

**SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Curriculum and Instruction Division**

**GATE Seminar Staff Recommendations
August 7, 2007**

On May 8, 2007, the 2006-2007 GATE Seminar Task Force presented a report to the Board of Education with recommendations for the District's GATE Seminar Program.

A District work group, composed of central office staff and site principals (see Attachment A), carefully reviewed the Task Force report (see Attachment B), analyzed pertinent District data, and developed staff recommendations. The work group met on a regular basis over a four-month period (April 13th, May 4th, May 11th, June 14th and July 13th).

This report brings forward a discussion of the work group's undertaking and a set of staff recommendations in response to the Task Force report.

Guiding Principles

The work group agreed upon the following guiding principles:

- Access – Every student who qualifies for the Seminar program should be able to participate in a high-quality Seminar program.
- Equity – The program should be distributed equitably across the district and should reflect, to the extent possible, the ethnic distribution of the student body as a whole.
- Fiduciary Responsibility – The district ought to fully fund the program while living within its means.

The recommendations in this report reflect each of these principles.

Program Background

The SDUSD GATE Seminar Program currently includes 52 schools, geographically distributed throughout the district, serving ~~2,294~~ ~~3,918~~ Seminar identified students. Twenty-one Seminar schools are at the elementary level (K-6); sixteen are at the middle school level (6); and thirteen are at the high school level (9-12). Seminar identification is typically defined as students scoring in the 99.9th percentile on the Raven's Progressive Matrices. These students are categorized as "highly gifted." Seminar students are also defined as those with extremely high tested ability but low academic achievement in school not due to a learning disability. Seminar classrooms are intended to serve students who require challenging curricular activities beyond that of their age-level peers.

Key Concerns

After a thorough review of both the GATE Seminar Task Force report and district data, the work group surfaced a set of key concerns related to access, equity, and fiduciary responsibility:

- Currently, not every Cluster offers Seminar at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. For example, there is no elementary Seminar program in the Clairemont Cluster, there is no elementary, middle, or high school program in the Lincoln cluster, and there are no high school programs at Kearny Complex or Hoover High School.
- Some clusters may be losing their brightest students while other clusters are gaining. For example, the Madison, Morse, Hoover, Kearny, Crawford and San Diego High clusters appear to lose significant numbers of residential Seminar-qualified students. On the other hand, the University City, Serra, Henry and La Jolla clusters gain significant numbers of Seminar-qualified students who do not live in their residential areas.
- There is currently an under-representation of African-American and Latino students in the Seminar program and an over-representation of Asian and White students.
- In 06-07, the district spent an additional \$2.34 million beyond the state allocation for Gifted and Talented (about \$1 million) to fund 20:1 class size. This encroachment is funded by TIIG dollars. The *total* TIIG allocation to GATE is \$7.9 million.

Recommendations

In order to address these concerns, along with those raised in the Seminar Task Force Report, the staff would like to make the following five recommendations.

- 1) Guarantee a vertical seminar program in every cluster
- 2) Establish a class size ratio of 25:1
- 3) Test all students in 2nd grade (without a permission slip)
- 4) Improve the quality of all Seminar programs
- 5) Conduct an in-depth study

Guarantee A Vertical Seminar Program In Every Cluster

It is critical that every geographic cluster of schools has at least one Seminar program at the elementary, middle and high school levels. This will ensure that every student who qualifies for Seminar has the opportunity to attend a Seminar program in his or her residential area.

By establishing a quality Seminar program in every cluster, school choice for Seminar students can be limited to Seminar schools within a student's cluster. The program application process can also be eliminated. When a student is identified as Seminar, s/he should immediately be offered admission into a program within the residential cluster, without any additional criteria. The 3rd grade class for 2007-2008 will be the first consecutive group of children who will not be

required to fill out a program application form and who will remain in their resident cluster of schools.

Establish A Class Size Ratio Of 25:1

The district will be able to provide access to the Seminar program for all qualified students in all residential areas by increasing class size to a maximum of 25:1. In addition, staff recommends that the school district conduct an annual review of CPU allocations (rather than a review every three years), allowing for programs to increase or decrease based on annual enrollment numbers and eliminating the need for sites to self-fund programs.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A 25:1 CLASS SIZE WILL RESULT IN AN APPROXIMATE SAVINGS OF \$490,000. THE PROJECTED SAVINGS IS BASED ON CURRENT SEMINAR STUDENT ENROLLMENT FOR THE 2007-2008 SCHOOL YEAR. FOR SCHOOLS THAT HAVE NOT YET COMPLETED THEIR MASTER SCHEDULES, STAFF USED ENROLLMENT FIGURES FROM 2006-2007. TO CALCULATE THE APPROXIMATE COSTS FOR NEW SEMINAR PROGRAMS, STAFF USED A MINIMUM ALLOCATION AMOUNT (1 CPU AT ELEMENTARY, .6 CPU AT MIDDLE, and .4 CPU AT HIGH SCHOOL). IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THESE FIGURES ARE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGE BASED ON THE SEPTEMBER 28TH ENROLLMENT COUNT. ~~the additional cost of fully funding Seminar across the district would amount to approximately \$300,000 \$735,000. This projected cost is higher than the estimate presented at the Board workshop in July because the previous dollar amount was based on student enrollment as of May 1st. At that time, some schools had not completed their master schedules and had not enrolled all of their students. This revised cost estimate is based on projected enrollment as of August 1st and therefore is higher.~~

Class Size Guidelines

A minimum of 15 students would be required to establish a Seminar program at a school. For existing programs, the District will "round up" for every ten students. For example, for an enrollment of 35 students in a Seminar program at an elementary school, the school would be allocated two CPUs.

Expansion of Status Quo Seminar Ratio

It is important to note that if the district were to implement the Task Force recommendations for adding CPU at a 20:1 ratio, it would cost an additional \$1.7 million.

The combined cost of the Task Force recommendations and the implementation of a vertical Seminar program in every cluster would amount to a total increase of approximately **\$1.96** ~~\$2.2~~ **\$2.65** million.

Test All Students In 2nd Grade

Currently, parents are required to sign permission slips in order for testing to occur. Staff recommends that parents be sent an “opt out” form instead, which will ensure that more students are tested, and in turn, identified. The retesting criteria proposed by the Seminar Task Force should also be used.

Improve The Quality Of Seminar Programs

Uniformly rigorous instruction and curriculum for Seminar programs will be met in the following ways, commencing in the 2007-2008 academic year:

- A minimum of two district-wide Seminar teacher meetings will be facilitated by GATE Department staff on an annual basis with emphasis on curriculum differentiation strategies particular to highly gifted students and social-emotional needs.
- Sessions will be offered at principal professional development conferences by GATE Department staff with an emphasis on curriculum differentiation strategies for highly gifted students as well as a review of Seminar teacher qualifications and program requirements.
- GATE Department staff will provide an annual in-service(s) related to the characteristics of gifted children and their social-emotional needs to school counselors and special education psychologists.
- In the 2006-2007 academic year, the SDUSD GATE department, in conjunction with San Diego State University, offered a new component to the SDUSD GATE certification program, titled “Curriculum Differentiation Part II.” The focus of this module is to train teachers in instruction strategies specific to highly gifted students, which will allow them to present curriculum with appropriate levels of depth and complexity beyond that provided to GATE Cluster students. This module was offered to veteran SDUSD Seminar teachers free of charge in addition to the certification candidates in 2006-2007. The module was held on three consecutive Saturdays, and was well-attended by veteran Seminar teachers. It is the intent of the GATE department to maintain this class/module annually and to continue to encourage veteran Seminar teachers to attend, free of charge, in future academic years.

In order to improve communications within the GATE community, the GATE Department will:

- Frequently update the GATE department website as a communications tool for Seminar parents and students.
- Disseminate ideas for more frequent communications to parents of students with dual exceptionalities and/or limited English proficiency at GATE Team Leader meetings, Seminar Teacher meetings and principal professional development sessions.
- Continue to work in conjunction with the Office of Parent, Student and Community Engagement to provide parents in each high school feeder pattern of underrepresented GATE student populations with informative evening sessions which will focus on the

GATE identification process and program options for GATE and high achieving students that promote a college-going culture.

Conduct In-Depth Student Study

Staff recommends that the GATE department lead a year-long evaluative study during the 2007-2008 school year. Some possible questions to explore are:

- What kind of “giftedness” is Seminar designed to serve? How do we know that the program is meeting the needs of this population?
- What kind of “giftedness” is currently being identified? Is the Raven’s Test appropriately identifying students?
- What might we do to better identify gifted students in currently under-represented groups?
- Why aren’t all Seminar-identified students participating in the program?
- How well do Seminar v. non-participating students compare on college readiness indicators?
- What programs exist to address specific giftedness, especially in mathematics? How are math precocious students identified and served?
- Given that gifted students have specific characteristics that require challenging and often self-paced learning environments, how might we address these needs through technology, internships, and dual enrollment programs?

Conclusion

The staff work group believes that the following recommendations, taken together, will serve to improve access, equity, and the overall quality of the Seminar program.

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GATE Seminar Program Workshop Attendees

Delfino Aleman, Area 5 Superintendent

Karen Bachofer, Executive Director, Standards, Assessment and Accountability Division

Carol Barry, Area 1 Superintendent

Edward Caballero, Administrator, Office of the Associate Superintendent, Parent, Student and Community Engagement

Jennifer Cheatham, Executive Director, Curriculum and Instruction

Adalia Lavado, Program Manager, Gifted and Talented Education

Jonathan McDade, Principal, Franklin Elementary School

Bruce McGirr, Principal, Grant K-8

Gamy Rayburn, Budget Operations Director

Sandra Robles, Program Manager, Office of Enrollment Options

Ernest Smith, Principal, University City High School