



Elementary Magnet Program Behaviors, Characteristics, Considerations

In deciding if a child should be nominated for the Elementary Magnet Program, or in deciding whether or not to enroll the child even if he/she qualifies for the program, a number of factors should be considered: academic behaviors and characteristics, social and emotional behaviors and characteristics, and transportation logistics. In examining behaviors and characteristics of children it is important to remember that no child is a textbook case; any child may exhibit varying combinations of traits commonly associated with gifted and talented students. For example, some children are strong academically in certain subjects and not in others. They may have displayed certain behaviors for periods of time or in certain situations, only to exhibit entirely different behaviors in other circumstances or at different times.

Academic Behaviors and Characteristics

Following are some of the behaviors and characteristics that an academically gifted child may exhibit, although the combination, amount, and degree may vary:

- Possesses large amounts of knowledge that seem “beyond” his/her normal age and intellectual development.
- Understands complex, challenging concepts and thinking processes in ways that seem unusual for his/her age.
- Exhibits considerable intellectual curiosity and a wide range of different interests, some of which may seem advanced for his/her age.
- Exhibits a significant ability to express himself/herself verbally.
- Is a committed learner: what he/she takes on is usually accomplished, often with a degree of perfectionism in terms of personal expectations and standards.
- Is a self-directed learner, requiring little adult direction or encouragement.
- Prefers open-ended tasks and projects in which he/she can be creative and personal about the way in which work is completed and presented.
- Seems frustrated or bored because the pace of instruction in the classroom is too slow or the work does not seem challenging enough.
- Complains that much of the classroom work is routine “busywork”.
- Seems to be getting into mischief or displaying inappropriate behavior patterns in class due to lack of challenge.

Considerations:

The Elementary Magnet Program is designed for students who excel in all academic areas. It is important for magnet students to feel comfortable with the advanced pace of instruction in all subject areas, the integration of subject areas, the actual assignments, the amount of written work, etc. The needs of a child who exhibits particular strength in one subject area only (e.g., mathematics) are best addressed by appropriate acceleration and enrichment/extension in that subject area at the neighborhood school.

Magnet students are enrolled in a classroom with other children who also have unique learning styles, curiosity, advanced intellectual ability, desire to excel, high personal standards, and high verbal ability. This may create a situation in which many children will be competing for attention and recognition. To be successful in the magnet program, a child must have self-motivation, task commitment, and good work/study habits.

Student performance in the Elementary Magnet Program is monitored continually. It is possible that a child might be dismissed from the magnet program if he/she is not performing at an appropriate level of expectation and the magnet staff believes the child could achieve more successfully at the neighborhood school.

Social and Emotional Behaviors and Characteristics

Following are some social and emotional behaviors and characteristics that an academically gifted child may exhibit; although the combination, amount and degree may vary.

- ❑ Exhibits sensitivity to criticism, challenge, or others' apparent failure to understand him/her.
- ❑ Chooses to isolate himself/herself from peers and adults, at least partially out of a strong sense of self and/or unwillingness to share thoughts and feelings with others.
- ❑ Exhibits a keen sense of humor that reflects his/her divergent thinking, but which may be perceived by others as negative or counter-productive.
- ❑ Sets very high goals for himself/herself, and may become frustrated and angry when these goals cannot be met.
- ❑ Seems content to find satisfaction and reinforcement from his/her own sense of accomplishment and may reject positive feedback from peers and adults.
- ❑ Displays a range of emotional understanding not usually associated with his/her age which may result in personal sensitivity or the feeling of insensitivity from others.
- ❑ Chooses to hide or downplay his/her talents, gifts, or abilities to conform to perceived (or actual) expectations of the classroom, school, or community. This behavior may be driven by the desire to be accepted or included, or it may reflect a deep frustration with his/her own "differences" from peers.
- ❑ Criticizes the efforts of others when they do not meet his/her own high standards of achievement and excellence. This criticism may result in negative relationships with peers and adults and exclusion from the mainstream, especially if the criticism is persistent and perceived by others as simply a negative attempt to belittle.

Considerations:

A magnet student may be in a classroom with few (if any) students from his/her neighborhood school. Magnet students and parents may need to be creative in finding ways for students to socialize and/or cooperate on assignments with classmates living in different areas of the county. On the other hand, keeping the child involved with extra-curricular activities in the neighborhood school and community may require careful planning and organization of time.

It is inappropriate to nominate a child for the magnet program to seek a stimulating atmosphere unless the child is truly above grade level in every subject area. Also, using the Elementary Magnet Program as a trial program option is not recommended unless the parents, professional staff, and other professionals are convinced that the child will be able to handle the emotional stresses of the program as well as the possible stresses if leaving the program to return to his/her neighborhood school should become necessary. This type of change may cause emotional and personal upheaval and may damage the child's self-esteem.

Sometimes magnet students encounter negative comments and attitudes from peers at the elementary magnet site, at the neighborhood school, or from adults about his/her giftedness or enrollment in the magnet program. Some children are able to cope with this better than others. For a particularly sensitive child, the academic benefits of the magnet program must be weighed carefully against the social/emotional considerations and any potential negative impacts.

Transportation Considerations

Each magnet student must attend the Elementary Magnet Program site to which he/she is assigned based on residence. If circumstances make it preferable for a child to attend a different magnet site, parents may submit to the Office of Gifted and Talented Education an *Application to Enroll Student in School Outside of His/Her Attendance Area* form. Based on the parents' written justification, the request may or may not be approved.

If a magnet student is to be transported to school by county school bus, he/she must ride the neighborhood middle or high school bus to a shuttle bus site. At that site, magnet students are monitored until they board the actual shuttle to the magnet site. Travel time from home to the shuttle site will vary depending upon location. Please note that magnet students will be riding on buses with older children.

Daily, upon dismissal at 2:30 p.m., students may continue to engage in learning activities. However, no new curricular material is presented once magnet dismissal begins.