



# Batavia CANDO

Challenge Advocacy Network Development Organization

*Advocating support and challenge for Batavia's gifted and talented students*

15 April, 2013 Gifted Committee Meeting

with CANDO Exec. Board and CANDO Elementary School Parent Representatives

**Attendees:** Brad Newkirk, Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Pam Ciway, Ms. Kim Anderson, Ms. Jen Conant, Gifted Specialists; Heidi LeRette-Kauffman, CANDO Advocacy Chair; David Stone, CANDO parent and former Gifted Committee member; Jodie Pufundt, JBN Rep.; Deb Grizzell, CANDO Chair; Bob Nishikawa, AGS Rep.; Beth Walker, HCS Rep.; Kathleen Barth, LWS Rep.

**Meeting topics:** 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade transition

Further development of Elementary school gifted services

District-wide focus on Mathematics curriculum

Future direction for gifted services: magnet school for grades 4/5?

Volunteer opportunities for CANDO parents in 2013-14

## 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Grade Transition

Identification of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students for the enriched literature and language section of 7<sup>th</sup> grade is underway. Students scoring in the top 5% on MAP testing were given CogAT to determine eligibility for the enriched lit/lang and inclusion in the gifted cluster team during their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. Only students scoring in the top 5% in both Mathematics and Lit/Lang were considered for this placement.

Fifth grade students were also re-evaluated for placement in the new 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted cluster team for 2013-14. MAP scores, CogAT, and teacher perception data were used in determining placement on this team.

This service delivery model is essentially a "school within a school," Mr. Newkirk explained. These high-ability students are grouped together for all of their core classes, with enriched curriculum offered in Mathematics and Lit/Lang.

Benefits to this approach cited by Mr. Newkirk include: 1) Research shows ability-grouping is beneficial for high-ability learners, 2) Focused professional development for the group of teachers working with this group of students.

The identification process for student placement is currently underway. RMS staff will be working on relevant scheduling issues and selection of teachers for the cluster classes. Parents will receive a letter notifying them that their student has been placed in the gifted cluster. Gifted cluster curriculum information will be released to parents of identified students this Spring. Students' schedules will not have a "gifted" or "enriched" notation for their Mathematics or Lit/Lang courses. Grades in these courses will not be weighted. Future hopes for the gifted cluster teams are to include enriched curriculum for Science and Social Studies.

If parents of students not identified for the gifted cluster team feel their child should be considered for that placement, they should request enactment of the “Problem Solving” process, which is the mechanism for addressing student learning needs. That request should be made to the child’s classroom teacher at the elementary level, or guidance counselor at RMS.

There will not be a Gifted Specialist at RMS. The gifted cluster teachers will design and implement the enriched curriculum under the direction of Kelley Karnick, Academic Dean at RMS. An instructional coach will be utilized by all RMS teachers, including gifted cluster teachers, during the 2013-14 school year.

### **Further Development of Elementary School Gifted Services**

There will be an effort to de-emphasize the label of “talented” for high-ability students (scoring in the top 6-10%) who do not meet the “gifted” criteria (scoring in the top 5%). BPS Gifted Services feels that labeling students “talented” decreases the fluidity with which they are able to move into flexible groupings for learning opportunities in the classroom. Support for enriched learning and differentiation for these high-ability students will not change.

### **District-wide Focus on Mathematics Curriculum**

There is concern at each educational level that there are “gaps” in learning in the Mathematics area. The current process of acceleration is being examined and evaluated. There is particular concern for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who accelerate to 4<sup>th</sup> grade Math in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It is thought that there should be a more gradual acceleration. A committee of Math teachers in grades K-12 is meeting to create a Mathematics curriculum unique to Batavia Public Schools’ needs. Current course materials and curriculum (i.e. *Everyday Math*) will still be used, but other curriculum components will be added to supplement established curriculum.

### **Future Direction for Gifted Services: Magnet School for Grades 4/5**

BPS Gifted Services is beginning the process of evaluating the magnet school model of service delivery for gifted elementary students in grades 4/5. Prior to this meeting, Mr. Newkirk asked CANDO to research and discuss the magnet school model of service delivery, and to be prepared to offer feedback to BPS Gifted Services staff. A summary of our conclusions follows these meeting minutes.

The magnet model of service delivery for gifted students is seen by BPS as an efficient mode for delivery of enriched curriculum across subject areas to gifted students in grades 4/5. There are a multitude of logistical issues associated with a move to a magnet school for these two grades, and this concept is in an exploratory phase at this time.

As the discussion concluded, CANDO presented our written conclusions and asked BPS Gifted Services to provide information about research supporting this model of service delivery at the elementary school level, as the research CANDO was able to access on the topic showed mixed results of effectiveness.

### **Volunteer Opportunities for CANDO Parents in 2013-14**

At the conclusion of the previous Gifted Committee meeting in February, Mr. Newkirk asked CANDO to consider offering parent-led after school enrichment class opportunities for students in BPS. H.C. Storm successfully offered these types of opportunities to students at their sites in an effort coordinated by PTO. The CANDO Executive Board and Elementary School Parent Representatives agreed to present this volunteer opportunity to CANDO parents for the 2013-14 academic year.

CANDO requested that Gifted Services discuss this new learning opportunity with building principals at their next meeting and establish their support for such an undertaking. CANDO would like to partner with building PTOs in offering these activities, which would be open to all students for participation. Parent facilitators of these enrichment opportunities would choose their own topics and define the elements of their workshops. More discussion on this opportunity will occur at the May CANDO General Membership meeting. The CANDO Programs Chair would have responsibility for supervision of these enrichment opportunities throughout the district. As that Executive Board position is currently vacant, interested CANDO parents are encouraged to place their name on the ballot at the General Membership meeting for election to the Programs Chair position. Parents interested in offering workshops would then express their interest to the CANDO Programs Chair.

**Please watch BPS Messenger for announcement of the date, time and location for the May CANDO General Membership meeting. We look forward to seeing you there!**

Regards,

Deb Grizzell  
2012-13 CANDO Chair

**Conclusions of the CANDO Executive Board and CANDO Elementary School Parent Representatives on the Subject Of Magnet School Model of Service Delivery for BPS Gifted Elementary School Students**



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The CANDO Executive Board and Elementary School Parent Representatives have been researching and discussing the Magnet School approach to offering gifted services, at the request of the BPS101 Gifted Services Committee. Our feedback and conclusions are briefly summarized below. In addition to reviewing research available in the professional literature on this topic, we have looked at Magnet programs targeted to gifted and talented learners across the country.

Magnet schools were originally formed to assist the public education system in its efforts to desegregate racially divided districts, and offer more equitable opportunities to all students, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. In many areas of the country, and particularly in urban, inner-city areas, magnet schools still serve this purpose. More recently, Magnet schools have offered educational opportunities catered to the unique characteristics and learning needs of specific populations (i.e. Performing Arts Schools, Math and Science Academies, Schools for Academically Gifted and Talented Students).

The idea of a magnet school for Batavia's gifted and talented students in grades three through five was proposed several years ago by Dr. Jan Wright, then head of the Gifted Services Committee. The magnet school model of service delivery was researched and discussed by the committee members, who had been charged to find a cost-neutral way to effectively and equitably deliver gifted services and differentiated curriculum opportunities to BPS elementary school students across the district.

After a couple of months of research and discussion, the magnet model was abandoned in favor of a cluster-grouping model of service delivery. The cluster-grouping model was well-supported in the professional body of research. It was hoped that through classroom teacher/professional staff training, and with the supervision and support of three gifted specialists, more of Batavia's gifted and talented elementary services would benefit from opportunities provided through differentiation, acceleration and other methods of tailoring curriculum to meet the needs of high ability learners. In addition, research on cluster-grouping shows benefit to learners of all abilities, not just the gifted and talented students; while research on the magnet model showed benefits to those students selected to participate in the magnet program, with no gains for the general student population, as well as negative impacts for some gifted students in magnet programs.

After re-examining the magnet model of service delivery, the CANDO Elementary School Parent Representatives and Executive Board make the following observations:

Regarding the cluster-grouping model of service delivery:

- The cluster-grouping model of service delivery is still well-supported in the professional body of research. When implemented properly, it benefits students of all abilities.
- BPS101 is only in year two of service delivery using the cluster-grouping model. Anecdotal reports from parents across the district indicate that the model has not been fully implemented at all sites.
- Parents continue to ask for more communication from teachers and administration about what differentiated curriculum is being offered to their gifted and talented students.
- Parents and classroom teachers have expressed a desire for more teacher training in order to more fully and effectively implement the cluster-grouping model of service delivery, and to appropriately provide differentiated curriculum opportunities.

Regarding the gifted magnet model of service delivery:

- Research on the magnet model of service delivery yields inconsistent findings on the model's effectiveness.
- It seems unlikely that the magnet model would be cost-neutral in implementation.
- Parents are concerned that with increased focus on gifted students in a magnet setting, high ability students remaining at neighborhood schools would be neglected.
- The middle school has not yet implemented the newly outlined gifted/talented services for Math and Language Arts and would not be ready to receive students from the Elementary Gifted Magnet program.

- The magnet model of service delivery does not serve all gifted students well. A percentage of gifted students “underperform” when grouped with only other gifted students. Without the variation in ability found in a typical, or cluster-grouped classroom, some gifted students feel inadequate to meet the demands of the rigor found in a gifted-only learning environment.
- While there are outstanding examples of Gifted/Talented Magnet schools across the country, they are found in districts with long-standing success in offering differentiated learning opportunities to all students, whether those students are in the Magnet program or neighborhood schools.

Thus, it is the conclusion of the CANDO Elementary Parent Representatives and Executive Board that the magnet model of service delivery is not the optimal approach to meeting the needs of Batavia’s high ability learners at this time. We would encourage BPS 101 to invest resources in teacher training and curriculum development to further support and implement the cluster-grouping model of service delivery to high-ability students in Batavia at the elementary and middle school levels.

2012-13 CANDO Executive Board

2012-13 CANDO Elementary School Parent Representatives