

**Santa Barbara Secondary School Districts
Gifted and Talented Education**

721 East Cota Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93103
(805) 730-7775 ••• FAX (805) 962-7196
<http://www.sbceo.org/~sbhsgate/>

Robin Sawaske, Associate Superintendent

Sandy Robertson, District GATE Coordinator

February 10, 2010

In response to the many emails and phone calls the GATE Office has received regarding the Draft Proposal for Secondary Honors Coursework, please see the information below. If you have further questions, please contact Sandy Robertson at srobertson@sbsdk12.org.

First, the planning and organization of the Special Board Meeting on the proposed changes to the GATE class labels and implementation of Honors coursework was solely the responsibility of the District Office Administration. The role of the GATE Office has been to provide information regarding GATE qualification criteria and on the characteristics of giftedness, on resources available for students and families, to facilitate communication among parents, teachers, and administration, and to ensure the equitable distribution of funds for GATE/AP classes. Please visit the District website (www.sbsdk12.org) for further information on the Draft Proposal.

Second, this proposed change is a change in nomenclature, not in the rigor or challenge of the classes. It must be emphasized that GATE is not being eliminated. Instruction will remain at the same level of challenge it has been all along. A powerful piece of evidence that the change is appropriate is that, according to each of the high school principals, all of their teachers support this program revision. Teachers who instruct GATE classes also teach Honors or other levels of classes, and they believe that students in Honors classes can achieve and succeed in a heterogeneous class; thus, teachers are prepared to ensure that the level of achievement remains at the same challenging level. Since it has been reported that teachers are supportive and they are the ones who face the students daily, then we can be assured that the level of instruction will remain rigorous.

Additionally, in regards to the name change, it is important to recognize that UCs do not recognize the label GATE, but do recognize Honors. This name change will align Santa Barbara School District with the rest of the state.

It is also important to note that there will be requirements for students to participate in the Honors Coursework: it is not an open-enrollment program. Proposed requirements or prerequisites for placement in Honors include that students meet at least two of the following criteria:

1. GATE identification
2. Grade of at least a 3.0 or above in previous coursework in English Language Arts and/or math
3. California Standards Test (CST) score of 375 or above in ELA and or math (2-3 years of CST scores may be used for evaluation)
4. Teacher recommendation with specific multiple measure if the above criteria is not met

These are the DRAFT proposals, so there will be discussion of all stakeholders, and there may be some modification (for instance, the grade requirement might be discussed and revised). This is why it is important for interested parties to attend the special meetings to address concerns. The first of these meetings will take place after our regularly scheduled District Advisory Council meeting (3:30-4:00) on Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010, at the Santa Barbara High School Cafeteria from 4:00-5:00 p.m. The second meeting for GATE parents, students, and interested staff is

scheduled for Monday, February 22, 2010, at the San Marcos High School Cafeteria from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Because GATE identification is one of the criteria for participation in the proposed Honors Program, our relationship with our feeder school districts will remain the same. We will continue to provide the administration of the Cognitive Abilities Test for the purpose of identification.

Another important research item (as presented by Dr. Davis Hayden, Director of Research and Evaluation) is that the levels of achievement between GATE identified students and other students (non-identified students in GATE classes and students in current Honors classes) is not that far apart as measured by the CST ϕ and the grade point averages of both groups of students. This confirms the teachers support of the plan to blend the two levels of instruction.

To ensure the success of all students participating in the Honors Program, both the District and The GATE Office are committed to providing comprehensive professional development in differentiated instructional strategies for all teachers. Research has demonstrated that there can be 60% positive results for full implementation of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classroom. (Educational Leadership, February 2010, pgs 79-81, or see full article at www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/feb10/vol67).

Finally, and as mentioned above, the role of the GATE Office will remain the same: we will continue to provide services for students, teachers, and families, including the identification of students; communication between and among teachers, parents, and organizations that provide enrichment activities; parent education; the advocacy for and providing of comprehensive professional development opportunities for teachers; fundraising to support both classroom materials and supplies as well as professional growth opportunities for teachers.