

Rock Lake Middle School Gifted/Talented FAQ



What is the gifted/talented program?

At Rock Lake Middle School, our gifted/talented program is composed of students who have been tested as gifted or have demonstrated advanced academic performance and acumen. The State of Florida defines gifted students as students who have superior intellectual development and are capable of high performance, based on the results of a performance assessment. Those students have personalized educational plans designed to provide both academic and emotional support throughout their educational careers.

In addition, we make sure that other students who are capable of superior work and have demonstrated such in the classroom have the opportunity to learn to their highest capability. The *talented* in gifted/talented refers to students who haven't been defined as gifted but are, nonetheless, both bright and high-achieving. These students often excel in the gifted/talented classroom as they are disciplined, focused students who are pushed to succeed.

How are students chosen for the gifted/talented program?

Gifted students are automatically enrolled in the program as part of their educational plans. Talented students are recommended by their teachers or by the school's administration based on their performance in their current classes and the expectation of continued success in more advanced-level coursework. Parents are notified and must approve of their child's placement in the gifted/talented program.

How is the gifted/talented curriculum different?

Rock Lake Middle School holds high expectations for all of its students in all of its classes, so the expectations will remain the same: Do your best to be your best. However, we recognize that many bright students are underserved in standard classes due to pacing and a lower complexity level than the student needs. Our gifted/talented classes share a similar curriculum, but the focus is on going deeper into the content. The key components of a Gifted/Talented education are:

- Advanced Critical Thinking
- Advanced Communication Skills
- Advanced Research Skills
- Creative Problem Solving

The difference is not in what is taught but how it is taught. Students will have opportunities to critically and creatively demonstrate mastery in the core subject areas in an academically enriched environment. They will practice advanced research skills, which will ultimately prepare them for advanced learning at the high school, and college levels.

What would I see if I walked into a gifted/talented classroom?

It's highly likely the first thing you would notice when you walked into the classroom is the high level of discourse taking place. We don't settle for easy answers, basic facts or responses to yes/no questions. We ask questions that actually "hurt" a little to think about. We ask questions that push students to their limits. Students are required to formulate their ideas both orally and in writing. While it is an adjustment, students are more engaged and eager to learn. There is less "I'm bored!" and more "What's next?"

How will my child be evaluated in gifted/talented classes?

Grades are based upon daily performance and share many of the same assignments as other classes. These include classroom assessments, assignments, performance tasks, and classroom participation. In addition, students are given many opportunities to extend their learning through more rigorous pursuits. Here's what that rigor may look like in core classes:

Language Arts. In gifted/talented Language Arts, students often work in groups, working together to understand complex texts with the teacher present to facilitate discussion. In addition, there is a "deeper dive" into particular areas of study, designed to broaden the student's base of knowledge to prepare them for the rigor of advanced high school classes. Higher-level texts enhance the curriculum, and students are encouraged to read regularly on their own. Because the curriculum is compacted, students have the opportunity to pursue more

specialized interests. Some special programs include Genius Hour, in which students pick a long-term passion project to investigate; and Choose Your Own Assessment, in which students can select how they wish to demonstrate their learning (a test, a project, a presentation, etc.).

Math. In gifted/talented Math, students will be completing 1.5 years of math skills in one year. It is expected that gifted/talented students can grasp the basic skills in class quickly, practicing them more in-depth at home using Khan Academy, thus leaving much of the classroom time to work with higher-level problem solving involving the skills. Students also have the opportunity to take higher level classes for high school credit, including Algebra I and Geometry. The normal student progression for math is as follows:

- 6th standard goes to 7th standard and then to Pre-Algebra
- 6th advanced goes to 7th advanced and then to Algebra I standard or honors
- *6th G/T goes to 7th G/T and then to Algebra I Honors*
- *GEMs goes to Algebra I Honors then to Geometry Honors*

Science. In gifted/talented Science, experiential learning leads to collaboration in order to understand complex topics. The curriculum includes sixth through eighth standards, as well as selected high school standards. In this way, we not only accomplish an understanding of the middle school curriculum, but also prepare students for the rigors of high school. As part of our exploration of the scientific process, students apply this process repeatedly in conducting many labs during class and in the development and testing of a science fair project. As the topics are student-selected, their learning becomes more personalized. Many projects are assigned to develop deeper understanding of science topics. The curriculum is very intense, requiring students to do outside work in order to excel. A strong work ethic and organizational skills are essential for success.

Social Studies. In gifted/talented Social Studies, students will be using methods of historical inquiry that involves the analysis of primary and secondary historical documents and using these documents to support a position. Students will be working in groups while engaged in a more in-depth study of content topics including required standards, current events and projects. Strong organizational skills, including Cornell Notes or similar note-taking strategy, are required for organizing information. Students will be engaged in higher order writing on a regular basis including short and extended responses, more in-depth essays, and authentic writing. Students in eighth grade participate in History Fair and seventh grade students maintain a portfolio for Project Citizen.

What makes a successful gifted/talented student?

The following traits are necessary for success in the gifted/talented classroom:

- Strong organizational skills with the ability to handle multiple tasks at the same time.
- A strong reader – Level 4 or 5 on FSA (Level 3 if they enjoy reading)
- Intellectual curiosity about a wide variety of subjects.
- Self-control with the ability to work in a group-setting while staying on task.
- Discipline and ability to make school work a priority.
- Commitment to do homework two to three times a week for each core course.
- Willingness to collaborate and share in the classroom.
- Self-driven to study and review for tests.