

The mission of the Gifted Education program is to promote and support the intellectual curiosity of our identified exemplary Gifted and Talented students at Beach Haven Elementary School.

The Gifted & Talented Program, through a variety of methods and modalities, strives to enhance and develop higher-level thinking skills of identified students by offering a customized and challenging enrichment program. Our teachers are dedicated to gifted education and carefully screen those students demonstrating superior academic abilities. Enrichment activities at all levels are developed to assist students in expanding and enhancing their unique proclivities and talents through the vehicles of science, technology, reading, engineering, art, and math.

The identification process is a multi-step process. It begins with a review of student performance data over a two-year span. 1 Level) Report card grades, state and Local Assessment data, and previous Sage test scores if administered. 2 Level) Teacher rating of behaviors associated with gifted learners from a modified Renzulli Scale. 3 Level) Teacher recommendations. 4 Level) Sage test scores. Students who attain a targeted score or higher are invited to enter the G & T Respectively for grades K-3 and Grades 4-6. Children new to the district will be observed similarly, and recommendations for the G & T program will originate with an endorsement from their classroom teacher.

It is important to note that, as individuals, we are all endowed with unique gifts and abilities. We know that children are in the process of developing their interests and strengths. Through our program, we strive to encourage our students to maximize their full potential. The program aims to improve, expand, and inspire academic performance by engaging the students in meaningful, challenging, and enjoyable learning activities, thereby aiding in developing higher-order thinking skills.

Our Beach Haven School program will encourage and stimulate students to use critical thinking, decision-making, and creative problem-solving skills. They will be exposed to ideas, concepts, and topics not traditionally introduced in their grade-level curriculum. All students will be encouraged to develop academic, social, and emotional competence, develop inquiry and discovery techniques, and ultimately become independent and collaborative investigators. Finally, all learners will be oriented toward being knowledge producers rather than consumers.

Our goals, emanating from this aim, directly evolve from the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The Gifted and Talented program reflects the six gifted education programming standards by the National Association for Gifted Children. These standards include learning and development, assessment, curriculum and instruction, learning

environments, programming, and professional learning. From these goals, our program determines to maintain the following objectives, thereby supporting the standards underscoring the 21st Century skills related to Critical Thinking and problem-solving: 1. Critical thinkers must first identify a problem, then develop a plan to address it and effectively solve it. 2. The ability to solve problems effectively begins with gathering data, seeking resources, and applying critical thinking skills. 3. Students will maintain that multiple solutions exist to solve a problem. An essential aspect of problem-solving is self-reflecting on why possible solutions for solving problems were or were not successful. 4. Collaboration with individuals with diverse experiences can aid in problem-solving, particularly for global issues where diverse solutions are needed.

The model is an enrichment lab period that will provide a variety of activities for students who meet all of the evaluated criteria. Kindergarten through sixth grade are assessed each year. We endeavor to assist students in building greater self-esteem and stimulate those students to think more critically and creatively. We expect this successful program to be achieved by stressing independent processing over teacher-led presentations. The G&T teacher facilitates the group during their exploration, leading to increased metacognitive ability and eliciting creative and critical thinking individually and in small groups.

Our program is deliberately undergirded with a conceptual emphasis on progressive theorists of education, including Marie Montessori, Margaret Naumburg, Reggio Emilia, and Howard Gardner. With a fundamental shift from direct teaching to a collaboration model, the students begin each session with a mini-lesson that quickly evolves into a student-centered and constructivist approach. This self-directed, experiential learning will be conducted once a week. The program will begin at the end of the first trimester and conclude in late May. Students can be reconsidered for our G & T program each new school year.

It is our firm belief that the ingenuity of children, when properly aligned and motivated through individual rigorous interests, will lead to the next generation of inventors, innovators, builders, designers, engineers, artists, writers, and theorists who are critical to our society and an asset to mankind.

Please contact me with any thoughts, concerns, or suggestions.

Very truly yours,

Dr. Stephanie Cechhini

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence."

Abigail Adams