



# Gifted Academy

*Proposal to the School Board  
February 23, 2009*

*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.  
– William Butler Yeats*

# Gifted Academy Task Force

## Chair

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## Principals

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## Parents

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## Teachers

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# History

- Synergy Program was evaluated through the Strategic Plan's Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) in 2006-07
- An identified goal was to initiate a program providing full-time gifted programming for highly qualified students
- A fifth grade pilot program was proposed in 2007-08 but not accomplished because of the failed levy referendum.



# Rationale

## Why develop a special program for gifted students?

Meeting the unique needs of the gifted learner is the most compelling reason to establish a Gifted Academy.

**Gifted children exhibit unique learning needs**

- Faster cognitive processing speed
- Larger memory capacity, need for less review
- Learning environment that emphasizes breadth and depth of study at an extreme pace
- Gifted children learn best in an investigative approach to learning presented in a thematic way
- Social and emotional needs of gifted learners are unique



# Rationale

Why develop a special program for gifted students?

- Analyses of research on full-time gifted grouping of students showed an increase in one-half year's additional academic growth for each year in a full-time environment
- District parent and teacher surveys indicate overwhelming support for a Gifted Academy
- Providing a Gifted Academy option for district parents will keep our Prior-Lake-Savage Area gifted learners in our school district



# Proposal

- **School within a School Model at WestWood Elementary opening in 2009-10**
- **One classroom of each grade: third, fourth and fifth grades**
- **Class size similar to elementary class sizes in comparable grades**



# Identification Criteria for the Gifted Academy

- **Highly Qualified Students – OLSAT score of 135 and above; 98% on MAP reading and math tests**
- **Qualified Students – OLSAT score of 132 and above; 96% on MAP reading and math tests**
- **Three tier placement procedure:**
  - *First tier – Highly Qualified Candidates who are district residents*
  - *Second tier – Qualified Candidates who are district residents*
  - *Third tier – Highly Qualified Candidates who are not district residents. Assessment will be required and paid for by non-district parents.*



# Identification Criteria for the Gifted Academy

- Current fourth grade Level I Synergy students are eligible for placement using existing test data (OLSAT, MAP and Ravens testing)
- Current third grade students are being identified now
- Current second grade students will be identified in late March-early April following the return of the OLSAT tests
- **Otis Lennon School Ability Testing**
  - *Administered to all district second and fifth graders*
  - *Was formerly administered in third and sixth grades*



# Curriculum

- District Curriculum that is differentiated and compacted
- Supplemented with rigorous program materials
  - *Math Olympiads, Jr. Great Books, William and Mary Curriculum, Word Masters, Mock Trial, Exchange City, BestPrep speakers, Mentorships, Public Speaking Greek/Latin Touchstones*
- Expected products, pace, process will be at high grade level similar to Honors courses
- Math Acceleration will be provided for identified students



# Teaching Staff

- Prospective teachers will be well-versed in differentiation, curriculum modification for high-ability learners
- Academy classroom will receive support from Synergy staff to meet needs of students and teachers



# Cost Neutral Parameter

- No new money has been allocated to the Gifted Academy
- Redistribution of funds from Synergy Program and Student Services budget



# Cost Neutral Parameter

## Synergy redistribution

- Synergy currently has 4.3 FTE positions.
- .5 FTE assigned at Prior Lake High School (less .1)
- 1.0 FTE assigned at Twin Oaks and Hidden Oaks (less .2)
- 2.0 FTE assigned to six elementary school for Level 2 Synergy programming and teacher support (less .5)
- .3 FTE will be directed to cover costs of the Gifted Academy (curriculum, testing materials, supplies) Approximately \$20,000
- .5 FTE assigned as Lead Teacher for the Gifted Academy and Synergy
  - Providing staff development to regular education teachers, cluster teachers and Synergy staff
  - Providing support to gifted learners



# Cost Neutral Parameter

- **OLSAT Testing Costs for Second Grade**

- o *Paid for using Synergy budget and Student Services budget*

- **Transportation**

- o *Provided one way for Gifted Academy students using the Edgewood buses*

- o *Transportation for the other way will either be provided by parents or by the district pending the outcome of the Attendance Boundary Committee work*



# Proposed Timeline

*Week of Feb. 23rd*

*Letters are sent to parents of students in grades 3 and 4 who are eligible for the Gifted Academy*

*Week of Feb. 23rd*

*OLSAT testing for grade 2 students*

*March 2nd @ 7:30 p.m.*

*Gifted Academy Parent Information Night - Parents of students in grades 3 and 4, WW gym*

*March 16th*

*Gifted Academy Commitment form due from parents of students in grades 3 and 4*

*April 7<sup>th</sup>*

*Gifted Academy Parent Information Night for parents of 2nd grade students @ WW Gym*

*April 21st*

*Gifted Academy Commitment form due from parents of students in grade 2*



# Questions

***Wasting the potential of a gifted mind is reckless for a society in desperate need of creativity and inventiveness.***

*– Carl Rogers*

