HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Phase IV School Design Specifications
Renzulli Academy
(piloted at Simpson Waverly in August 2009)

Overview of School Model

Description of school type, accreditation and affiliation model

The Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli Gifted and Talented Academy is a school designed for students in grades K-12 who have a passion for learning and are capable of gifted performance in school. Students are academically talented, task-committed, and curious. They are original thinkers who are open to discovering their gifts in a creative educational setting. Renzulli Academy students are characterized by intrinsic motivation, creativity and high aptitude.

The Renzulli Academy offers high quality and distinctive programs specific to those needed to accommodate Hartford's identified gifted and talented youth. The Academy utilizes the SEM model, the SEM model is not intended to replace or minimize existing services to high achieving students. Rather, its purpose is to integrate these services into "a-rising-tide-lifts-all-ships" approach to school improvement. The SEM provides enriched learning experiences and higher standards for all children through three goals: developing talents in all children, providing a broad range of advanced level enrichment experiences for all students, and providing follow-up advanced learning for children based on interests. The SEM emphasizes engagement and the use of enjoyable and challenging learning experiences constructed around students' interests, learning styles, and product styles.

The State of Connecticut mandates that districts identify gifted and talented learners. Hartford Public Schools has taken this mandate to the next level and is providing services in a full day model that offers rigorous, accelerated and unique curriculum to gifted learners. Gifted behavior consists of behaviors that reflect an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits – above average ability, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Students who manifest or are capable of developing an interaction among the three clusters require a wide variety of educational opportunities and services that are not ordinarily provided through regular instructional programs; it is this that the Academy provides.

The Renzulli Academy will be located at Mt. Laurel School's Annex. The goal for the school is to service grade K-12 students. It will follow a growth plan for the next several years until maximum capacity of the proposed 572 students in grades K-12 is reached. The Renzulli Academy has been running a pilot program at Simpson Waverly. The pilot started with grades 4-6 in 2009 and has grown to grades 4-7 in 2010.

The pilot has evidenced promising results. One example is the student growth experienced with the advanced curriculum in the 6th Grade Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) results from the Spring of 2010. Researchers and practitioners define ORF as the reader's mastery of three observable behaviors: automatic processing or decoding of words, accuracy in decoding, and prosody. Using Hasbrouck & Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Data, which is nationally normed, by the end of the year 80% of 6th graders at the Academy read with an oral reading fluency at 90% or higher. At the state level, two sixth grade students were also recognized for their inventions at the State Connecticut Invention Convention. The most impressive accomplishment was on the 2010 Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) where 89% of Renzulli Academy students scored at goal or mastery.

The Academy was started with support from Dr. Joseph Renzulli and Dr. Sally Reis. Joseph Renzulli is a professor of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut, where he also serves as director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Dr. Renzulli was designated a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor at the University of Connecticut in 2000. Sally M. Reis is a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor at the University of Connecticut and the past Department Head of Educational Psychology Department at the University of Connecticut where she also serves as a Principal Investigator for the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. Dr. Sally Reis serves on several editorial boards, including the Gifted Child Quarterly, and is a past President of the National Association for Gifted Children. She was recently honored with the highest award in her field as the Distinguished Scholar of the National Association for Gifted Children and named a fellow of the American Psychological Association.

The long term vision for this Academy involves growing to a K-12 school with a student body population of 572 students. The K-3 Academy will focus on enrichment. Grades 4-12 will focus on academic opportunities for identified gifted and talented students. The school hopes to offer a pathway for our identified gifted and talented students into high schools that best meet their needs through pre-AP classes, AP classes, honor level classes and early college options.

When Crandall Innovation Schools are available to all districts, The Renzulli Academy will apply for participation. This opportunity allows suburban students to enroll through regional competition in Hartford-based Crandall Schools, a long term proposal that will support the Sheff vs. O'Neil settlement.

Theme/Content Focus

Features of the Renzulli Academy:

- Schoolwide Enrichment Model
- Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Reading
- M3 – Mentoring Mathematical Minds Curriculum
- Pre-Algebra and Algebra
- Inquiry Based Science
- Project Based Social Studies
- Service Learning
- Independent Study
- Rosetta Stone Foreign Language
- Renzulli Learning

Major Partners

Connecticut Association of the Gifted
University of Connecticut
Connecticut Invention Convention
CT-Public Television

Research Basis

Studies on the SEM have demonstrated its effectiveness in schools with widely differing socioeconomic levels and program organization patterns (Olenchak, 1988; Olenchak & Renzulli, 1989). The SEM has been adopted in over 2,500 schools across the country (Burns, 1998), and programs using this approach have been widely implemented internationally.

Research on the SEM suggests that the model is effective at serving high-ability students in a variety of educational settings and in schools serving diverse ethnic and socioeconomic populations. These studies also suggest that the pedagogy of the SEM can be applied to various content areas resulting in higher achievement when implemented in a wide variety of settings. The model is effective with diverse populations of students, including high ability students with learning disabilities and those who underachieve.

Studies on Curriculum Compacting and Differentiated Instruction

Specific studies that investigated achievement include a study on curriculum compacting that found that when teachers eliminated as much as 50% of the regular curriculum for gifted students, they scored as well or better in the out-of-level post achievement tests, using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills than those students whose curriculum was not compacted. Students whose curriculum was compacted in mathematics scored significantly higher in the math concepts Iowa subtest than did control group students whose curriculum was not compacted.

Studies on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Reading (SEM-R)

In another recent study, the Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Reading (SEM-R) and (Reis, et al., 2005; Reis & Fogarty, 2006) was used to investigate the effects of an enrichment approach to reading on elementary school students' reading achievement and attitudes toward reading. The SEM-R provides enriched reading experiences by exposing students to books in their areas of interest, daily supported independent reading of challenging self-selected books using differentiated reading instruction, and interest-based choice opportunities in reading. Researchers found that when they eliminated 5 hours of regular grouped reading instruction and replaced it with short conferences and enriched reading based on interests, significant differences were found, favoring the SEM-R group, in reading fluency and attitudes toward reading.

In a second related study on the SEM-R (Reis, McCoach, Coyne, Schreiber, Eckert, Gubbins, 2007) a randomized design investigated the effects of this enriched reading program on urban elementary students' reading comprehension, reading fluency, and attitude toward reading. All students participated in the direct instructional approach, Success for All (SFA), for 90 minutes each morning. In an attempt to increase reading scores, a daily one-hour afternoon remedial literacy program was implemented each afternoon using workbooks and test preparation instruction instead of teaching social studies and science. In this study teachers were randomly assigned to teach the treatment or control groups, and students were randomly assigned to either participate in the SEM-R treatment group or continue in the control group to receive remedial reading instruction and test preparation for 12 weeks during an afternoon literacy block. Results indicate that students in the SEM-R treatment group scored statistically significantly higher than those in the control group in both oral reading fluency and attitudes toward reading.

Studies on Underachievement and Social Emotional Development

Baum, Renzulli, and Hébert (1999) conducted research with teachers who guided 17 gifted underachieving students (ages 8-13) in the completion of Type III self-selected products based on their interests as part of the SEM. Positive gains were made by 82% of the students who were no longer underachieving in their school setting at the end of the intervention.

Studies on Using Gifted Education Pedagogy to Nurture Mathematical Talent
In a recent study (Gavin, Casa, & Adelson, 2006; Gavin & Adelson, 2008; Gavin, et al., 2007), math achievement was investigated using Project M^3: Mentoring Mathematical Minds curriculum units. These units were created specifically to provide high-end learning with challenging and motivational investigations for talented math students in grades 3, 4, and 5. Researchers found that two cohorts of students made consistently significant gains on achievement in math concepts, computation, and problem solving on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills each year over a 3-year period. Both cohorts of students using the curriculum also outperformed a comparison group of students of like ability from the same schools. There also were highly significant gains on challenging open-ended problems adapted from international and national assessments in favor of students using the Project M^3 curriculum over the comparison group.

Studies on Renzulli Learning
Eleck (2006) studied students in enrichment and regular classrooms who used Renzulli Learning, finding that students could use the program with minimal training. Almost 50% of students had ideas for completing products using Renzulli Learning, and 80% enjoyed using Renzulli Learning completely or very much. Eleck (2007) subsequently conducted intensive case studies of six, fifth grade students who developed mathematics enrichment projects using Renzulli Learning. Findings suggest that RL assists students in developing project ideas, exploring topics, and organizing information for a final product. Students who used RL created amazing presentations using PowerPoint or iMovie to convey the information they learned through the development of mathematics enrichment projects with RL.

Field (2007) used quantitative research procedures in this empirical study to investigate the use of Renzulli Learning on oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, science achievement, and social studies achievement. Students were involved in the study from two schools, an urban middle school where nearly half of all students are considered to be at risk due to poverty or other factors, and a suburban elementary school in a middle class neighborhood. Classes of students in grades 3-5 (n=185) and grades 6-8 (n=198) were randomly assigned to use Renzulli Learning for 2-3 hours each week for a 16-week period. Scores of students in the treatment groups were compared to those of students who did not have the opportunity to use Renzulli Learning in control classes in the same schools. After only 16 weeks, students who participated in Renzulli Learning demonstrated significantly higher growth in reading comprehension, oral reading fluency, and social studies achievement than students who did not participate in Renzulli Learning.

Conclusion of Research
This collected body of research suggests that the SEM and related extensions of gifted education pedagogy can be used to increase engagement and enjoyment of learning, as well as to extend interest and enrichment-based learning opportunities to more students. It also suggests that when educators use enrichment-based teaching and learning practices, students achieve as well or better than when the focus is on traditional or remedial practices.

Model Sites

- **Bell Academy**, Queens, NY
  - Student demographics: grades 6-8
  - School achievements: NYC Overall Progress Report Score: A
- **The DaVinci Academy of Sciences and Arts**, Ogden, UT
  - Student demographics: grades 7-12
  - High student achievement in a college preparatory, project-based curriculum

School Mission & Vision

Mission (*purpose*)
The mission of *The Renzulli Academy* is to instill in young people a lifelong desire to learn and excel and to develop their intellectual aptitude, motivation, curiosity and commitment to learning by focusing on their strengths and interests.

Vision
The vision of the Renzulli Academy is to enable academically talented and high potential youth in Hartford to achieve at the highest levels of performance, graduate with advanced knowledge base possible, and prepare them for admission to competitive colleges and universities in the world so they will contribute as ethical, productive members of a global society whose talents will make a positive difference in our world.

Student Body

Grade Configuration and School Size

The Renzulli Academy has been on a growth model since opening in 2009. During the 2009-2010 school year grades 4-6 were serviced. Presently, The Dr. Joseph S. Renzulli Gifted and Talented Academy is a grades 4-7 model. For subsequent years, the Academy will continue to expand to a K-12 model. For school year 2011-2012, the Academy will expand to grade 8.

Number of Students Per Grade (2009-2010):

Grade	4	5	6
# of classes	1*22	1*22	1*22

Total number of students: 66 (proposed)

Number of Students Per Grade (2010-2011):

Grade	4	5	6	7
# of classes	1*22	1*22	1*22	1*22

Total number of students: 88 (proposed)

Target Number of Students Per Grade (2011-2012):

Grade	4	5	6	7	8
# of classes	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	1*22

Total number of students: 198 (proposed)

Target Number of Students Per Grade (2012-2013):

Grade	K	4	5	6	7	8	9
# of classes	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22

Total number of students: 308 (proposed)

Target Number of Students Per Grade (2013-2014):

Grade	K	1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
# of classes	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22

Total number of students: 396 (proposed)

Target Number of Students Per Grade (2014-2015):

Grade	K	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
# of classes	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22

Total number of students: 484 (proposed)

Target Number of Students Per Grade (2015-2016):

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
# of classes	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22	2*22

Total number of students: 572 (proposed)

Governance Structure

School Leadership

The Leadership Team will work with the members of the school Governance Council. Leadership teams will include school administrator(s) and content area teachers. The decision-making model will support shared leadership for the school and collective accountability. The leadership team, led by the principal of the school/program, will ensure that staff meets the demands of the gifted and talented learner. This will include building on the strengths and talents of the staff and motivating staff to develop gifted and talented expertise.

The School Leadership Team will include:

- A Principal who has extensive knowledge of Gifted and Talented
- Content area teachers with certification in Gifted and Talented (in accordance with new endorsement legislature 2013)
- Nurse
- Custodian
- Food Services
- Specials (PE, Art, Music, Art & Tech)
- Guidance Counselor (with Gifted and Talented knowledge and advisory skill experience)

School Governance Council

School Governance Council will be established according to Board policy. Membership on this council will include a partner(s) and higher education partner as well as educators with expertise in curriculum development, teaching, administration, and finance. Parent and student representation is essential. The Council's primary role will be to provide guidance in the accomplishment of the school's stated vision, monitoring of the School Accountability Plan and annual approval of the school budget.

Parent Leadership Team (PLT)

As partners in education, parents will be active participants and valued partners in gifted education. They will be expected to attend and participate in PLT meetings or activities and serve as PLT leaders and/or members. In addition, all parents will have opportunities to participate in the school science fair, math night, family literacy nights, fundraising opportunities, hobby fairs, art and engineering exhibits and various extended day options. Parents will also have workshops and other opportunities to develop their background in Gifted and Talented. Parents will be expected to attend an orientation to understand their role within the Academy.

Student Leadership

Students will participate in Student Government. Each grade level will have two representatives who will make recommendations to the governance team on behalf of the student body. In addition, teacher-recommended students to hold positions on Leadership Teams.

Curriculum and Instruction

Pedagogical Approach and Classroom Design

Strategies used to support gifted education at the Renzulli Academy fall into four categories:

A. Procedures that help teachers identify students' unique interests, achievements, strengths, talents, and learning preferences.
    - Renzulli and Reis Talent Pool Identification Model
B. Strategies for enhancing and improving the quality of our curriculum units
    - Use of curriculum that was specifically designed for the gifted and talented learner such as SEM-R and M3.
C. Techniques for differentiating assignments, resources, teaching, and learning activities for students with varying levels of prior knowledge, distinct learning styles, interests or cognitive ability
    - Independent Study, service learning and differentiation.
D. Tactics for addressing talent development through the use of interest-based enrichment activities.
    - Type 1, 2 and 3 learning activities.

Curriculum Design

Renzulli Academy Teachers will center student learning on strong literacy and writing skills while building students' understanding of rigorous content in all areas. Student centered instruction will be inquiry-based. Students will learn to think and solve problems in real world applications leading to service learning culminating projects. Task commitment and creativity will be engaged across the content areas.

Major focus in curriculum design include:

- The use of curriculum maps for each content area that will provide the scope and focus of instruction.
- Articulated learning outcomes linked to specific state and national standards
- Interdisciplinary units
- Learning goals aligned with the Advanced Placement benchmarks with the goal of adequately preparing students to continue their accelerated and advanced education

Recently, a new on-line version of the SEM called Renzulli Learning (RL) has become available. This model assesses students' interests, learning styles, and product styles and matches them to a unique, individualized database of enrichment activities. RL also offers a Wizard Project Maker to assist students in creating projects and has a series of teacher tools to implement differentiation as well as offer enrichment opportunities to match students' interests, learning styles, and product styles.

Core Literacy Program

Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Reading – SEM-R

The Reading/Language Arts Curriculum uses the Schoolwide Enrichment Model – Reading Framework (SEM-R) that was designed to challenge talented readers. It was developed to increase reading challenge and enjoyment for talented readers and is based on Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model that includes three levels of enrichment: broad exposure to areas in which students might have interests, training in reading strategy instruction, and opportunities to pursue self-selected books of high interest.

Students are exposed to the classics as well as high interest literature across multiple genres They read independently each day in self-selected challenging selections with supported, differentiated reading conferences. They also have time to use advanced reading strategies to pursue individual interests in reading. They complete advanced writing selections on a weekly basis. Based on many years of research, the SEM-R has been proven to be effective at increasing achievement in reading and encouraging talented readers to read more challenging material for longer periods of time.

Core Math Program

Mentoring Mathematical Minds M^3

Students in the Renzulli Academy participate in an advanced mathematics curriculum called Project M3, Mentoring Mathematical Minds. This program is the result of a 5-year collaborative research effort of faculty at the University of Connecticut and other universities in which a team of national experts in the fields of mathematics, mathematics education, and gifted education created 12 curriculum units of advanced mathematics.

Using a project-based approach, Project M3 offers depth and complexity of math concepts taught across grade levels to high-ability students. The program has been field tested over the last several years and includes advanced math curriculum with projects and investigations to foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. For example, in place value, students will move beyond using tens, hundreds, and thousands and take part in a simulated archaeological dig, where they will discover unusual calculations carved into rock. Using creative problem solving skills, students are asked to determine which place value system was used by these people. All Hartford Public schools math standards are integrated and compacted for students as part of this process.

Core Science Program

The science curriculum is based upon challenging standards that employ the scientific method. Students are studying key concepts and principles in science based on grade level standards and then depth and complexity are added to enable students to work actively on science projects by forming a hypotheses and applying the scientific method to project based learning and inquiry experiences in science. The goal each year will be for students to submit a science fair project at the state level. In 2010 The Renzulli Academy had students place at the State Level of the Connecticut Invention Convention.

Core Social Studies Program

History is introduced by adding depth and complexity to the grade level standards and adding project- based learning to enable students to meet educational standards, work on high quality curriculum materials and engage in authentic historical research that teaches students the critical skills they need to be effective citizens in the 21st century. Advanced themes from the National History Day Competition are integrated with standards based instruction. All students are required to complete one historical project of sufficient quality that can be submitted to the regional competition.

Arts Program

Art curriculum will include traditional, technology and design mediums. Students will use technology-based programs to investigate different mediums of art. Traditional art instruction will be blended into the curriculum to ensure a solid understanding of essential art concepts. Units of study will include scientific illustration, modeling, modern and classic elements of design, videography and photography. Career paths and training related to technology and engineering will be included in teaching. In addition, a partnership with The Bushnell will be embedded into the arts curriculum.

Music

Through a partnership with Hartford Symphony Orchestra the music curriculum will include traditional music instruction and technology-based music instruction. Students will work in a computer lab to write, compose, develop and produce a wide variety of music. Student produced music will be shared through electronic and traditional means. Students will also be exposed to different instruments and have the opportunity to participate in a strings program through the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.

English Language Learner Support Approach

English Language Learners will be supported through the implementation of the Sheltered Instruction Approach. Students will be guided to construct meaning by scaffolding the instruction starting at the instructional level of each student. The students will have the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of concepts and skills through different modalities such as:

- Hands on activities

- Group tasks or projects
- Performance-based assessments
- SEM-R and oral fluencies

Intervention Program

Students identified as needing intervention in content areas and will be supported through differentiation and Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI, as a comprehensive program, will be designed for specific student needs. Students requiring reading intervention will be identified by specific criteria based on standardized test scores and formative assessments. Once identified, students will receive reading support through use of the differentiation. Data on student progress will be regularly reviewed and analyzed by the Renzulli Academy staff. Students requiring intervention support must fully participate in their individualized support program to maintain their seat at the school.

Special Education

Students who have identified dual exceptionalities will follow the PPT protocols, and their IEPs will be implemented to meet their needs.

Instructional Technology

Technology will have a dual function at the Renzulli Academy. Technology will support learning in classrooms as a tool for teaching and learning. Technology will also function as a separate subject with specific technology goals established at each grade level. This dual approach supports the understanding that technology offers students access to current and developing information, tools for visualizing and modeling, data collection, data analysis and emerging communication of ideas.

Within each classroom, teachers will use:

- Interactive white boards for classroom instruction and presentations
- One to one laptop computers for research, communication and learning activities
- Online resources for content area reinforcement (specifically Renzulli Learning and Rosetta Stone)
- Kindle digital books and/or iPads to support literacy in grades 6-8
- Digital data collection equipment such as thermometers, probes and microscopes for scientific investigations and inquiry
- Video conferencing and virtual fieldtrips to maximize students' exposure to points of interest
- Virtual learning

Homework Expectations

Homework experiences will support and extend classroom learning. Students will engage in activities and independent practice. Technology will enhance the flow of information between families and the learning community. A computer/web-based program will provide families access to detailed information on assignments and grades.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Design

Assessment Design

Assessment at the Renzulli Academy will includes multiple levels across multiple domains. Traditional, formative, and authentic assessments will be implemented. Learner outcomes at the Renzulli Academy will address student performance at various developmental points as these talented students often learn at different levels. These outcomes provide the basis for creating challenging and authentic learning experiences for setting appropriate expectations and for assessing the extent of learning attained by each student. Assessment must be flexible as some gifted third-grade students will prepare a science project using a scientific process--select a topic of interest, read extensively about the topic, design an experiment to test a question of interest, completing the experiment, and communicating the results through a poster and oral presentation. Other gifted students will conduct independent research using basic statistics, on a topic of interest.

Authentic assessment will also be used with gifted students to measure performance using authentic assessment. While standard assessments may limit a gifted child's demonstration of acquired knowledge, authentic assessment enables a broader sphere of performance in areas such as presentations, speeches, Web page production, inventions, games, and classroom demonstrations may permit a more expansive demonstration of learning. These students also have the opportunities to create projects such as school displays and to enter contests in their areas of interest.

Culminating Independent Study Projects

Culminating independent study projects will be conducted using the Student Product Assessment Form that has been developed to assess gifted students creative projects and products. The Student Product Assessment Form can be used in a variety of ways, but it is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing student creative project work. Individual teachers, resource persons or subject matter specialists can evaluate products independently or collectively as members of a team or individually.

Performance Benchmarks

Every gifted learner needs specific benchmarks and goals for learning accompanied by clear indicators of students' continuous progress in learning. Gifted learners need outcomes that provide clear differentiation of what the students can learn within a given period of time. Since the characteristics of gifted learners imply a capacity to learn basic material much faster than other learners and handle more complex and sophisticated material at an earlier stage of development, appropriate learner outcomes must reflect these distinctions. Current state-developed learner outcomes for all students will be implemented as well well-informed and embedded benchmarks within the specific disciplines of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. These benchmarks will include knowledge of characteristics of exceptional learners demand higher expectation levels for performance at every level of schooling. Thus differentiated learner outcomes will be used as they are necessary for gifted students to be appropriately challenged. All activities will be tied to substantive outcomes and teachers will work to develop and clearly understand the relationship between a classroom activity and its related outcome.

The following are examples of gifted learner outcomes for performance benchmarks: appropriately challenging for gifted students at the requisite stage of development; linked to extended outcomes that extend beyond the regular school curriculum (NAGC); substantive and worthy of substantial instructional time and student independent time, and assessment using authentic approaches.

The faculty will review existing state or local learner outcomes using the stated criteria for judging whether they are challenging for gifted learners at the requisite stage of development. They will also review gifted program goals/curriculum goals and align them with subject area outcomes. They will also create additional learner outcomes for gifted students as needed, using the notes and suggestions of the subgroups. The faculty will also develop analogous assessment protocols for the differentiated outcomes and align the differentiated learner outcomes for gifted students with existing classroom activities and materials. They will continue to develop new activities and locate supplementary materials as needed, will continue to use the annual Hartford assessment data to determine needed changes in key aspects of the teaching and learning cycle, and develop alternative assessment tools and strategies.

Teacher Capacity

***Theme*-Specific Certification Requirements**

All staff will be expected to comply with special Gifted and Talented Endorsement pending 2013 (12 credits in GT).

Training and Professional Development Program

- Confratute
- Empowering Writers
- Selected Gifted and Talented courses at The University of Connecticut
- Rosetta Stone
- Scratch Webinar
- Edutopia Webinars
- NECGT (New England Conference on Gifted and Talented)
- NAGC (National Association of Gifted Children)

Teaming/Collaborative Planning Expectations

Teachers will be engaged in reflective, collaborative teaching. Common grade level planning time will be used to plan interdisciplinary units of inquiry, examine student work and student data, plan interventions and create common formative assessments based on state standards. All teachers will commit to sharing best practices. Teachers are a learning community and will collaborate regularly with team members and students to ensure academic and personal achievement for the students. Teachers will be given common planning time according to grade level needs; middle school teachers will have common planning time and elementary teachers will have common planning time.

Student data, used to drive instruction, will be an important part of meetings. Renzulli Academy staff will participate in on-going data analysis as a regular part of their collaboration.

A gifted and talented enrichment resource room will be established for the purpose of providing on-site professional development to teachers.

Student Schedule

Length of School Day

The school day will allow for in-depth study of advanced content and enrichment for students. School day hours will be determined.

Co-Curriculum Programming

Students will be invited to participate in programs offered by The CT Public TV, Talcott Mountain Science Center, The Bushnell, CT Association for the Gifted, CT Invention Convention and National History Day. Partnership programs and activities are aligned with project based learning, enrichment learning and curriculum frameworks.

Summer School/Extended Year

Opportunities for summer enrichment will be offered through Talcott Mountain Science Center and The Bushnell.

Partnerships

Role of Partners

Community and business partners will provide

- Opportunities for hands-on exploration and experiential learning
- Curriculum development
- Professional development
- Extended day programming

Higher Education Partners

- The University of Connecticut
  - Teacher Preparation and Certification
  - Resource Center for National History Day participation
  - Mentorships with graduate students
- National Research Center for Gifted and Talented
  - Up to date research to align Academy goals
  - Parent resource documents for parent education goals

Community Partners

- University of Connecticut
  - School Psychology Interns
- Connecticut Invention Convention
  - Renzulli Academy Lead Teacher as the Hartford Schools Coordinator
- CT-Public Television (Paul Heffier)
  - Future Producers Academy
- Connecticut Association of the Gifted
  - The Renzulli Academy as an Action Lab for the New England Conference on Gifted and Talented
- Talcott Mountain Science Center
  - Programs for families and students
- The Bushnell
  - Pilot Site for curriculum integration partnership
- Hartford Symphony Orchestra
  - Symphony in Schools Ensembles

High School/College Readiness

Plan of Study and Transition Planning

In order to establish the expectation that students will attend a four year college, the Renzulli Academy will:

- create university or college partnerships for mentoring and fostering a college-going culture.
- implement a college-going culture with the goal that all students will attend a four year college after high school.
- align grade 6-12 learning goals with the Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement benchmarks in order to prepare students to continue their accelerated and advanced education.
- work collaboratively to develop a comprehensive curriculum that is closely aligned with expected 9th grade competencies. (Ideally, students will be enrolled in Pre-Advanced Placement courses and taking AP courses in grades 10-12.)

Career Explorations
Highly focused academic and career counseling will be provided to eighth graders. This will include exposure to high school and college options.

High School/College Visits
Prior to completion of 10th grade, each student will complete actual and virtual visits to college campuses. Visits will include tours and an admissions overview, which specifies university expectations for freshman admissions.

Advanced Placement Opportunities
Curriculum Maps are aligned with Advanced Placement benchmarks.

School Culture & Climate

The Renzulli Academy will have a culture of academic excellence.

- Learning deeper content will be expected of all students, parents and staff in order to support the mission and vision of the school.
- The school environment will be safe for both teachers and students to experiment with new ideas.
- The school will develop a partnership between teachers, parents and students who will work together to ensure student achievement.
- There is an unmistakable common belief that all students can learn at a high level.

School Compact
The school will devise a ***Compact***, an agreement committing families, students, and school staff to work in equal partnership to help each student reach his or her potential. The compact will identify conditions which must be created in the school and the home to increase student achievement and specify shared responsibilities that are necessary to create the conditions for continuous improvement.

School Uniforms
A school uniform will be mandated and will reflect the rigorous academic environment.

Behavior Support Program
In addition to mentoring students to be self-regulators for expected behaviors Positive Behavior Support may be implemented to support high standards of student behavior. PBS is a system to understand what maintains a student's challenging behavior through a process which includes information gathering, a support plan and monitoring.

Parental Role

In Academics
Parents are expected to:

- communicate with the Renzulli Academy staff about student progress and performance
- monitor homework and assignment completion
- attend workshops to develop their background in gifted and talented pedagogy
- to access classrooms assignments and resources online
- to track student progress through on-line access to grades, attendance and behavior.

In School Culture/Climate

- Parent commitment, roles and responsibilities will be articulated in a *Compact* which includes parents as partners in education and specifies expected roles and responsibilities.
- Parents will have opportunities for involvement through participation in field studies and after school events and activities.
- Parents will be connected to the curriculum through learning activities and homework in which families can participate.
- Web program will keep parents informed of school activities.
- Parents will serve on the School Governance Council.

Support Services

Special Education Program
Reis, Gentry, and Maxfield (1998) investigated the impact of providing one type of gifted education pedagogy, enrichment clusters, to the entire population of two urban elementary schools. Enrichment clusters provided a regularly scheduled weekly time for students to work with adult facilitators to complete a product or provide service in a shared interest area. Teaching practices of classroom teachers who participated as cluster facilitators were affected both in the enrichment clusters and in regular classrooms. More challenging

content was integrated into 95% of the clusters through teaching specific authentic methodologies, advanced thinking, and problem solving strategies. Starko (1986) found that students involved in SEM enrichment group reported over twice as many creative projects per student as those in a comparison group and that they showed greater diversity and sophistication in projects.

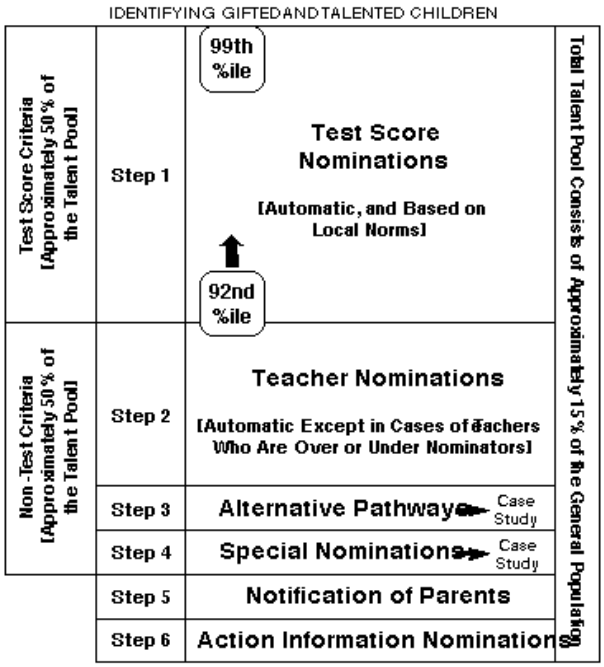
Support Services Model

Students will exhibit a high amount of self-regulation for their schoolwork and responsibilities to their peers, their school and the community. Students will be given the individual attention needed to manifest all of their potentials. Students needing extra support will receive differentiated instruction and the support of the entire Renzulli Academy staff through a PPT if necessary. Student data will be analyzed and monitored on a regular basis. From this data the instructional teams and teachers will adjust and adapt the individual needs of each student. Parents will become a partner in helping to cultivate caring, intelligent and socially conscious students. These supports will stay intact throughout a proposed pathway to high school to help ensure student access and success.

Application Process

The Renzulli Academy provides an academically advanced curriculum; therefore, the identification needs must match these services. Students are invited to apply; CMT test results, parent nomination and teacher nomination are considered in the applications. The Renzulli Talent Pool Identification Model is used to determine eligibility. A first step is to look at results from the Connecticut Mastery Test and send out applications to students who have scored in the top ninetieth percentile. Parents and teachers also send in nominations of students they feel display the elements of the three-ring conception of giftedness. Applications are sent to all students who are nominated or identified through the CMTs. In addition to having a student application teachers also complete a Scale for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students. Student essays that are included within the application play a large factor in helping to identify students, those with above average ability and creativity. Finally, families attend an informational meeting prior to the start of school.

The following chart summarizes the process for the identification of gifted and talented children.



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