

Overview of the PACE Program - K-12

The Plano Academic and Creative Education (PACE) program is an advanced academic program offering services to children with demonstrated need for consistent, rigorous academic challenges. The district's assessment should not be confused with determining whether an individual is, or is not, gifted. Instead, our process seeks those students who show the need for additional academic services as revealed at the time of assessment. Consequently, there are students who may be gifted but do not participate in PACE for a variety of reasons, such as: evidence supporting the need for more advanced services is not apparent at the time of assessment, or the student's gifts and talents may exist in areas other than academics. Since children's academic needs change over time, a student who is not recommended for participation in a given year may be referred again in the future. At the appropriate grade level, children with gifts and talents in areas other than academics may seek to enroll in advanced music, art, sports, and theater programs, as well as take advantage of the many leadership opportunities that exist at our campuses.

Elementary (K-5)

Kindergarten. Identified kindergarten students begin receiving PACE services by March 1st. Services may be through their kindergarten teacher or through the gifted specialist. The formal pull-out class with the gifted specialist begins in first grade.

Grades 1 through 5. The first through fifth grade elementary gifted program consists of two academic experiences: (1) pull-out instruction several hours each week with the gifted specialist, and (2) differentiated instruction in the student's general education classroom as needs demonstrate.

Pull-Out Program / Curriculum. The PACE pull-out curriculum is an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes higher level / creative thinking while coaching the students to grow as individuals and to better understand themselves. Although the PACE curriculum is tied to topics studied or academic skills learned in the general education classroom that year, pull-out instruction is designed to address topics / skills at a more challenging level and to make connections between what is learned. Every PACE student has areas of strength and areas for potential growth. An interdisciplinary curriculum allows the gifted specialist to appeal to a student's strengths while coaching him / her in an area of relative weakness. PACE units of study are an integral part of the challenge PACE students receive and are neither "more nor extra" work. The pull-out experience, the specially trained teacher, and the opportunity to work with fellow PACE students several hours each week is what distinguishes PACE from the general education program.

Differentiated Lessons in the General Education Classroom. Although the pull-out program is a unique and dynamic aspect of the elementary gifted program, students spend many hours each week in the general education classroom, so classroom teachers who work with PACE students are responsible for adapting and differentiating the general education curriculum in math, language arts, social studies, and science. Not every PACE student will need every lesson adjusted, so the teacher must determine which students need this differentiation. The goal of differentiation is for the teacher to develop alternative activities to make the material appropriately challenging and interesting to the student. Please visit with your student's classroom teacher to learn about differentiation in math, language arts, social studies, and science.

Middle School (6-8)

The middle school gifted program emphasizes the PACE Social Studies Humanities class, which meets daily. Humanities compacts the TEKS and the general education curriculum and adds special units drawn from a study of the humanities as well as frequent divergent instruction; extension of prior learning; advanced critical thinking skills; problem-solving; creative interpretation and expression; advanced oral, written and visual presentation skills; and self-directed study.

Gifted students enrolled in an Honors, AP or IB math, science or English class receive differentiated instruction on an as needed basis: gifted students may be above level in one subject area, but not in others.

High School (9-10)

The focus of the high school gifted program is the PACE Humanities class, which meets daily. The Humanities is an honors/AP course focusing on the connections between world art, music, and literature. Students compact the honors world history TEKS and curriculum with an in-depth study of a history of the fine arts. Students experience frequent divergent instruction; extension of prior learning; advanced critical thinking skills; problem-solving; creative interpretation and expression; advanced oral, written and visual presentation skills; self-directed study; and advanced research and expository writing skills.

Gifted students enrolled in an Honors, AP or IB math, science or English class receive differentiated instruction on an as needed basis: gifted students may be above level in one subject area, but not in others.

Senior High School (11-12)

While the formal program called PACE ends in 10th grade, gifted services continue through additional opportunities. Students may continue to have their academic and developmental needs met through American Studies (designed as an interdisciplinary experience reminiscent of the Humanities experience) and/or a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses offered in all core disciplines.

American Studies combines AP US History and English III AP Language to create a daily two-hour cultural experience simultaneously enabling students to explore the connections between literature and history. Students explore the history of the United States with special emphasis placed on the study of rhetorical styles and structures of important historical documents and readings. This course also focuses on the cultural accomplishments as manifested in art, architecture, literature, music, and other visual media. Students learn and practice the craft of writing through various products, specifically focused on the essay formats necessary for success on both the AP US History and AP English Language exams. US Literature of all genres are incorporated into the curriculum within the structure of the historical study and used as a method of enhancing the depiction of historical time periods. At the culmination of the class, students may choose to take both the AP US History and the AP English Language exams in the hopes of earning college credit. The prerequisite for this course is AP World History. Pre-AP English II is strongly encouraged.

In order to be recognized as a gifted student, one must have been in Humanities in high school (or be a newly identified or out-of-district transfer student) and must be enrolled in at least one AP/IB course in any one of the four core areas. Any Humanities student who formally exits PACE after the 10th grade or who does not enroll in at least one AP/IB course in any one of the four core subject areas in 11th and/or 12th grade is no longer designated as a gifted student in official district records.