

# **Santa Rosa City Schools**

## **Advanced Learner Program and Services**

### **ALPS**

#### **Vision**

All students will receive rigorous and creative learning opportunities that support their affective needs, cultivate their interests, and enhance their ability to effectively utilize critical thinking to thrive in diverse, complex, local and global environments. Due to their unique needs, advanced learners require services to continue to grow academically and intellectually in order to reach their full potential and maximize the likelihood that they make positive contributions to society.

#### **Philosophy**

It is the mission of Santa Rosa City Schools to educate all students in an integrated setting, to become responsible, literate, cognitive, and contributing members of a multicultural society, through excellence in teaching and learning.

We are committed to a school environment that fosters excellence and the achievement of one's potential. It is this belief in the possibility of individual excellence and unique achievement - and the school's responsibility for fostering both - that is the basis of Santa Rosa City Schools' Advanced Learner Program and Services (ALPS).

We recognize that advanced learners, as well as all students, have special talents that must be nurtured, as well as unique needs that must be addressed through accommodations such as differentiation of content, instruction, and assessment, as well as careful attention to their social-emotional development. By considering the whole child, and not just his or her innate abilities, teachers, parents, administrators and community members are able to challenge and motivate all students to achieve at their full potential.

ALPS service delivery is through an inclusive approach with an emphasis on differentiated instruction and flexible grouping in the regular classroom. The goals of the ALPS Program are to meet the intellectual needs of all students so they can reach their highest potential. We strive to increase the application of critical thinking skills and promote positive social emotional skills.

Identification systems will allow for schools to equitably engage in talent development and talent enhancement for every student. We will evaluate our systems and services annually to improve the process and work to find and identify underrepresented students who qualify for this program.

Using Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), best teaching practices and focusing on student strengths, we collaborate with teachers to provide differentiated, rigorous, and accelerated experiences during the school day. We also assist teachers and families in identifying resources for serving the social-emotional needs and unique interests of students to encourage their passion for learning.

# 1. Program Design

Our Program Design is a qualitatively differentiated program which modifies and adjusts *content, process, products*, and learning environments in ways which build and extend the special characteristics of advanced learners. Our teachers provide each student with uniquely appropriate opportunities suited to her/his individual talents and abilities throughout the school year during regular classroom instructional time.

## Components that Support the Diverse Abilities and Needs of Advanced Learners

The **content** (what is taught) is more abstract, complex, and varied, while aligned with the general education program. It is presented in a way which achieves economy, illustrating the organization and method of inquiry of a discipline, and includes a study of well-known producers, performers, and innovators.

The **processes** include those which develop higher-level thought; allow for open-endedness, discovery, and freedom of choice; encourage intellectual peer interaction and proof of reasoning; are varied in both kind and pacing.

Student **products** involve real problems presented to real audiences. Students will be taught self-evaluation of their products which must involve transformations of original thinking. Students have opportunities to produce products which illustrate the student's unique talents (i.e. audio-visual, performing, leadership)

## General Goals

- To identify advanced learners, including those from diverse racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds
- To provide differentiated opportunities for learning that meet each student's particular abilities and talents
- To design curriculum that addresses the individual characteristics, needs, abilities, and interests of each student - differentiation of depth, complexity, and novelty
- To provide staff training and learning opportunities that enhance the curriculum and instructional program in order to meet the needs of advanced learners
- To provide opportunities for students to work in homogeneous, heterogeneous, and independent instructional settings (Flexible grouping, novelty and acceleration)
- To develop in each student a sensitivity and responsibility to others
- To assist each student in developing a healthy concept of self
- To develop each student's ability to recognize, integrate, and utilize his/her potential
- To encourage family and community participation in services for advanced learners

## Program Components

- Instructs advanced learners at all elementary sites
- Offers differentiated instruction, talent development and talent enhancement for all students
- Formally assesses and identifies students beginning in grade three
- Serves both high-achieving and at-risk advanced learners
- Serves populations which reflect the diversity of the community
- Follows CCSS, NGSS, and best practices in teaching advanced learners
- Uses integrated curricula and varying depth and complexity
- Employs the inquiry approach
- Offers accelerated and enriched content
- Applies varied/higher thinking processes
- Allows students to create advanced and novel products
- Helps students to develop appropriate social skills and good citizenship
- Fosters a positive self-image, enthusiasm for learning, insights into ideas and problems
- Is supported by a district Advanced Learner Lead TOSA who will be responsible for the overall coordination of the program within and across the school sites in conjunction with the Advanced Learner Advisory Committee

## Collaboration

***Our program allows for the active collaboration between teachers, parents, administrators, the community, and the students themselves to set high standards and challenge our learners through...***

- Differentiating instruction
- Broadening the core curriculum
- Acceleration/ Depth/ Complexity/ Novelty
- Grouping patterns and strategies that meet the needs of all students, including advanced learners
- Allowing the students to participate and take responsibility for their education
- Administrative support for the education of advanced learners
- Offering opportunities to meet with community members and others with similar interests

## 2. Identification

### Purpose

Identification systems will allow for schools to equitably engage in talent development for high-potential learners, and talent enhancement for high-achieving/performing learners. The system will be one based on notions of inclusion and differentiation according to need. Schools will see advanced learners as a part of, never apart from, all of the many and varied students they serve on their campuses.

Since students have a wide variety of abilities, the ALPS student identification efforts are quite broad, and different identification techniques are appropriate to different categories.

SRCS considers all the following categories (also recognized by the State of California):

- Intellectual Ability: A pupil demonstrates extraordinary or potential for extraordinary intellectual development.
- Creative Ability: A pupil characteristically perceives unusual relationships among aspects of the pupil's environment and ideas; overcomes obstacles to thinking and doing; produces unique solutions to problems.
- Specific Academic Ability: A pupil functions at highly advanced academic levels in particular subject areas.
- Leadership Ability: A pupil displays the characteristic behaviors necessary for extraordinary leadership.
- High Achievement: A pupil consistently produces advanced ideas and products and/or attains exceptionally high scores on achievement tests.
- Visual and Performing Arts Talent: A pupil originates, performs, produces, or responds at extraordinarily high levels in the arts.

Santa Rosa City Schools recognizes that ability and talent may occur across multiple domains or one domain. Regardless of how broad or narrow a student's abilities may be, teachers understand the need to foster advanced development in the area(s) where students demonstrate readiness to delve more deeply than typically developing peers.

### Assessment

**Intelligence is *emergent*. Intelligence is *fluid*. Culture may influence how intelligence is expressed. Intelligence is *complex*.**

### Kindergarten through Third Grade

In Kindergarten through third grade, rigorous differentiated instruction is in place to foster talent development and nurture advanced potential in students. Formal assessment does not take place until third grade. A scope and sequence for differentiation exists in the primary grades. Any parent, teacher, or administrator who perceives that a K-3rd grade student exhibits a need for further support and is not being appropriately served, may request the principal to convene a Student Success Team meeting at which a team of educational professionals will review the need for further differentiating the child's learning experience.

### Grades Four through Six

Formal assessment and identification of all students takes place in third grade. However, administrators, teachers, and parents who feel a 4th-6th grade student may require greater differentiation or services may refer the student to a Student Success Team. The team will review the needs of the child and consider appropriate accommodations in the classroom.

SRCS's formal ALPS identification process begins in 3rd grade and extends through 6th grade. The ALPS TOSA and site leads work together to conduct identification activities, following the SRCS procedures detailed below. All students in grades 4-6 by referral have additional opportunities throughout each year to be assessed for ALPS identification.

### **Procedures**

- An Assessment Review Team meets to review referrals for ALPS identification and to make a determination of eligibility.
- Students can be referred by parents, teachers, community members, and administrators for participation, based on the criteria discussed below.
- Multiple sources of evidence for the characteristics of advanced learners are to be used and a record is to be maintained in the student's cumulative file as well as in the district ALPS file and in the Illuminate Education School Information System (SIS). Transfer students whose cumulative files indicate that they were found to be ALPS eligible in a previous district are included in SRCS ALPS program without review.
- Students may be referred once annually. Sites maintain data on nominees and include these data in reassessing students who are referred more than once.
- The district provides ALPS referral forms, which may be obtained from school sites. Any person wishing to make a referral must complete a referral form and submit to the ALPS committee.

### **Identification Criteria**

The district's formal ALPS identification process begins with testing of all students in the spring of 3rd grade. All 3rd grade students will be given the opportunity to take the Raven Progressive Matrices. A passive consent form will be provided to parents to provide an opportunity to decline testing. Any student scoring in the 97th+ percentile of the Raven will meet the eligibility criteria for ALPS. Also students who score an ELA score of 2625 and or math score of 2645 on the SBAC will be eligible for ALPS.

Parents may request to have their student re-assessed once annually after 3rd grade, in the spring of each year.

In addition, any person may refer a student who has not obtained the required Raven or SBAC scores to the ALPS Assessment Review Team for consideration of alternative criteria; these include teacher observations, work samples, and other assessment data. The Assessment Review Team may consider privately obtained assessments. A student must first have taken the Raven in order for the alternative criteria to be considered. Transfer students, who have not been ALPS identified in their previous District, may be assessed in the spring. Alternative criteria, such as teacher observation and work samples may be particularly important for identifying students who are advanced learners in areas such as the arts or leadership.

### **Notification**

Once a student has been found ALPS eligible, in grades 4-6, parents are notified in writing. Students transferring to another district will be provided with ALPS identification information as part of their cumulative file which is sent on to the receiving district. All teachers of ALPS students will be able to describe the differentiation strategies that they are using to assist the ALPS learner.

### **Training in Identification**

The ALPS lead district TOSA and site administrator at each school will be responsible for training all staff in the identification process and procedures, including the characteristics of the ALPS learner. As the identification process and procedures are refined, updates and revisions are shared with all staff. The ALPS lead personnel meet at regular intervals to review the identification process to guarantee the inclusion of underrepresented groups such as ELL, twice exceptional, underachievers, migrant education and foster youth.

## **3. Curriculum & Instruction**

SRCS provides a differentiated curriculum designed to respond to the needs, interests, and abilities of all students, including Advanced Learners.

General education classroom differentiation is the primary service option for identified Advanced Learners. As educators, we need to provide learning experiences that promote the interaction of creativity, task commitment, and above average ability to nurture the development of gifted behaviors.

A core purpose of differentiation for Advanced Learners is to promote their deeper and more complex understanding of core content, so these students are appropriately challenged to meet or exceed Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Differentiation for these students provides access to advanced content, as well as a balanced development of critical and creative problem solving and research skills. This facilitates student preparation of products appropriate to their abilities and moves the curriculum beyond simply asking advanced learners for a greater quantity of work. When deemed appropriate by the teacher, core curriculum materials may also be compacted for enriched instruction and learning. Appropriate differentiation leads to increased metacognition, perseverance, and efficacy for learning, as well as sensitivity to and respect for individual differences.

Students will learn:

- to not just accept knowledge but to question it
- to know that knowledge is constructed from a particular point of view, which influences how information is presented and perceived
- to understand the implications of power relationships in the world and how various texts are used to reinforce relationships
- to read and write to raise awareness of the world in order to improve it
- to take action to improve conditions for self and society

To ensure the balance and continuity of appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction, teachers receive support and professional development. (See Professional Development-Section 5) Some instructional strategies teachers may use are universal themes, curriculum compacting, extension menus, scholarly behavior, higher order thinking skills and questioning techniques, tiered assignments, use of depth and complexity, acceleration and novelty.

<b>Acceleration</b>	
<p>Acceleration encompasses more than simply moving gifted or high ability learners through the curriculum at a faster pace or providing a second grade student with fourth grade work. Acceleration focuses on how we can orient a student towards “accelerated levels of thinking and levels of knowing” (California Association for the Gifted, 1994, 2005).</p>	<p>Acceleration of thinking and knowing involves differentiating the core curriculum to provide challenge and opportunities above and beyond grade-level content. Instructional strategies to differentiate the core curriculum through acceleration include: (a) connections to Universal Concepts: POWER, CHANGE, SYSTEMS, STRUCTURE, RELATIONSHIPS, CONFLICT, ORDER vs. CHAOS, and (b) the teaching of the disciplines or “Thinking Like a Disciplinarian” -- viewing the same topic from different disciplinary perspectives: economy, geography, linguistics, sociology, psychology to see the interdisciplinary connections of a single topic, theme, or event.</p>
<b>Depth</b>	
<p>Differentiation using “depth” refers to approaching something or studying something from the following patterns to pursue the topic in greater detail and to a greater understanding: (a) from the concrete to the abstract and from the abstract to the concrete, (b) from the familiar to the unfamiliar and from the unfamiliar to the familiar, and (c) from the known to the unknown and from the unknown to the known.</p>	<p>Delving deeper into content requires students to examine topics by determining the facts, concepts, generalizations, principles, and theories related to them. Key words such as: language of the discipline, patterns, details, trends, ethics, big ideas, unanswered questions, and rules represent the means by which students elaborate on their thinking and understanding of a topic. According to CAG (2005), depth is moving from patterns to trends; it proceeds from rules to structure to ethics, from simple “pragmatism to speculation.” As students move through the different patterns of thinking, they form large conceptual foundations of subject matter.</p>
<b>Complexity</b>	
<p>Differentiation using “complexity” involves moving students beyond a surface level understanding, from an analysis of what is intended to what is inferential. Complex thinking requires students to view the implications of something NOW and something OVER TIME -- to see its connections and applications across the spectrum in a fluid rather than a static orientation.</p>	<p>Differentiating the complexity of the core curriculum can be accomplished by extending the content to the study of issues, problems, and themes. Complexity involves making relationships between and among ideas, connecting to other concepts, and bridges to other disciplines. Key words of complexity consist of: overtime, multiple perspectives, and interdisciplinarity.</p> <p>The teacher’s challenge in differentiating the complexity of a task or subject matter is to assist the student in seeing the myriad of facets that the topic consists of: to see associations among diverse subjects, to find multiple solutions to the problem, and to analyze or evaluate those solutions from multiple points of view (CAG, 2005).</p>

## Novelty

Providing advanced learning with differentiation through novelty depends upon the students' perceptions and responses. Novelty means that teachers can stimulate students in the following ways: (a) the use of critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving skills, (b) encouraging students to seek original interpretations of existing information, and (c) encouraging the development of aptitude or interest-based learning experiences. Independent Study projects are another example of how novelty can be used in the classroom.

According to CAG (California Association for Gifted-2005), novelty complements depth and complexity by providing inquiry and exploration into seemingly disparate and incongruent topics that lead students to create new, original, and/or reorganized knowledge structures. Key words of novelty include: irony, paradox, complexity, content imperatives and independent study.

*(Definitions adapted from Dr. Jessica Manzone USC)*

### What is Differentiation and how do we do it?

The form and appropriateness of differentiation is determined by teachers and administrators, with consideration of parent input.

#### Differentiation is...

- Students and teachers collaborating in learning
- Respecting prior knowledge and readiness levels of students
- Considering students' needs and abilities when planning
- Assessing prior to, during, and after a unit of study
- Assessing students in multiple ways
- Allowing for choice in the demonstration of knowledge
- Incorporating critical thinking skills
- Having high expectations for all students
- Using time flexibly, based on student need
- Working with students to establish whole class and individual learning goals

#### Differentiation is not...

- Assigning more work to students who finish early
- Asking students to teach material they have mastered to others
- Giving every student an individual assignment
- Finding a student's deficit and then having the student practice that skill indefinitely
- Only assessing students at the end of learning to see "who got it"

## Differentiation

Teachers differentiate curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of Advanced Learners. Strategies used for differentiation include, but are not limited to

Focus on models of instruction	Learning centers
Socratic Seminar	Advanced reading strategies
Hilda Taba teaching strategies	Think Like a Disciplinarian
Curriculum compacting	Independent study/research
Tiered assignments	Flexible skills groupings
Mentorships/apprenticeships	Student-initiated special projects
Modifications in depth of content, process, and/or product in standards based lessons	Iconic Prompts and Content Imperatives to access depth and complexity

Cluster Grouping: Approximately five to seven gifted students with similar areas of giftedness are grouped within a regular classroom setting.

## 4. Social & Emotional Development

All students are supported in their social and emotional needs. SRCS recognizes that advanced learners may experience social and emotional challenges related to their unique talents and needs.

Staff in-service trainings inform teachers and administrators of the specific issues faced by these students. In this way, staff is able to watch for difficulties that may emerge for individual students and to refer them for counseling when additional support is warranted. Counseling services are available at each school site, as needed, for every student.

In addition, teachers are trained to develop appropriate strategies for assigning group work and individualizing workload. Strategies for dealing with students' issues with peer and family relations, school and homework and ethical behaviors are regularly discussed in collaborative teaching groups.

SRCS works to ensure that parents are provided with resources and parent education opportunities that help develop awareness of the characteristic learning and social /emotional needs of Advanced Learners.

SRCS provides a variety of counseling and special support services. Parents receive general information about these services, and are involved directly when their student requires assistance.

Some Advanced Learners may also struggle if English is not their primary language or if they have some other learning limitation. SRCS teachers are trained to observe for underachievement that may be the result of language barriers or learning disabilities. When instances of underachievement emerge, teachers and administrators work with parents to differentiate the educational program so that students can access curriculum at an appropriate level. This may require implementation of remedial interventions or classroom accommodations.

At-risk Advanced Learners are not excluded from the Advanced Learner Program. Teachers and parents are provided information about appropriate intervention strategies. The program is adjusted to meet individual student needs.

### Ongoing Actions to Support Affective Needs of Advanced Learners

- Information regarding the social-emotional needs of gifted students is disseminated through brochures, professional development activities, and District Advanced Learner Advisory Committee meetings.
- The district website provides Advanced Learner information to staff, parents and the community.
- Awareness of career opportunities and guidance regarding college and vocational possibilities is offered to Advanced Learners, including underachieving Advanced Learners.
- At risk Advanced Learners are monitored and supported.
- Psychologists and counselors are able to recognize and support at-risk Advanced Learners' social-emotional needs.
- Professional development is provided for all staff to recognize symptoms of at-risk behaviors in Advanced Learners, in order to appropriately refer students for interventions.
- At-risk Advanced Learners are referred to the site Student Study Team (SST) to determine appropriate interventions. Parents are an integral part of this process.

## 5. Professional Development

Professional development must be ongoing and on varied levels to meet the needs of all teachers. District-wide professional development is constructed with the intent of meeting the needs of all students, including those who are identified as Advanced Learners. As the District plans professional development, a key area of focus is differentiated instruction at all levels.

Teachers of advanced learners are provided professional development opportunities in order to ensure students have access to a high quality instructional program. Administrators, counselors, psychologists, support staff, School Board members, and parents/community members are also encouraged to attend professional development opportunities.

Professional development in the following areas is provided to teachers in order to meet the needs of Advanced Learners:

- The components of the Advanced Learner Plan
- The referral and identification process
- Depth of complexity
- Differentiated instruction
- Strategies of instruction
- Independent study/Project-based studies
- Recognizing and supporting at-risk Advanced Learners
- Concept based curriculum

The intent is to provide teachers with exposure to programs and instructional strategies that will serve the wide range of students we have in the District, including the Advanced Learners. While District-wide professional development is the primary manner in which teachers are trained in strategies for differentiation, teachers also have opportunities to attend workshops that occur outside the District as appropriate topics related to gifted education arise.

Teachers are encouraged to pursue Advanced Learner certification through accredited entities. The District Advanced Learner Teacher On Special Assignment (TOSA) and site administrators are provided opportunities to gain expertise in gifted education in order to carry out the duties of this position.

In addition to the site and district offered Advanced Learner professional development, staff members may be provided with opportunities to attend professional development activities outside the district.

<b>Advanced Learner Professional Development Opportunities-Outside the District</b>	
Offered By	Topics May Include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sonoma County Office of Education</li> <li>• California Association for the Gifted (CAG)</li> <li>• Sonoma State University</li> <li>• Other Local Universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characteristics of the gifted child</li> <li>• importance of differentiated instruction strategies</li> <li>• types of differentiation</li> <li>• the identification process</li> <li>• social and emotional needs</li> <li>• recognizing at-risk Advanced Learners</li> <li>• professional scholarliness for staff and students best practices and current research</li> </ul>

## **6. Parent and Community Involvement**

### **Parent and Community Referrals**

In addition to identification based on the criteria above, teachers, district staff and parents can refer individual students in grades 3 through 12 to ALPS at any time by filling out the District ALPS referral form. Forms should be given to the Site ALPS Lead Teacher of the principal. Eligibility determinations are made within 30 school days after the Site ALPS Lead Teacher receives the parent referral.

Parents wishing to appeal their student's ALPS eligibility determination may complete an appeal form in writing and submit it to the Site ALPS Lead Teacher. At schools, where the Site ALPS Lead Teacher is not the principal, the appeal is shared with the principal. The parent is provided an opportunity to meet with the Site ALPS Lead Teacher, principal, and a teacher who knows the student. If the concerns cannot be resolved at that meeting, then the parent may contact the District ALPS TOSA to discuss the issue further. The decision made by the District ALPS TOSA will be final.

The District's program serves Advanced Learners who are talented in traditional academic areas as well as creative ability, leadership, and visual and performing arts. At the elementary level, programming primarily consists of in-class differentiation and enrichment activities. Elementary Advanced Learners may also benefit from site librarians steering them to the rich selections of literature at each site. Students also have access to technology and support from teachers to use technology for learning. Furthermore, classroom teachers are supported by ALPS leads and the ALPS TOSA in order to effectively differentiate instruction/curriculum for Advanced Learners.

### **Advisory Council**

ALPS Advisory Council is made up of educators, parents and community members. The council meets regularly to address philosophical and program design topics. Meetings are facilitated by the District ALPS Teacher on Special Assignment. Each school year, it is anticipated that at least three (3) meetings will be held.

In addition, the District will provide 2 parent information nights. Information Nights will be organized by the District ALPS Teacher on Special Assignment.

In an effort to see that all constituents are represented, the District publicizes ALPS Advisory Council meetings in site newsletters and specifically invites parents of gifted students with special education needs or English language development needs to attend.

## **7. Program Assessment**

ALPS program evaluation is carried out at both the site and District levels on an annual basis, and used to study program effectiveness. Evaluation results are used to improve services for Advanced Learners.

Program evaluation will be conducted by the District ALPS TOSA working with site ALPS Leads. Disaggregated data from SBAC testing, District performance assessments, and parent/teacher/administrator surveys will be used in this process.

The District's assessment of ALPS will be shared with the Board of Education and the ALPS Advisory Council. Based upon program evaluation, identified strengths and weaknesses in the program will be reviewed and considered in order to maintain and continually improve the program's quality.

## **8. Budget**

The District will allocate LCAP funds to support Advanced Learner Programs & Services. The amount of the allocation by the board will be used to support professional development, direct student support services, and conduct district-wide coordination and student identification efforts.

These funds supplement District activities pertaining to Advanced Learners. Using a combination of Advanced Learner funds and District general fund dollars, the District employs a District ALPS TOSA. The District's allocation from Advanced Learner funds for a TOSA is commensurate with its size and the program philosophy which maximizes the use of existing resources.

A significant portion of the Advanced Learner funds will be annually expended in order to support the development and delivery of professional development opportunities for teachers.

The District strives to expend all Advanced Learner monies annually in order to maximize fiscal support of the program. Resources that support Advanced Learners are maximized by accessing opportunities that may be funded from other sources.