

ALPHA

Advanced Learning Program for High Achievers

Spring 2008 Parent Night

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ALPHA MISSION

The mission of ALPHA is to:

- Create an environment which identifies and serves academically exceptional students and
- challenge their intellectual capabilities for lifelong learning while
- fostering their ability to thrive in a global society.

ALPHA Goals

- To provide activities and experiences that enhance and develop higher level thinking skills including problem-solving, inferential reasoning, composition skills, and critical analysis of literature.
- To encourage positive and intellectual risk-taking.
- To expose students to a variety of disciplines through interaction with visiting experts.
- To foster positive interaction among academic peers.
- To provide independent and group learning experiences

What is ALPHA?

ALPHA meets the needs of academically exceptional students whose verbal and quantitative reasoning skills range in the top 1%-2% of students in their age group nationwide.

The program is for students who:

- in the fall, will be entering grades 4,5, and in some districts 6
- qualify on the Johns Hopkins University School and College Ability Test (SCAT)
- meet individual district criteria.

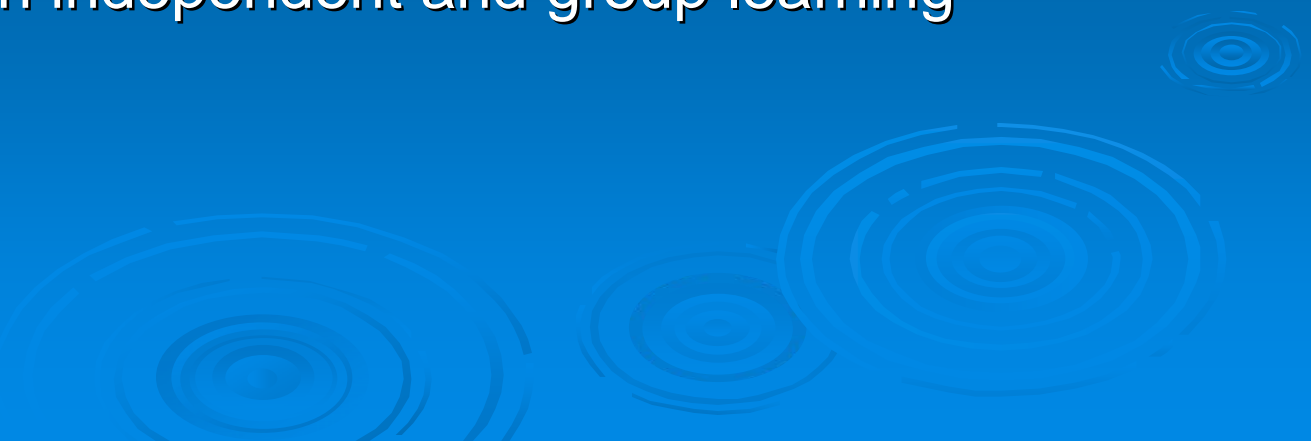
Program Focus

- Offers an interdisciplinary approach to instruction
- Aligns a thematic approach with the NYS Learning Standards
- Provides differentiated learning opportunities to match students' abilities

Program Design

- Class instruction 1/2 day per week
- Class time approx. 2.5 hours
- Classes in home school, district or near-by district

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 - problem-solving
 - inferential reasoning
 - composition skills
 - critical analysis of literature.
 - To encourage intellectual risk-taking.
 - To foster positive interaction among academic peers.
 - To provide both independent and group learning experiences.
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Instructional Design Features

- Balance of individual and small group activities and projects
- Challenging hands-on and interactive activities
- Visiting speakers throughout the year to connect curriculum to real-life.

Instructional Design Features

(continued)

Sample Curriculum Units

(integrated throughout the whole year)

- Literature
- Mathematics
- Debate/Argument & Persuasion
- Engineering is Elementary
- Wordly Wise, American Sign Language,
- Project AIMS

Instructional Features (continued)

Literature

The Wright 3 by Blue Balliet

Students will:

- Critically question and analyze literary elements in literature circle format
- Utilize higher order thinking and problem solving skills for decoding hidden messages
- Enlarge their understanding by means of Socratic questioning using the Socratic Seminar approach
- Research the life history and accomplishments of Frank Lloyd Wright and his architectural style

Instructional Features (continued)

Mathematics/Project AIMS

Students will:

- Focus on patterns, algorithms, and strategies
- Observe sequencing in nature; flowers, pinecones, leaves
- Participate in activities which integrate Math and Science such as symmetry through use of mirrors, polygons in natural objects

Instructional Features (continued)

Debate/Argument & Persuasion

Students will:

- Learn the proper format of a debate
- Participate in argument using utilizing the proposition/resolution
- Evaluate peers using a debate rubric
- Debate topics will vary, some examples...fast food favorites, school uniforms, non graded curriculum...

Instructional Features (continued)

Engineering is Elementary

Students will:

- Increase their technological literacy by acquiring essential understandings and skills
- Engage in hands on, real world engineering experiences; bridge building, designing houses, and learn how society influences and is influenced by engineering

Instructional Features (continued)

Wordly Wise

Students will:

- Strengthen word knowledge
- Acquire strategies to understand word relationships
- Utilize critical thinking through work with synonyms, antonyms, analogies, puzzles ,and word origins

Instructional Features (continued)

American Sign language

Students will:

- Learn the sign language alphabet
- Utilize acquired knowledge to communicate with their peers
- Understand the importance of tolerance and acceptance of others

Instructional Features (continued)

Performance Portfolio

- This type of authentic assessment is designed to track student progress and growth over the academic year.
- It will contain both process and final work from various class projects and assignments as well as student self-assessments.

Instructional Features (continued)

Performance Portfolio (continued)

specific requirements for each unit may include some of the following examples:

- Literature: literature circle log entries, invented code and two letters written in code with translation, article/feature for class newspaper, questions in Socratic Seminars
- Debate: planning and presentation sheets for 1 formal in class debate
- Mathematics: project AIMS, patterns in nature observation and exploration data, completed rules and sketches for Math Game
- Engineering is Elementary: all completed studies
- Reflections: two students, one parent

Instructional Features (continued)

Students will complete two formal portfolio self-assessments during the year.

- The first will focus on an initial analysis of their work
- The second will focus on analysis of creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking of selected works. (parental response section is also included)

ALPHA Student Code of Conduct

Students are expected to behave responsibly and respectfully to each other and to all staff.

Appropriate student behavior is...


- Practicing good listening and speaking habits
- Following the rules and directions of the teacher and other adults who are in charge without arguing
- Respecting the rights and feelings of others, both adults and children, by being polite and by keeping hands to oneself
- Taking care not to damage or destroy school property
- Staying in the classroom until excused or dismissed
- Taking responsibility for his or her own belongings
- Listening to directions and obeying adults who are supervising while riding on the bus and during lunch and recess

Assessment

The purpose of assessing student work is to provide feedback to the students in order to help them grow academically.

- Rubrics will be used and created by both the students and the teacher.

Evaluation

- Student Performance
 - December, March and June evaluations
 - Portfolio reflection by students
 - parent comments
 - Student and parent surveys
 - Continuous feedback in class by teacher and peers
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Student Work Showcased

- ALPHA newsletters

Bi-monthly newsletter to inform parents of work we have completed and upcoming events

- Evening Presentation; Student Showcase

Communication

- Newsletters; available on-line and sent home via your child
- telephone communication (voice mail)
- e-mail
- e-mail (one-way) news items (sign-up)
- if needed we can set up a meeting time
- ALPHA website:

<http://www.bocesinstructionalresources.org/alpha/mainpage.html>

FAQ's

How do students handle the missed work from their general education classrooms?

Students will meet with the teacher to discuss class assignments and how they should be completed.

Will my child have homework from ALPHA?

Most of the time - but no more than 10-30 min. per week.

FAQ's

Can my child bring a snack to class?

YES! Grumbling stomachs distract our focus. Food fuels the brain, so snacking is encouraged!

Since ALPHA is during my child's lunch time, will they get to eat?

Yes - many students will bring their lunch to the classroom and eat it there.

FAQ's

What if my child doesn't like the program?

There is a 3 week trial period for every student. A student may drop the program before the end of the first three classes without any cost to the district. (let us know!)

FAQ's

Who do I contact with questions?

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