

Original Proposal for a JPA Day School Academic Enrichment Program Task Force

The Pressman Academy Day School is committed to meeting the individual needs of its students. We recognize that children learn at various rates and in different ways and thus, one particular method of instruction may not be successful with all students. As part of our mission, we encourage the balanced development of each child, valuing intellectual, social and emotional growth.

Rationale

Pressman Academy currently has a remedial program staffed by a Learning Specialist to address reading and writing issues of elementary school students. The topic of enrichment has been raised and is currently part of the WASC Action Plan. Although there are ways in which the school does provide enrichment (math groupings, use of technology, reading levels etc.), a comprehensive evaluation of the current needs of the school has not been undertaken.

Task Force

During the 2013-2014 school year, the school will explore what “enrichment” -- and all that goes with it -- might look like in our school. A task force has been formed to examine the issue and make recommendations. Michelle Porjes will chair the Task Force. Karen Fried has agreed to be the lay co-chair. Janet Rich Weissman and Elyssa Elbaz are parent lay volunteers and Sarah Hartung represents the faculty on the task force. Sarah is a current second grade teacher and teaches science in the middle school. She also has experience with the summer enrichment programs run through the Johns Hopkins CTY Talent Search. A consultant with a background in enrichment will be hired to guide the process and provide guidance.

Goals

The task force will undertake a thoughtful evaluation of what it might mean to have enrichment as part of the curriculum. It is recognized that this issue has many components and there are a variety of opinions/feelings on the topic. The goal of this task force is to examine the issue in a way that balances the desires of parents with the philosophy/needs/limitations of the school.

Objectives

Specifically, the task force and/or consultant will engage in the following:

1. Collect information about enrichment programs in other Private Schools (Jewish and non-Jewish).
2. Evaluate curriculum areas that may be involved in enrichment. While mathematics is an area that readily lends itself to such a program, the Task Force should determine if there are other disciplines that could be addressed and possibly prioritize them.
3. Consider how enrichment needs might be met: Push in? Pull out?
4. Recommend criteria for participation in enrichment.

5. Recommend if school should begin with a trial period (i.e., 1 subject, elementary school only) and how this might be best undertaken.
6. Explore the feasibility of bringing in an academic enrichment teacher/consultant for the 2014-2015 school year. Issues to be considered are full time vs. part time, working with elementary-age students vs. entire school population, whether teacher specializes in one academic area or general education.
7. Write up a job description including the qualifications needed to be an enrichment teacher.
8. Discuss how students who participate in an enrichment program might be grouped and how participation might be reflected on transcripts.
9. Explore the roles of technology and/or online resources.

Reporting/ Proposal

Michelle will report regularly to the Leadership Team, whose members will evaluate the results, comment, and, if necessary, modify them. Progress reports will also be shared with the Day School Committee.

The Task Force will make recommendations to the Leadership Team for review and approval. Once approved, the proposal will be brought to the Day School Committee for review and approval and then to the Education Cabinet for final review and approval.

If approved, the Task Force will then undertake a search for a teacher/consultant. The recommendation of a candidate will be reviewed by the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team will recommend the chosen candidate to the Interim Head of School, who will make the final decision and, after informing the Education Cabinet, will hire the candidate.

Funding

Rabbi Joel Rembaum will approach potential donors who have expressed an interest in such a program to see if they will consider funding the Task Force. He will also find out if they would fund a five year grant to JPA to help pay for the teacher. The grant would support the personnel costs on a reducing percent basis over 5 years. It would be reduced each year so that JPA funding would take over full payment by the sixth year.

Potential Timetable:

September 16-30, formation of Task Force.

October - January 15, 2014 Evaluation of enrichment program concluding with a proposal.

January 15-31 Review and approval as discussed above, followed by an announcement of the new program to the JPA/TBA community.

February - March, search for and hiring of the candidate.

Beginning of April - Hiring of new enrichment teacher is announced to JPA/TBA community.

Pressman Academy Enrichment Task Force Report Based on the Original Proposal

Below is our recommendation based on a review of the literature, discussions with a consultant, gathering of data, and formulation of ideas in the task force meetings. It represents our best effort to balance the needs of students and desires of parents while maintaining the philosophy and limitations of the school. The intention is to implement the plan as described. However, the reality of implementing the plans may involve some alterations.

1. Collection of information about enrichment programs in other Private Schools (Jewish and non-Jewish).

Results: Many schools were contacted (both Jewish and secular). A few schools had well thought out programs. It seems like many schools are grappling with the same issue of how to address students on the higher end of learning curve. See Appendix A.

2. Evaluation of the curriculum areas

Results: Mathematics is an area that readily lends itself to enrichment at our school. It does appear that although reading and writing allow for individualization for all students, higher end students could benefit from additional support to maximize dimensions of depth and complexity through the use of different “lenses”. The goal is to constantly push learning and increase curiosity in students.

3. Consider how enrichment needs might be met

Results: For our school, it does seem that a hybrid version might be best. This may consist of some mixed grade pull-out, some push-in, teacher support and parent support. It is critical that parents are educated in their child’s strengths and progress within the current curriculum. It is also vital to understand that if a student does not meet the criteria for participation that it is not due to a failure of the child, the teacher and/or the curriculum. It is also immensely important that teachers receive the support they need for providing enrichment during the school day.

4. Recommended criteria for participation in enrichment.

This Task force recommends against the use of an intelligence (IQ) test as the determiner of whether or not a student should participate in our enrichment program(s). Although IQ tests contain useful information about how a student processes information and acquires information, it predicts potential and not necessarily effort and academic progress in our current curriculum. It is the student’s level and mastery of the curriculum that will inform participation in our programs.

The Task Force recommends the following:

Math

Current students in grades 4 and above with an independent school stanine of 8 or 9 on the ERB in either math or quantitative ability will be invited to take the placement test administered by Pressman Academy for the math acceleration program (MAP). In addition, parents and/or teachers may nominate students who show advanced math ability. New students to the school may also submit a copy of standardized tests results for consideration or examples of math work that demonstrates advanced math problem solving skills.

For students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade, the school does not require ERB testing results in order to apply to the MAP. Parents and teachers of students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade may nominate students who show advanced math ability for the MAP.

All students, regardless of grade, who wish to participate in the math enrichment program must take a specific test administered by Pressman Academy to determine their eligibility. Students who meet the criteria on this test will be invited to participate in the program. The test requires advanced problem solving skills and those that nominate students should be aware that the nature of the test may be viewed as frustrating to students who are not ready for this type of challenge. The final decision of acceptance to the MAP lies with the school personnel. Please note that the ability to be a productive member of the program, follow directions, have a strong desire to be challenged, and the ability to behave in the group program are also taken into consideration. All students who participate in the MAP program will be monitored for successful participation. Should a student not experience success in the program, the parents and student (when appropriate) will meet with school professionals to evaluate whether or not continued participation in the MAP program is recommended.

Once a student is eligible to participate in the math enrichment program, s/he must be able to keep up with classwork and homework in his or her classroom and complete specific work for the program should it be assigned.

Language Arts

Current students in grades 4 and above with an independent school stanine of 8 or 9 on the ERB in either verbal reasoning, vocabulary, or reading comprehension will be invited to take the placement test for the language arts enrichment and acceleration program (LEAP) administered by Pressman Academy . In addition, parents and/or teachers may nominate students who show advanced language arts and reading skills. New students to the school may also submit a copy of standardized tests results for consideration or examples of language arts work that demonstrates advanced language arts and reading skills.

For students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade, the school does not require ERB testing results in order to apply to the LEAP. Parents and teachers of students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade may nominate students who show advanced language arts and reading skills.

All students, regardless of grade, who wish to participate in the LEAP must take a specific test administered by Pressman Academy to determine their eligibility. Students who meet the criteria on this test will be invited to participate in the program. The test requires advanced language arts and reading ability and those that nominate students should be aware that the nature of the test may be viewed as frustrating to students who are not ready for this type of challenge. The final decision of acceptance to the language arts enrichment program lies with the school personnel. Please note that the ability to be a productive member of the program, follow directions, have a strong desire to be challenged, and the ability to behave in the group program are also taken into consideration. Should a student not experience success in the program, the parents and student (when appropriate) will meet with school professionals to evaluate whether or not continued participation in the LEAP program is recommended.

Once a student is eligible to participate in the LEAP, s/he must be able to keep up with classwork and homework in his or her classroom and complete specific work for the program should it be assigned.

5. Recommendations for the program components and timeline

The recommendation for the 2014-2015 school year is the following:

- For Kindergarten and 1st grade—The task force recommends a “push-in” model during general studies in each classroom for one (1) 30 minute session for math and one (1) 30 minute session language arts/reading per week. Given the big transitional aspect of Kindergarten and 1st grade, the following is further recommended:
 - This program would involve assessment in the month of December of the Kindergarten and 1st grade years. The MAP and LEAP Kindergarten push-in would begin in January of the Kindergarten year.
 - For those 1st grade students already identified as part of the program, their participation would begin after the initial transition back to school most likely in the month of October.
 - New first grade applicants for the LEAP and MAP program would be assessed in December and begin the program in January. This allows for the current classroom teacher to have input as well.
- For 2nd and 3rd Grade—The Task force recommends a combined grade pull-out model for two (2) 30 minute sessions for math and two (2) 30 minute sessions for language arts/reading per week.
 - This would begin after the initial transition back into school, most likely the month of October.
 - New 2nd and 3rd grade applicants for the LEAP and MAP program would be assessed in December and begin the program in January. This allows for the current classroom teacher to have input as well.

- For 4th and 5th Grade—The task force recommends a combined pull-out model for two (2) 45 minute sessions for math and two (2) 45 minute sessions for language arts/reading per week.
 - This would begin after the initial transition back into school, most likely the month of October.
 - New 4th and 5th grade applicants for the LEAP and MAP program would be assessed in December and begin the program in January. This allows for the current classroom teacher to have input as well.

The Task Force recommends that for 2014-2015 school year that students in grades 2-4 be assessed for MAP and LEAP in the Spring of 2014. For future years, new applicants should be assessed as described above in December for participation in the MAP and LEAP beginning in the month of January. This will allow for the maximum amount of data to be collected including the student's current functioning in the curriculum/classroom. For students in Kindergarten and 1st grade, assessments should also be conducted in December for participation in MAP and LEAP starting in January.

This results in 9 hours per week of direct instruction to students with a focus on creating challenges that would otherwise not be part of the day to day educational experience. In addition to this, task force recommends that the teacher use an additional 11 hours per week for teacher consultation, parent communication, and material preparation. The total hours would be 20 hours per week for the professional who will be providing these services.

The first years with any new program are challenging. The Task Force recommends hiring a second professional as a consultant. The consultant, together with school personnel, would continue to craft the program and to do significant amounts of work with parents, teachers and curriculum. It would be expected that the consultant would be more of an expert in the field and a source for the professional doing the direct teaching of the students, thus creating a mentor-mentee relationship to solidify the program. It is recommended that this person be on campus 5-10 hours per week.

6. Feasibility of Program

It appears feasible to bring an enrichment program to the Pressman Academy for the 2014-2015 academic school with the notion that the program itself will grow and deepen over time. The current needs are teacher support, parents support, direct work with children and also work with the various curricula used in the school. It appears that to begin with the focus should be on the elementary school both to support the math curriculum as well as the reading/writing curriculum.

7. Job description including the qualifications needed to be an enrichment teacher.

The Pressman Academy seeks a highly qualified, experienced individual or individuals who:

- Has background in gifted education

Able to assess the needs of gifted learners
Creates appropriate curriculum/activities for gifted learners
Able to communicate effectively with teachers and parents
Works autonomously and collaboratively
Show a deep understanding of the concepts of depth, complexity, acceleration and novelty
Challenge children with high levels of knowledge and creativity
Can teach intellectual rigor and leadership

8. Documentation on Transcripts

The school progress report should allow for a comments section as is the case with the students who received remedial support. The enrichment teacher should describe the skills being developed as well as the individual student's progress on these skills. It is also recommended that the enrichment teacher comment on behavioral skills such as ability to deal with advanced academics, cooperative behavior, motivation etc.

9. The roles of technology and/or online resources.

It is clear that technology has place in the MAP and LEAP. However, equally clear is that technology should not be used in lieu of a teacher delivered program. The enrichment teacher will work in collaboration with school administration to determine the parameters for the use of technology.

Future Recommendations

This current enrichment task force recommends the following as future directions:

1. The continued focus on differentiation and meeting the needs of students within the current curriculum.
2. Once the LEAP and MAP are firmly established in the 2014-2015 school year, a new task force should be formed to examine the needs of enrichment in middle school. It is suggested that the task force examine what an enrichment program might look like beginning in the 2015-2016 school year..
3. The school administration should consider how progress is reported in elementary school and whether there could be additional or more specific reporting vis-a-vis a student's progress in relationship to the curriculum or the other students in the class.
4. The school administration should consider how ERBs are reported and whether there could be additional or more specific reporting vis-a-vis a student's achievement compared to classmates.
5. Continued teacher training on how to deepen curriculum to challenge advanced students.
6. Examining the role of parent volunteers in helping to provide enriching activities to the whole class on an informal basis.

