

## **Historical Perspective**

Gifted and Talented Programs in Fairfax County Public Schools evolved over time in response to internal forces (i.e., the needs of students who require educational challenges above and beyond those provided in the general education classroom) as well as external forces, (i.e., state mandates and annual reports). The following timeline highlights the critical points in this evolution from a single program to a continuum of services.

### **1964, GT Center Program Started**

The FCPS GT center program began in 1964 in response to parental concerns that the needs of highly gifted students were not being met in the general education program. Parent advocacy for a GT center program was the catalyst that led FCPS to create this educational option.

### **1974, GT School-Based Program Started**

The GT school-based program started in 1974 in response to the realization that not all GT students are advanced in all subject areas and some students need challenge in one or more areas of academic strength.

### **1964-1993, Selection Criteria**

From 1964 - 1993, the only information used to determine who was eligible for GT programs was a student's score on a group ability test and/or an individual intelligence test. These were provided either by the school system or a private psychologist. Students who scored 140 and above were offered GT center placement. Students who scored 130 and above were offered the school-based gifted program.

### **1993, Screening Committees Formed**

In 1993, the county identification program changed from a single test score to a review of multiple criteria that make up a student's screening file. Local and central screening and selections committees were formed to review the data and make decisions based on information from multiple sources. These include ability test scores such as the Cognitive Abilities Test and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, achievement test scores such as the State Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, a score on a Gifted Behavior Rating Scale (GBRS) that is completed by classroom teachers and other teachers who work with a child, and student progress reports. In addition, student work samples, a parent/guardian questionnaire, and student awards may also be added. The change from a single test score, to a holistic case study approach that requires a review of

multiple sources of information allows FCPS to identify a broader range of gifted students. It also led the district to create a continuum of gifted services that moves beyond the notion of giftedness as a static trait and supports the notion of giftedness as dynamic, evolving potential that has no limits.

### **2003, Continuum of Gifted Services Created**

In 2003, Fairfax County Public Schools created a continuum of gifted services that provides all learners with multiple opportunities to engage in complex subject matter and helps prepare them for more challenging and rigorous classes as they advance in grade level. The county has four levels of gifted service and the focus is on labeling the services and not the children. Teachers, administrators, and specialists work together to make decisions that will provide the level of service that is most appropriate for each learner, knowing that many will move to another level when they are ready.

Because gifted programs are an important gateway for participation in challenging courses in high school and higher education, the school district is committed to providing access to these advanced learning opportunities to every student who has the potential to succeed. Working together, we can ensure that every child receives a level of gifted service that will keep them challenged, engaged, and excited about learning.

Carol V. Horn, Ed.D.

Coordinator, Gifted and Talented Programs

Fairfax County Public Schools

Carol.Horn@fcps.edu