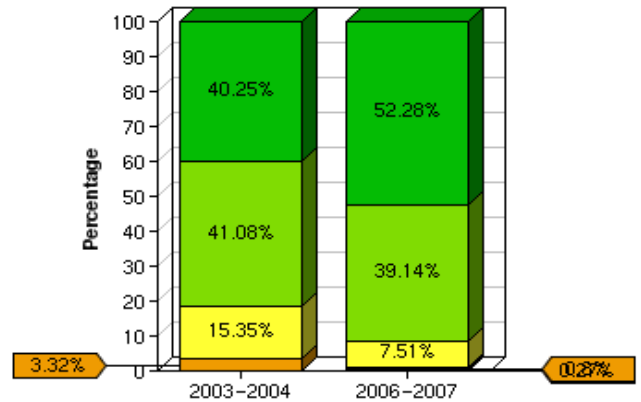
Math results showed a slight gain in the Advanced Band, but a decrease in the % Proficient and an increase in Basic and Below Basic.

Science results, as shown on page 4, show a marked increase in the percent of GATE students scoring Proficient and Advanced.

School Sites will be looking at the results of their GATE students in

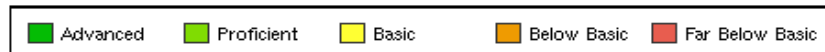
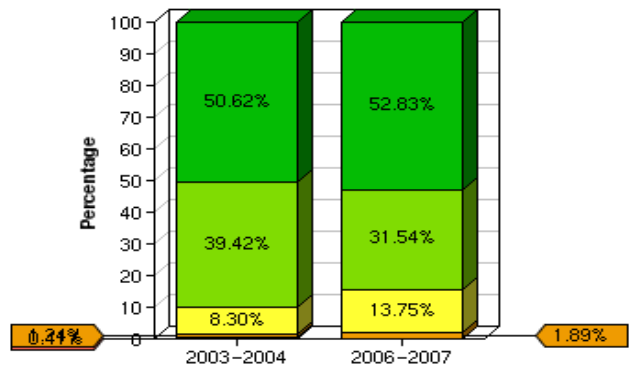
CST ELA Proficiency

Proficiency Level	2003-2004	2006-2007	Change	% Change
Advanced	97	195	+98	+12.03
Proficient	99	146	+47	-1.94
Basic	37	28	-9	-7.85
Below Basic	8	3	-5	-2.52
Far Below Basic	0	1	+1	+0.27
Total Represented	241	373	+132	N/A



CST MATH Proficiency

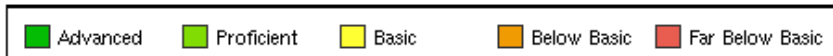
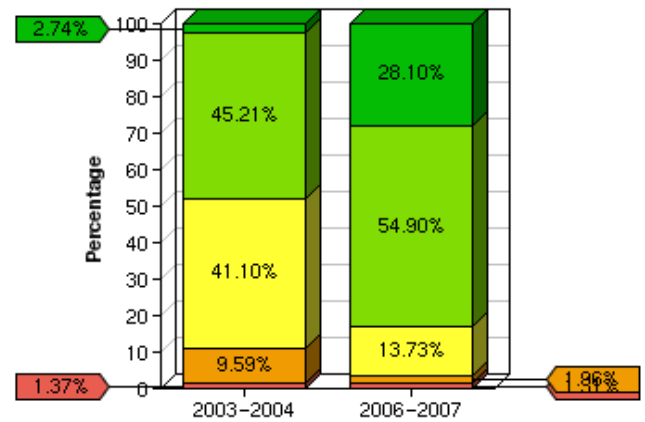
Proficiency Level	2003-2004	2006-2007	Change	% Change
Advanced	122	196	+74	+2.21
Proficient	95	117	+22	-7.88
Basic	20	51	+31	+5.45
Below Basic	3	7	+4	+0.64
Far Below Basic	1	0	-1	-0.41
Total Represented	241	371	+130	N/A



As a comparison: Across the State, 57.14% of GATE students scored in the Advanced range in ELA and 31% scored Proficient; 58% scored Advanced in Math, with 29% scoring Proficient. Merced County scores show that 54.14% score in the Advanced range in ELA and 33.43% scored Proficient; 51.57% scored Advanced in Math, while 33.86% scored Proficient.

CST SCIENCE Proficiency

Proficiency Level	2003-2004	2006-2007	Change	% Change
Advanced	2	43	+41	+25.36
Proficient	33	84	+51	+9.70
Basic	30	21	-9	-27.37
Below Basic	7	3	-4	-7.63
Far Below Basic	1	2	+1	-0.06
Total Represented	73	153	+80	N/A



ATWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

1401 Broadway Avenue
Atwater, CA 95301

Phone: 209 357-6100
Fax: 209 358-0133