CAPE - Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence

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Integrated Setting for Enrichment Education Program
(I.S.E.E. Grades 4-9)

This program has two components, the grade 4/5 split and the 6/7/8/9 split. The grades 4 and 5 students are grouped in a cross-grade class. They are offered a fully-enriched, integrated, interactive program of studies in the four core subjects, which also involve group work, individual and/or group projects, and special projects. Grades 6-9 students are grouped in a cross-grade class. They are also offered a fully-enriched, integrated, interactive program of studies, which also involve group work, individual and/or group projects, and special projects. The English language arts and social studies programs are integrated (Humanities) and taught by one teacher or team-taught. An extensive, extended reading list including Canadian, American, British, Russian, etc. authors enrich and challenge. Students are exposed to various forms of literature and types of writings (scientific papers, research papers, position papers, plays, poetry, short stories, etc.). Science and mathematics are integrated (sciences) and taught by one teacher or team-taught. The integration allows for the application of concepts within these areas. Students have access to personal devices, Internet, e-mail, and other technologies. These are integrated into every aspect of the program. In this cross grade program students of different ages but similar abilities/areas of talent interact and work together on the same concepts but at different levels of complexity.

Participation in this program is contingent on meeting the criteria established by CAPE and on parental consent.

Screening Process:

• All students in Grade 3 are screened using the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT) in the spring of their grade 3 year. Any other student being considered for the I.S.E.E. program are also be screened using the CCAT.

• Any students who achieves at or above the 6th stanine (high average) using age norms on any of the subtests and on the composite score or on any two subtests is considered for the I.S.E.E. program. The placement process begins for these students with parental/guardian agreement.

• Additionally, teachers of students in grades 4 – 8 may recommend students for assessment to determine whether or not they qualify for placement in the program.

The identification process includes the following steps:
- A cognitive assessment: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children®—Fifth Edition (WISC-V)
- An achievement assessment (Reading Comprehension & Math): Wechsler Individual Achievement Test®–Third Edition (WIAT®–III)
- A review of the most current grades in the core subjects.
- Checklists completed by both the parents/guardians and the current teacher(s).
- A review of attendance, homework completion and behaviour.

Each of the above steps contributes a particular number of points that are then used to determine eligibility for placement within the I.S.E.E. program. Students qualify for enrichment programming within the I.S.E.E. program if their total score is 45 or higher.

• Parents will then be contacted with the results of the placement process.

Continuation in the I.S.E.E. Program:

Students in the I.S.E.E. program will be expected to keep up their grades and class participation. The following is in effect for all (current and new) I.S.E.E. students in grades 4 – 9:

    Probation:
        1. Student grades will be monitored at progress and at report time (5 times/year).

        2. If any academic grade (Language Arts, Math, Science, or Social Studies) is below 65%, the student will be placed on probation.

3. If there is no improvement by the end of the school year, the student will be exited from the program for the following school year. The child may re-qualify for the program if all initial criteria are met for the school year after that (e.g. if the child exits the program in June of 2013, he/she would not be able to re-enter the program until the fall of 2014)

Exit Criteria:
1. Any student who receives lower than a 65% cumulative mark in any academic subject OR two or more "Incomplete" grades on the final report card will be exited from the program for the following year.

2. Regular school or class attendance drops below acceptable levels (10% of the school year), unless it is due to a planned family holiday, medical emergency (hospitalization, surgery), etc.

3. The student is late 10% or more of the time during the school year.

4. Parent or student (with parent approval) request.

5. Behaviour problems of a chronic/severe nature (e.g. disciplinary in-school suspension, out-of school suspension). Vice Principal's recommendation is needed for removal from the program on these grounds.

Re-admittance to the Program After Removal:
Students exited from the program due to grades, attendance, behaviour, or parental request, may be readmitted to the I.S.E.E. program after a minimum of one year's absence if ALL of the following occur:
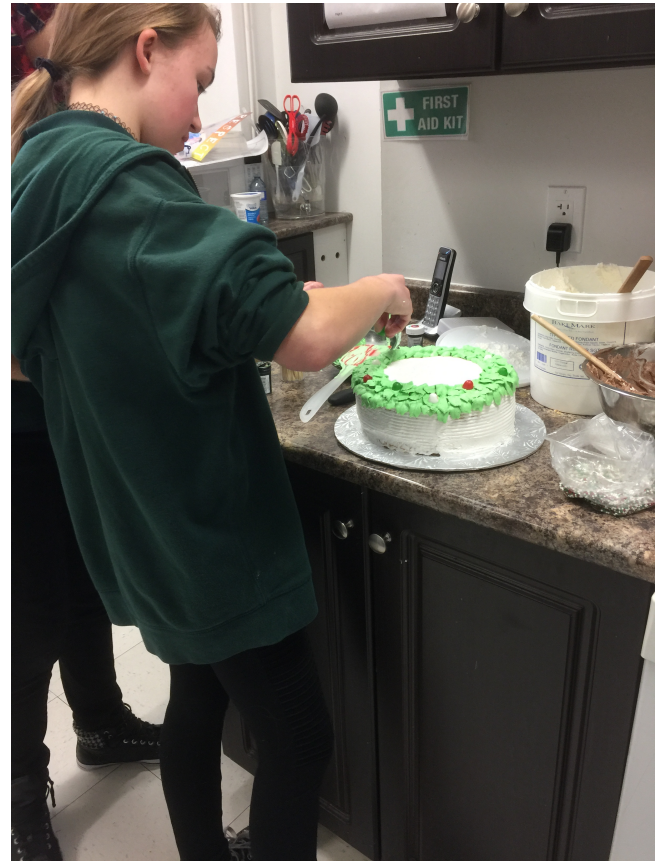1. The parent notifies the Director of Student Services to request a return to the program.

2. Behaviour and/or attendance problems are eliminated. Vice Principal's recommendation is needed for re-admittance to the program on these grounds.

3. It is not necessary for the student to again meet the standardized testing criterion; however, the student must have maintained the academic standard warranted by the criteria: i.e. core class report card grades must be 70% (enriched) 80% (gifted) or higher.

In addition to standardized test scores, Achievement test scores, parental feedback, teacher feedback, and student feedback will be used as evaluative tools to assess the effectiveness of the program. Teacher evaluations of the classroom atmosphere, student involvement and productivity, and parental satisfaction also provide valuable insights into the success of the program.

Operation Shoebox, Christmas 2016   Cake Decorating, Christmas 2016

This program evolved over time. The following is a brief history of this evolution.

Phase I: September 2003 Gifted/Talented Program Grades 6-8

Educators have recognized the high numbers of bright, capable students that drop out of school. These students leave school citing a lack of challenge, social and/or emotional difficulties, and low levels of mental stimulation or boredom. As a group of divergent critical thinkers, these students have needs which are not being met by a traditional mainstream program. In September

2003 CAPE initiated the Gifted/Talented Program for grades 6, 7, and 8. This program necessitated that the formal assessment of the students provided valuable insights into the cognitive world of our students, and therefore, into strategies for intervention. What we found is that an extremely small group of gifted students are traditionally-perceived gifted students. They are bright with a very even or flat WISC profiles without major weak areas, are organized and disciplined, prepare for tests and do homework, pay attention in class and ask questions, are intrinsically motivated and eager to achieve. They test very well. The profile of the vast majority of the students in this program shows a significant difference between the verbal and performance scores. Within the verbal, vocabulary scores are very high, information is as high or almost as high, comprehension is considerably lower. Performance scores are severely affected by very low processing speeds. So, we found ourselves faced with a group of students that were very smart, had a lot of bits of information and the words to talk about them, but very little true understanding of that which they talked about. They thought they knew and understood, but in fact needed to slow down, look at things several times, and learn process skills, logical thinking skills, organization and accuracy, and divergent thinking skills. Emotional and behavioural issues such as depression, antisocial tendencies, and arrogant behaviours aggravated the problems. These students were easily discouraged, and were very critical of themselves. Academic achievement was usually well below potential. They really were underachieving. The extreme scenario is, of course, eventually these students may be dropping out of school. The second year of the program reinforced and refined our program.

This program targeted the Grades 6-8 Gifted/Talented students. Identified gifted and/or talented grades 6-8 students (coded) were grouped in a cross-grade class. They were offered a fully-enriched, integrated, interactive program of studies in four core subjects, which also involved group work, individual and/or group projects, and special projects. In this cross-grade program students of different ages but similar abilities/areas of talent interacted during core time while also interacting with age-similar peers in the p.m. project time. During core time they worked together on the same concepts but at different levels of complexity. The main goal of this program was to encourage gifted/talented students to become functional members of society to the degree of each one's potential. Placing these students together in a multi-age yet homogeneous class allowed for enrichment strategies to be used. This new program was designed to provide a setting within which these students could be comfortable yet challenged, explore freely within guidelines, and acquire the practical yet necessary skills for not just surviving, but to be successful in their endeavours with society, a society within which they often feel as outcasts. Teaching strategies addressed areas of development including resourcefulness, organization, divergent thinking, critical thinking, self-reliance, self-direction, holistic learning, and social skills.

The English language arts and social studies programs were integrated and team-taught. Students followed a common themed Language program that allowed for the particular needs of each student. An extensive, extended reading list including Canadian, American, British, Russian, etc. authors provided enrichment and challenge. Students were exposed to various forms of literature and types of writings (scientific papers, research papers, position papers, plays, poetry, short stories, etc.). Science and mathematics were integrated together. The integration allowed for the application of concepts within these areas. Students had access to personal computers, internet, e-mail and other technologies. These were integrated into every aspect of the program.

The teaching staff, as supporters and implementers of this project, has played a crucial role in the identification of the target group, in the timetabling, in the identification of the program's teaching staff, the ordering of resources, the integration of concepts, the development of the integrated curriculum, the research on gifted/talented students, and development of units. This degree of involvement was indicative of total commitment to and support of this program.

This program proved successful for large number of our students. This attracted more students to CAPE, students that were indeed talented, very talented, or gifted. However, a significant percentage of these students also presented with some very different and previously unidentified challenges.

Phase II: September 2006 Introduction of the I.S.E.E. Program for grades 4-5
Parental feedback and teacher observations as well as data analysis indicated that this type of program needed to reach our younger population. September 2006 saw the introduction of the I.S.E.E. program (Integrated Setting for Enrichment Education) for grades 4 and 5, a parallel program to the Grades 6, 7and 8 Gifted Program, now merged into one program. Following the research and recommendations of established programs, this program offers classes that attempt to address the common areas of need for divergent and critical thinkers. These areas include:
- *Stimulation and challenge,*
- *Independence and confidence,*
- *Goal-setting,*
- *Comprehension of theory,*
- *Development of and confidence in building process skills,*
- *Encouragement for using divergent thinking skills,*
- *Development of study skills,*
- *Development of good work habits,*
- *Development of interpersonal skills and relationships,*
- *Development and use of coping strategies,*

6

- *Time management,*
- *Organizational strategies.*

While the term "gifted" is commonly used to describe students that have above-average abilities, it is often used in more general sense to identify students with strengths. Since all students have areas of strength, the term "gifted student" is often not accurate enough. The students that enrichment education attempts to identify and work with are those who score within the top 5 or 10% of a population. Most commonly, standardized tests such as the CCAT (Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test) and the CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) or CAT-4 are used to clearly define these students.

At CAPE, many members of our school community are involved in the identification process. Teachers or parents may recommend a student for initial investigation. Students whose checklist and CTBS or CAT-4 results show a favourable indication are then screened using the CCAT, or Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test. Results are shared with parents and a decision is made as to the best placement for each individual student. As students are accepted to the program, they are scheduled to write the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children 4th edition, or WISC-IV, with an educational psychologist. This test identifies the student's specified areas of strength and weakness, which are used to help develop that student's Independent Program Plan. The WISC-IV also determines the student's IQ profile, used only for identification purposes. Since there are many people involved and various tools used to identify students, an accurate plan can be developed that is aimed at individual success.

Students who take part in the I.S.E.E. program are taught the grade-specific curriculum as mandated by Alberta Education. The material is compacted which allows extra time for enrichment to occur. Subject-integrated teaching also allows for enrichment as skills are learned in an applied setting. The amount of homework for I.S.E.E. students is comparable to that of mainstream students, given that both sets of students utilize their class time effectively. The level of concept complexity for I.S.E.E. students is higher than that outlined in the curriculum and thereby provides the necessary stimulation and challenge these students seek. Since students are kept within their graded curriculum topics, there is no difficulty for students who transfer into, move within, or leave CAPE.

Student Profiles: Before developing its enrichment program, CAPE conducted an extensive research process. Some of our observations agreed with widely-based research. However, we had many more students that did not fit the gifted stereotype as described in multiple resources. These students had typically been unidentified or misidentified by teachers and/or parents, and therefore had not received accurate programming to provide optimal success.

Through standardized testing and teacher observation, a number of profiles emerged.

Students with High Spatial Reasoning
* *achievement/success varied dependent upon output strategy*
* *achievement typically higher in math and science as these are rule-based*
* *difficulties with supposition*
* *hard and strict adherence to rules makes for difficult transitions*
* *challenges in accepting different approaches from different teachers*
* *struggles with concepts of fair, not equal*
* *difficulty recognizing and following social/behavioral norms*
* *constant tinkering / dissecting, limited ability to reassemble*
* *unwillingness / inability / difficulty to understand exceptions*
* *impulsive actions*
* *frustration to explain self when actions are impulsive*
* *difficulty understanding why some actions are wrong, when seemingly reasonable*

Supports:
- *social programming supports should exceed academic program support to provide stability to learn, then academic programming*
- *encouragement and support to build vocabulary and memory*
- *consistent staff, regular routines*
- *adult support on field trips or less structured activities, detailed explanation of event before-hand*
- *use of stress balls and stimulus items to provide tactile experiences*
- *specifically assigned roles for tasks and field trips*
- *social group counseling to help develop social awareness rules*

Students with 'Typical' Profile
* *high academic achievement tends to be important*
* *work is well-organized and completed on time, often exceeding expectations*
* *attentive in class*
cause few to no disruptions in class
* *easygoing; tend not to complain*
* *able to help others and often provide leadership*
unless pushed, some students choose not to challenge themselves

Supports:
- *the need for student involvement and choice in projects*

- *access to extensive resources and equipment*
- *a human resource to guide and support student learning, and present challenges*
- *balance of accelerated and elaborative program strategies*

Students Who Exhibit Resistant Learning
* high academic achievement with basic recall
* strong verbal skills with vocabulary slightly lower, but not significant
* resistant to develop process (product oriented)
* answer driven with in-ability or unwillingness to provide proof of strategy
* intolerant
* feelings of superiority
*unwillingness to change habits
* resistant to suggestions or other possibilities
* resistant to the possibility of error within themselves
* argumentative
* consistently looking to debate
* consistently looking to compare academic achievement for superiority
* weak organization generally
* lack of study skills and test preparation

Supports:
- *cross-grade class provided student with a number of possibilities for comparison (superior / inferior balance)*
- *insistence on process and written/observable proof*
- *formative, anecdotal assessment*
- *repetitive formats for process with visual rules and examples*
- *prescribed activities for organization; physical routines, written processes, formatting*
- *non-negotiable classroom management procedures*
- *direct support for test preparation and development of study skills; one-on-one progressing to small groups*

Non-verbal Learning Disorders
* variable by skill (strong with logical processes and rules)
* limited to basic recall and simple usage; does not carry through for application or discussion
* success with rote learning
* some frustration with the incongruency between mental understanding and the written or verbal form

* difficulty in understanding connections
* difficulty with spacial concepts and writing observed occurrences
* written work clearly encompasses ideas, but the work is not fluent
* difficulty supposing "what if"
* challenged to retrieve visual information, i.e. pictures, diagrams

Supports:
- *oral reading to them of their written work to cross-check*
- *extensive use of flow charts, sequential outlines*
- *key vocabulary list in examples for context, i.e. vocab lists for exam usage*
- *guided assistance for tests where there are applied or explanation type questions*
- *options to respond in various forms; various written or oral, picture support (probably not student choice)*

Low Memory   &/or Process Speeds
* success dependent upon time management, much of which is outside of class
* limited success with formal written tests
* do well on activities of personal interest
* not subject/area specific
* overwhelmed by amount of work
* perceived time management issues
* can be late with assignments and transitions
* slow to start work periods
* smaller social groups of peers with similar maturity level and numerous commonalities
* organization weak and time consuming
* may appear to be daydreaming when processing
* frustration with studying and not yielding expected results in expected times
* do not always score accurately on standardized tests due to time constraints

Supports:
- *generous transition times and set routines*
- *color coding of papers and binders*
- *personal table of contents for binders*
- *homework assigned by time limit rather than amount*
- *extensive pre and post testing*
- *options in showing knowledge (projects, etc.)*
- *extra time given for tests*
- *assignments focused to specific learner outcomes...not necessarily more time to complete*

the "whole" unit i.e. benefits of 6+1 Writing Traits

Students with Multiple Issues

* sporadic and easily influenced by forces outside the classroom; diet, sleep, change in routines
* grades higher in areas directly related to peak i.e. high verbal = higher marks on verbal tasks
* frustration in maintaining a consistent level of achievement
* depression if student does not identify a peer with similar learning issues
* difficulty being contributing group member
* incongruency between processing speed and output goals (done vs. finished)
* student program needs are extremely specific and student does not have peer with which to identify

Supports:
- *frequent student-teacher conferencing and counseling support*
- *support of special services for IPP objectives and triage*
- *homework assigned in time limits rather than amounts*
- *one-on-one support to develop and follow project timelines*
- *peer teaching by someone with inverse profile (strong/weak balance)*
- *counseling to help manage negative feelings*

If interested in a very short introduction to giftedness, please see:

Giftedness 101
Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D.
Synopsis