

Ten years ago, D102 committed to developing the academic abilities and personal attributes of all students by providing challenging, appropriate curriculum for all learners, including those who possess (or have the potential to possess) high levels of aptitude. A key result of this commitment was the creation of the Talent Development Program.

During those ten years, a lot has changed in the field of gifted education and we have learned a lot as a district that has helped us to continually evolve the program year after year. We continue to seek new ways to access opportunities for students and make adjustments to staffing and resources to maximize them for our students.

For this upcoming school year, we have made some shifts in a few areas of the program. These shifts will help us to achieve our mission and expand access to more enrichment and engagement at school, while maintaining a high quality accelerated service component.

1) The program has a new name – Talent Development Services Program (TDSP). A one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Excellent programs have a continuum of services. The inclusion of the word “services” communicates that D102 strives to offer a variety of experiences (in addition to the accelerated classes themselves) to enrich and engage its students.

2) A revised program model has been created and will be available to families on the D102 website next fall. This model includes a foundation, cognitive approaches, key underpinnings, and the service delivery components. The model communicates that all students have strengths (some students’ strengths are significant enough to be considered talents), and, as a district, these strength and/or talent areas need to be discovered, nurtured, and celebrated.

3) D102 has purposefully created a schedule so the TDSP staff can provide direct services to identified students, as well as serve in a resource capacity for all students and staff within their respective buildings. Although this might look different in each elementary school, our initial foci will be collaborating with staff on differentiation strategies while also serving as a resource to teachers, students, and families.

By reorganizing staff and resources, TDSP staff will have approximately 2.5 hours per week to devote to support classroom teachers, including our primary staff and the kindergarten center (Barnsdale). Previously, we have not been able to offer this aspect to the D102 community and are excited to offer it beginning next year.

4) For the past few years, we have been working on additional entry points into the accelerated classes. There are new entry points in grades 3 and 4 accelerated mathematics. Starting next year, we are pleased to have an entry point before winter break in grade 3 and one after trimester one in grade 4.

As I have communicated to several people in various conversations, our program will remain robust, research-based, and high ability student-centered. The new model of the program has the individual student at its center. Personally, I am most looking forward to have time built in to get to know students as “individuals” moving forward.

Here’s to a great THINKING SUMMER,

Randy Lange, PhD  
Talent Development Services Program