

PLANO
ACADEMIC
AND
CREATIVE
EDUCATION



A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF
STUDENTS IN THE PACE PROGRAM



PLANO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Welcome to PACE!

Welcome to Plano Academic and Creative Education (PACE)! PACE has a long, rich legacy of challenging and exciting its students! While PACE students enter the program with one or more noticeable talents, PACE strives to develop each student's abilities in multiple subjects. PACE believes that a student with strong abilities in one field should be trained to strengthen his/her talents in other fields as well. Consequently, PACE teachers recognize that there is no standardized PACE student, equally strong in all subjects and academic skills. Though PACE students frequently excel in their scholarly endeavors, they just as frequently emerge as talented leaders, musicians, performers, artists, and athletes. It is also critical that students have opportunities to deepen his/her understanding of himself/herself, others, and the world in general. The PACE program and its staff encourage students to explore and broaden their talents and interests; thus every opportunity is taken to leverage the curriculum so that students can be in challenging courses, yet still "have a life," as many of our older PACE students might say.

Since the PACE program exists to serve children while encouraging further growth, we hope that PACE will encourage your student to step outside of his/her comfortable learning zone. PACE is not a reward for work previously completed; it is a journey through new learning that will continually require new efforts. While not true in every circumstance, it is more common than suspected for new students entering the program to require reassurance as they transition into this new experience. Since many of these students are accustomed to success in their previous coursework, they may require extra encouragement and nurturing as they transition into the expectations of the PACE program. This is especially true during the common transition years from 5th to 6th grade and 8th to 9th grade, years which tend to involve a variety of changes that have more to do with a new overall environment than any one specific course. Please take advantage of your campus PACE Specialist's experience in advising students and families new to the program if you feel your student needs assistance at any grade level.

We hope that this handbook will help you and your student become more familiar with the PACE program. Information in this booklet is general in nature, so please be sure to contact your PACE specialist or visit our web site at <http://pisd.edu/parents/advanced.academics/gifted.pace/index.shtml> for more information. Specific course information is available through the annual course catalogs, from the campus gifted specialist or through the district's web site at www.pisd.edu.

Mission Statement and Program Beliefs

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Plano Academic and Creative Education (PACE) is to provide a challenging learning environment that nurtures the unique potential of gifted and talented students so that as citizens they can contribute ethically and productively in ways commensurate with their abilities.

SUPPORTING BELIEFS

1. We believe that pursuing educational excellence for all students is best accomplished through coordinated, well-articulated programs crafted to address and to challenge the unique needs of each and every student. Consequently, we believe that meeting the needs of identifiable populations, such as the gifted and talented, is sound educational practice.
2. We believe that gifted programs must provide choices allowing for the specific gifts, talents, and needs of individual students while equipping each student to become a self-directed, life-long learner.
3. We believe that balanced programming for gifted and talented students provides for both cognitive and affective development.
4. We believe that it is essential for gifted and talented students to spend instructional time interacting with their academic peers.
5. We believe that a program for gifted and talented students must constantly challenge these students in order to develop their potential to become exceptional contributors to society.
6. We believe that gifted and talented students learn best when instructed by properly trained educators who respect and enjoy interacting with these students and who visibly model life-long learning and expertise.
7. We believe that there are multiple expressions of giftedness and of talent, so we strive to honor as many different manifestations as can be identified and reasonably accommodated within a public school academic environment.
8. We believe that there are gifted and talented students who are underserved due to cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic barriers, so we continually seek to include those students who demonstrate the abilities necessary to be successful in a rigorous program.
9. We believe that educational excellence for gifted and talented students requires a partnership between educators and families.

Overview of the PACE Program, K-12

Elementary (K-5)

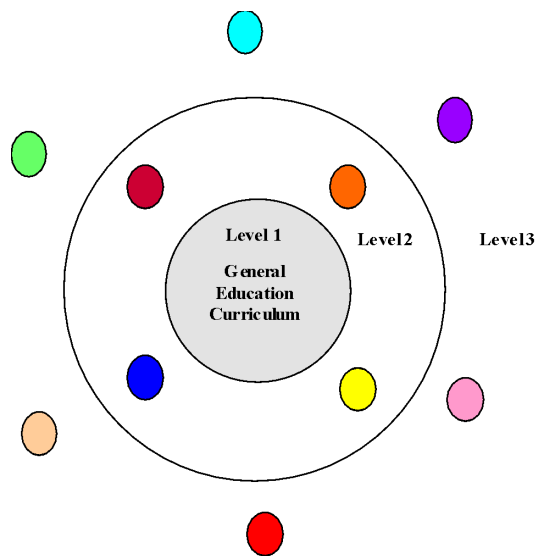
Kindergarten. Identified kindergarten students receive PACE services through either the PACE specialist or one of the teachers on the kindergarten team.

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.

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

The following model helps to explain:



Level 1: District Curriculum – language arts, math, social studies, and science delivered by classroom teachers using differentiation as appropriate. This curriculum may provide some data for program evaluation.

Level 2: Required PACE Curriculum – program-wide topics of study delivered in pull-out groups; provides data for program evaluation

Level 3: PACE menu units – delivered in pull-out groups; this menu of topics reflects the "love of learning" and "developmental needs and interests" of gifted students beyond the state curriculum stressing depth and complexity of content, concepts, and/or skills. These topics will vary from school to school and year to year.

Middle School (6-8)

PACE students are served in their social studies class. This course compacts the TEKS and the general education curriculum and adds special units drawn from a study of the Humanities. The course extends prior learning; advances critical thinking skills, problem-solving, creative interpretation and expression; advances oral, written and visual presentation skills; and allows for self-directed study.

AP/IB/Honors

[International Baccalaureate \(IB\)](#) - The International Baccalaureate Program is a challenging course of study designed to meet the needs of highly motivated secondary students and to promote international understanding. The effectiveness of the IB program is due not only to the depth of the individual courses, but also to the comprehensive nature of the program. Unlike other advanced academic programs, the IB Program requires each student to take courses in six academic areas. PISD students attend the four year IB Academy at Plano East Senior High School. A student works toward earning both a Texas high school diploma and an IB diploma concurrently. As with AP courses (see below), IB courses and diploma may result in college credit.

[Advanced Placement \(AP\)](#) - Courses sanctioned by The College Board follow curriculum standards determined by that organization and the Texas state standards. Students may enroll in one or more AP courses. The national test taken at the end of the course is used by individual colleges and universities when determining whether or not to accept or to deny credit.

[Honors classes](#) - The honors curriculum includes a wider range and greater depth of subject matter than that of the regular course. Emphasis is placed on higher level and critical thinking skills, on creative, productive thinking, and on independent guided research. In the middle school program, honors courses are offered in mathematics beginning in grade 6, English beginning in grade 7, and in science beginning in grade 7.

High School (9-10)

The 9th/10th grade course integrates the Humanities into a combined Pre-AP English I and AP World History two-year interdisciplinary course. The curriculum includes a historical study of the commonalities of the fine arts, including literature, the visual arts, architecture, and music. Humanities I focuses on the period up to the Renaissance; Humanities II examines the period from the Renaissance to contemporary times. Students will learn and practice the craft of writing through various products. Literature from a variety of world traditions will also be a key focus. Ninth and tenth grade students will sit in the same class while earning credit in separate courses; ninth graders will earn Pre-AP English I credit while tenth graders earn AP World History credit. At the conclusion of Humanities II, students may choose to sit for the AP World History exam in the hopes of earning college credit.

Senior High School (11-12)

While the formal program called PACE ends in 10th grade, gifted services continue. Students may choose 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.

Designed for the gifted and/or accelerated learner, American Studies integrates the Humanities into a combined AP US History and English III AP Language course to create a daily two hour cultural experience which requires students to simultaneously explore the connections between literature, history and the Humanities. Students will study the history of the United States with an emphasis on both collaborative and independent work that emphasizes the study of rhetorical styles and the structures of important historical documents and readings. This course considers cultural accomplishments as manifested in art, architecture, literature, music, theater and philosophy. American literature of all genres is incorporated into the curriculum to enhance the depiction of various historical time periods. At the conclusion of the course, students may choose to take both the AP US History and the AP English Language exams in the hopes of earning college credit.

Parent Communication - Elementary

Parent Orientation Meeting

This meeting will typically be offered in the fall as an introduction to the program. Much of the information in this handbook will be shared in addition to the opportunity to meet the campus PACE specialist as well as learn more about the curriculum at each grade level.

Throughout the School Year

Teachers will remain in contact via email, social media sources, newsletters, etc. as the year progresses. You can expect to hear from the PACE Specialist at least once a month. These contacts will give you valuable information about what's happening in the PACE classroom. Please keep in mind that work done in PACE is usually kept in that classroom because of the nature of the schedule. Students are with the PACE specialist only twice a week, so the units typically take the 6-12 weeks to complete.

PACE also sends home progress reports twice a year - at the end of each semester. Students in PACE are assessed on the following characteristics, using a 4-point scale:

4=above what is expected from a PACE student
2=developing in the PACE student

3=what is expected of a PACE student
1=unobserved or incomplete

- Creative Thinker
- Higher Order Thinking Skills
- Collaborative Worker
- Problem Solver
- Self-Directed Learner
- Advanced Communication Skills
- Advanced Products and Performances

Special Circumstances Procedures

PACE Furlough Information General Information

- o Furlough decisions are joint decisions between the parents, student, and the Campus Placement Committee. TEA prohibits individual teachers and/or counselors from granting a furlough.
- o Furloughs require a beginning date and an ending date.
- o Furloughs exist for one semester or less in a given school year and may be brought before the Campus Placement Committee for renewal not to exceed the school year in which they were granted.
- o Furloughs are granted for student health and/or personal issues and family situations. Elementary furloughs sometimes reflect a need to suspend pull out time and increase instruction in the general education classroom.
- o Furloughs are not to be used as discipline tools or to avoid challenging courses or instructors.
- o Reasons for furlough are confidential. Furlough paperwork stays in the PACE student folder and is not included in the student's cumulative file.
- o All furloughs expire at the end of the school year in which they were granted.
- o Students may return to PACE within the dates prescribed in the furlough without requiring reassessment for PACE. A student will be considered to have exited PACE if he/she does not return to the PACE class at the end of the furlough as agreed upon and must be re-assessed to re-enter the program.
- o Students are not responsible for PACE work missed while on furlough.

Procedures

- o Consultation between teacher, parent, student, gifted specialist, and counselor/administrator
- o Request for Furlough form completed and returned to gifted specialist (The furlough may not proceed without parent signature.)
- o Campus Placement Committee convenes and makes a decision
- o Parents and teachers are informed of the decision and the dates involved
- o Gifted specialist updates the student's PACE file
- o Gifted specialist reminds parents, student, and the Campus Placement Committee when the furlough is about to expire and when the student will return to the PACE class. A request to renew the furlough not to exceed the current school year may be considered at this time.

PACE Exit Information General Information

- o Exits may be initiated by the student, the parent, the teacher, or the counselor/administrator and must be agreed to by the Campus Placement Committee. TEA prohibits individual teachers and/or counselors/administrators from making exit decisions on their own.
- o Exit decisions should be joint decisions between the parents, student, and the Campus Placement Committee. However, in cases in which the student's continued participation in PACE may prevent success on the state mandated curriculum, may prevent credit for a course required to graduate, or may prevent other students from realizing these same goals, the campus may decide to exit the student after counseling with the parent and allowing an opportunity for the student to take corrective action.
- o Except in situations regarding safety, exits initiated by PISD employees are permitted only after allowing the student multiple opportunities to address the areas of concern. Documentation must be maintained, and the parents must be involved early in any discussions leading to the possibility of an exit.
- o The gifted specialist must counsel with the student/family when the exit is initiated by students or parents so that the family is aware of the process and any implications.
- o Reasons for exit are confidential. Other than indicating 'exited,' the date/grade, and the specialist's signature on the matrix in the student's cumulative file, the exit paperwork stays in the PACE student folder.
- o Students who exit PACE may return to PACE through the regular process required for all new referrals.

Procedures

- o Early consultation between specialist, parent, student, and counselor/administrator outlining measures the student must demonstrate and that situation may warrant exit if significant progress is not realized
- o Opportunity for the student to improve and documentation of progress or lack thereof
- o Follow up conference with specialist, parents and others to update them on progress or lack thereof. Except in situations regarding safety, the student should be awarded a second opportunity to make improvement. This conference should state the expectations that must be fulfilled to remain in PACE. The word 'exit' must be introduced into the conversation and documented.
- o Completed PACE Exit Form
- o Campus Placement Committee convenes and makes a decision
- o Parents and teachers are informed of the decision
- o Gifted specialist updates the student's PACE file

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is gifted education described?

A: Gifted education is designed to respond to students whose interests and skills are more advanced and potentially diverse than many of their classmates and offers opportunities for study beyond the general education curriculum. Students receiving gifted services typically absorb information at a faster rate and process it differently than students in the regular classroom and frequently comprehend information with greater depth, often showing surprising insight and understanding. These students may have interests that are more typical of older students or adults. Because they come to school with these different learning needs, they respond well to programs that allow them to explore topics in greater depth or approach their studies from unexpected perspectives.

Q: What are the benefits of PACE?

A: While an obvious benefit is exploring advanced curriculum in ways different than in the general education classroom, the greatest benefits are working with their academic peers, learning in a more open-ended environment, and receiving instruction and guidance from a specially trained teacher. Depending upon the grade level, students may experience the same PACE specialist for two to five years, which allows for a special bond and understanding between teacher and student. These factors combine to create a dynamic synergy between the students and between the students and the teachers, which lifts the potential for learning even higher.

Q: Once my child joins PACE, will he/she continue in the program the following year?

A. Yes, as long as the program continues to meet his/her learning needs. Students do not 'retest' for PACE once they join the program.

Q: Are students retested each year to remain in PACE?

A: Students are not retested. However, continued placement in the program is based not only on the need for the program but also on the students' interest and active participation.

Q: What relationship exists between the PACE curriculum and the regular curriculum?

A: The PACE curriculum reinforces topics studied at the respective grade level, but does so through added depth and complexity. For example, in the general education classroom fifth grade PACE students study the Constitution, touching upon our basic freedoms. In the pull-out classroom fifth grade PACE students explore the nature of constitutional law as it applies to several of our basic freedoms, integrating higher order analysis into the topic; they also explore the concept of intellectual property and how one protects abstract creative product. Thus the study is both deeper than in the general education classroom and more complex in terms of the number of higher level concepts that are examined.

Q: How often are elementary students pulled for PACE?

A: First, second, and third grade students are normally pulled for two hours weekly. Fourth and fifth grade students are pulled for three hours weekly. Depending on the teacher's schedule, students may be pulled for one long session, or the time may be split into two or three sessions. The gifted specialist and the classroom teachers meet to set the best schedule for each grade level.

Q: Are elementary students responsible for work missed in the regular classroom while they are at PACE pull-out? What should I do if I think there is a problem?

A: Naturally, PACE students are expected to master the same state required curriculum as all other students. Therefore, they are responsible for the knowledge covered in the classroom during PACE pull-out. They are not, however, expected to make up the activities they missed in the regular classroom, though from time to time they may be required to complete some. If the teacher feels that the assignment is necessary in the learning process, extra time to complete the assignment will be given. If you think there is a problem with missed work in the regular classroom while the student is at pull-out, please contact the classroom teacher to address the issue. If this does not help, please contact the gifted specialist.

Q: Does PACE have its own report card?

A: Elementary PACE has its own progress report that is sent home at different times during the year - the end of each semester. Middle schools and high schools report students' progress on the district's academic report card.

Q: How much homework/study time is required in PACE?

A: Assignments that are given in elementary PACE are usually either completed within the class period or are assigned over a period of time. On rare occasions students are required to complete assignments outside of class. In middle school and high school, homework mirrors that which is normally expected of an honors level class. In both cases, however, the homework should be more exploratory in nature rather than focusing on memorization or drill and practice.

Q: Are students in Special Education or other programs included in the gifted program?

A: Yes. Gifted children come in all shapes and sizes, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, every ethnic and language base, and every learning and behavioral style. Sometimes gifted children come to us from special education as well.

The district seeks to identify and serve all qualified students and strives to ensure a fair identification procedure. This means that extra effort must be made to uncover the talent of students with multiple special needs. The district encourages the Campus Placement

Committee to consider these populations and their needs when making placement decisions.

Q: How do I know if the PACE program is working for my child?

A: The best source of information may be your student's attitude about PACE and learning in general as well as his / her comfort with exploring new ideas in more complex ways. Hopefully, some of this learning spills over into conversation, whether at the dinner table or in the car. You may even notice that he / she chooses to pursue information that is not 'assigned' in class, but happens to 'pop up' in class conversation. Watch for times that your child sees or hears something in the media or in adult conversations that he/she relates to something talked about or studied in PACE! If you have questions about how your child is performing, please request a conference with your PACE teacher.

Q: Is there a way for PACE parents within the district to communicate with each other?

A: Yes, parents within the district may consider joining PAGT (Plano Association for the Gifted and Talented) a local parent support group not affiliated with PISD. Parents may also join TAGT (Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented). Annual dues are required for each organization. Many of the campuses also have a Special and Gifted Education (SAGE) sub-committee of their PTA. Please contact your campus PTA for this information.

Book Resources

- Birely, Marlene. Crossover Children: A Sourcebook for Helping Children Who Are Gifted and Learning Disabled (2nd Edition). Council for Exceptional Children, 1995.
- Boothe, Diane, and Stanley, Julian, ed. Critical Issues for Diversity in Gifted Education: In the Eyes of the Beholder. Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, 2004.
- Cohen, LeoNora and Frydenberg, Erica. Coping for Capable Kids: Strategies for Parents, Teachers, and Students. Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, 1996.
- Cross, Tracy. The Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Kids: Understanding and Guiding Their Development. Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, 2005.
- Davidson, Jan and Bob. Genius Denied: How To Stop Wasting Our Brightest Young Minds – What You And Your School Can Do For Your Gifted Child. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.
- Davis, Gary A. Gifted Children and Gifted Education. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2006.
- Galbraith, Judy and Delisle, Jim. The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide for Ages 10 & Under. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Free Spirit Publishing, 1998. (Also publishes a Teen Handbook)
- Goleman, Daniel. Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ. New York: Bantam Books, 1997.
- Halsted, Judith. Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers from Preschool to High School (2nd Edition). Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2002.
- Kerr, Barbara. Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood, and the Search for Meaning. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2001.
- Kerr, Barbara. Smart Girls: A New Psychology of Girls, Women, & Giftedness. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 1994.
- Mathews, Dona and Foster, Joanne. Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and Educators. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2005.
- Neihart, Maureen, ed. The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know? Washington, D.C.: Prufrock Press, 2002.
- Rogers, Karen B. Re-Forming Gifted Education. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2002.

Slocumb, Paul D. and Payne, Ruby K. Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty. Highlands, Texas: aha! Process, Inc., 2000.

Webb, James, ed. Grandparents' Guide to Gifted Children. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2004.

Webb, James, ed. Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults. Scottsdale, Arizona: Great Potential Press, 2005.

Web Resources

<http://www.ditd.org/>

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development - contains an abundance of helpful information and links

<http://eric.ed.gov>

Links to many other pages of information

<http://gifted.uconn.edu/>

Web site for the National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented located at the University of Connecticut which has a wealth of links to research topics as well as student, parent, teacher resources

www.hoagiesgifted.org

Site dedicated to teachers, parents, and students with many links to other sites and resources.

www.ibo.org

Web site of the International Baccalaureate program

www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/ed.gifted.html

General articles on topics of interest to parents of gifted students such as creativity, ADHD, general education, college planning

www.loc.gov

Library of Congress web site

www.nagc.org/index.html

National Association for Gifted Children

<https://pisdouncil.membershiptoolkit.com/Sage>

Plano ISD Special and Gifted Education page

www.sengifted.org

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted - valuable site affiliated with Dr. James Webb

www.si.edu

Smithsonian Institute web site

www.tagfam.org

General information about gifted students and issues that impact them

www.txgifted.org

Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented

Note: The information provided by individuals/organizations found within above web sites are strictly those of the site authors. The contents of these pages have not been reviewed by Plano ISD.