

**SASKATOON CATHOLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (E.L.O.) PROGRAM**

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**FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS GIFTED**

**1. Statement of Philosophy**

Educators today are called upon to make every possible effort to discern students' special needs, interests, and potentials, and to provide educational opportunities for their nurture. The Extended Learning Opportunities philosophy incorporates the following guidelines as listed in Saskatoon Catholic Schools Mission Statement:

- *to inspire hope by encouraging the growth and affirming the worth of each person,*
- *to be attentive to the specific needs of each student,*
- *to encourage the development of each person's God-given talents,*
- *to foster the creative potential of each student.*

**2. History of Gifted**

In 1980, the Saskatoon Catholic Schools initiated a gifted education program. The Extended Learning Opportunities pull-out program for Grades Four to Six was based on Joseph Renzulli's model. Renzulli (1978) defined giftedness as the interaction among ability, creativity and task commitment.

The E.L.O. pull-out program expanded to include more students from more schools and increased the grades to include Four to Eight.

Research and experience in the area of gifted education resulted in the implementation of the Catalyst Teacher model (Treffinger, 1985). A School Division Catalyst Teacher was employed in 1985. The pull-out program continued to operate and expand. The approach to gifted education, the one-half per week pull-out, the School-Based Catalyst model, and the Division Catalyst model, continued until June, 1993.

**3. Delivery System**

Contemporary approaches to gifted education suggest that local school ownership and implementation of the program for gifted students is the most successful model. Involving the teacher-librarian, the classroom teacher and the catalyst teacher in the implementation, planning and evaluation of the program for gifted students encourages school-based ownership. The development of the program in each school is determined by the needs of the students.

The contemporary program for gifted students in the Saskatoon Catholic School Division (the E.L.O. program) is offered as four components:

- i) The Grade 4, 5, 6 component is school-based. This school-based model utilizes a team approach. Each school's teacher-librarian is instrumental in the implementation of the gifted program. Two school-based catalyst teachers and one division catalyst teacher are assigned to assist with program procedures. The key person of each team who delivers the program to the students is the classroom teacher. This team approach has often expanded to include other staff members such as the Learning Assistance Teacher. Often this team organization is an initiative taken by individual principals based on that school's needs.
- ii) The Community Resource component is offered to the Grade 7 and 8 students who have been identified as gifted. Units of interest to students are selected by the students and offered by community experts in the interest area. The duration of each unit varies from five to twelve weeks, one-half day per week. There are three groups of six units offered during each school year.
- iii) **Mentorship Programs**  
A mentorship program is established on a one on one or two on one basis for Students who have an extremely high intelligence aptitude and show extreme Ability in one or more content areas. The classroom teacher serves each student's needs in the best possible way; however, some very capable students have special needs that demand a one on one service in order that the student might be academically challenged. Often, this means crossing grade level barriers to an advanced level during the mentorship. The student remains in the regular classroom with chronological peers for the rest of the regular classes.
- iv) **Advanced Programming in One or More Content Areas**  
For students precocious in one or more content areas, a program is established whereby the student can advance as his/her own level. An example of this is a Grade VIII student very talented in Mathematics may finish the Grade VIII Mathematics program during the fall term, September to December, then take Mathematics 90 during the second term at one of our high schools during first period, then return to the elementary school for the remainder of the day.

#### Advanced Placement Program – High School

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools, colleges and universities. For students, AP can 1) develop, in a high school environment, the study skills and habits they will need in college, 2) motivate them to attempt more challenging courses in both high school and college, 3) provide college credits for courses and examinations successfully taken in high school. The Coordinator of Gifted Education works cooperatively with high schools in the AP program to provide inservice and resources.

**4. Identification of Students**

All grade three students in the Saskatoon Catholic School Division are screened. The Test of Cognitive Skills (T.C.S.) is utilized. Students are eligible for School Based Extended Learning Opportunities who:

- a) Score at or above the 96<sup>th</sup> Percentile on the Canadian Test of Cognitive Skills
- b) Score at or above 103 on the WISC-III

Parents are advised of the students' ability by the classroom teacher. Referrals are often initiated by parents or individual students via the school.

There is constant scrutiny of the identification procedure. It is planned that more factors will be considered for inclusion.

**5. Program Development**

The Grades 4, 5 and 6 program for gifted students is school-based and it is developed by the team at each school. Some possible choices for delivery of the program are: catalyst model, classroom enrichment, pull-out, teacher-librarian and classroom teacher cooperative teaching, etc. Differentiation of curriculum in content, process and product is an important part of program planning and development. An example of applying this differentiation of curriculum is providing extensions in these three areas to a Resource Based Learning theme. An independent study project may be an option for individual or small groups of very capable students.

**6. Staff Development**

Inservices are ongoing for classroom teachers and teacher-librarians. The three catalyst teachers have experience in teaching gifted children and in differentiating curriculum in order to meet the bright students' needs. The catalyst teachers are assigned to work with the team in each school on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to assure classroom application of enrichment and extension of curriculum. Consultation with students, parents, teachers and principals is available on an ongoing basis whenever the need arises. Communication with parents of the Community Resource program is ongoing.

**7. Evaluation of Program**

The evaluation of this School-Based model for delivering gifted education will be on-going. No formal evaluation is in place at this time.