

SAIL Parent Advisory Group Curriculum Committee

Recommendations

The members of the SAIL Parent Advisory Group curriculum subcommittee recommend

- the development of **SAIL Articulation Records** to facilitate
 - continuity of effective instructional practices
 - appropriate goal setting for gifted students
 - communication
 - accountability
- clarifying and strengthening the role of the **school SAIL coordinators** to include
 - assisting other teachers in obtaining specialized materials, with access to special funds for this purpose
 - helping other teachers find support to implement advanced instruction
 - responsibility for maintaining records on each student
- that in the short term, SAIL coordinators should be given **release time** and/or **supplemental salary** to enable them to effectively coordinate and support this program serving nearly 1/4 of the school population, and that the district should work towards the goal of hiring **full time** SAIL coordinators to provide support for this large district program
- that differentiated instruction occur during parts of the school day that are designated as **usual instructional time**, not during lunch or recess or otherwise outside of usual instructional time
- the district adopt a **new district wide goal**: “To meet the needs of all diverse learners within our district, including a strong special education program, an excellent core curriculum, and a leading program to address the special needs of gifted learners which will serve as a model to other districts.”
- **class assignments** decided recognizing the special need of gifted students to work within an intellectual and social peer group, and to match students with teachers who can meet that particular child’s needs best
- that the district provide organized, ongoing , district wide **professional development** focused on the particular needs of academically gifted learners, and in particular about differentiated instruction
- the district adopt the "**Gifted Program Standards**" of the National Association for Gifted Children

SAIL Articulation Records

SAIL students need to benefit from formal, careful records such as specialized articulation forms that describe the interventions and differentiation that have been tried each year.

This benefits the students:

The students can receive better continuity and consistency in instruction at the level that meets their needs. These records give protection to this academically needy student population – it will help ensure that individual unusual educational needs are recorded, which is the first step in seeing that these needs are met.

This benefits the teachers:

The teachers will be given an excellent starting point for beginning differentiated instruction for the gifted student(s) in his or her class. The teacher will have a better idea of what topics are already mastered and will not need to spend time figuring this out before beginning instruction at the appropriate level. Worthwhile instructional resources and approaches are already identified, and the teacher will not have to search for something new.

This benefits the parents:

When parents want to know how their child's needs are being addressed, the answers will be available. Parents can use this information to be partners in creating the best possible educational experience for their children.

This benefits the district:

Keeping these records will allow the district to make more exact statements about the differentiation being done to accommodate SAIL students. When parents ask the district to show how it is addressing the needs of gifted students – individually or in the aggregate – these forms will provide valuable information for that conversation.

We recognize that a program serving 23% of the school district population by necessity must be a diverse program, addressing a multiplicity of needs and levels of need within that 23%. Some students have needs that can be described concisely or some students will only participate in a small number of SAIL programs during a school year, while other students will need further detail and elaboration for clear descriptions of the differentiation that meets their needs. Accordingly, we have included both a **Basic SAIL Articulation Record**, as well as an **Extended SAIL Articulation Record** that allows for more detailed descriptions and supporting documents.

See Appendix for both forms, as well as sample responses to the items in the forms.

Role of the School SAIL Coordinator:

Each school has a teacher identified as the SAIL coordinator. With SAIL serving 23% or more of the school population, it is imperative that the school SAIL coordinator be a strong, positive presence in each school.

The classroom teachers are each accountable for providing appropriately differentiated instruction within each classroom. The SAIL coordinator needs to be accountable to parents and to the district that the SAIL program is being implemented within the school in a manner that meets the varying needs of the 23% of the students identified as academically needy within the parameters of the SAIL program.

In particular, the SAIL coordinator should be responsible for

- assisting other teachers in **obtaining specialized materials** to aid in the instruction of SAIL students, with access to special **funds** for this purpose
- helping other teachers find **support to implement advanced instruction**, with special attention given to supporting teachers who need to accommodate students performing more than two years above grade level
- maintaining **records** on each SAIL student, and maintaining aggregate records that indicate how the school as a whole meets the needs of SAIL students
- facilitating **communication** between parents and teachers about individual SAIL students, and facilitating communication with the school community and the district about that school's implementation of the SAIL program
- coordinating meaningful **assessment** of SAIL student achievements and needs
- **advising** SAIL students with particular needs related to their SAIL status

The SAIL coordinator should receive support and time to enable him or her to fulfill these responsibilities successfully.

The SAIL coordinator should receive **education and training** specifically aimed at the special knowledge needed to fulfill the responsibilities of this position. The training should include

- understanding the learning differences and social/emotional needs of the gifted child, and how to provide support for these needs
- an introduction to the record keeping and communication requirements particular to the SAIL program
- an orientation clarifying what school and district resources are available for helping to meet the needs of SAIL students, and how to access these resources
- ongoing opportunities for networking and sharing ideas in order to creatively find or invent resources for meeting unusual needs of SAIL students

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The SAIL coordinator at each school is asked to coordinate a program that serves the needs of nearly 1/4 of the students in that school, and this is substantial.

In the short term, SAIL coordinators should be given **release time** and/or a **supplemental salary** to enable them to spend the time needed to do a good job. The district should work towards the goal of hiring a well-qualified **full time SAIL coordinator** for every school to provide support for this large program.

Benchmarks for this goal: two shared elementary school coordinators and one shared coordinator for the three middle schools and high school hired by September 2008; one full time coordinator in every school by September 2010.

The SAIL coordinator should be responsible for assisting other teachers in **obtaining specialized materials** to aid in the instruction of SAIL students.

- The SAIL coordinator should be given **access to funds** to purchase needed materials (such as advanced textbooks, or access to distance learning opportunities) for SAIL students.
- SAIL coordinators should have **expedited access to resources** within the district (such as borrowing “extra” or old textbooks from other schools within the district).

The SAIL coordinator should be prepared to help teachers find **support to implement advanced instruction** when the teacher is not able to give instruction at the level that a particular student needs. Teachers may need assistance for a variety of reasons ranging from lack of time to unfamiliarity with an academic subject, or teachers may simply be in need of a good idea from a more experienced colleague. SAIL coordinators should be empowered to designate that a SAIL student needs time with a subject area specialist.

The SAIL coordinator should be responsible for **maintaining records** on each student who has needs met by SAIL programs, ranging from participation in SAIL convocations to extraordinary differentiation within the classroom to differentiation that employs outside resources.

- This coordinator should be available to facilitate **communication** with parents, teachers and specialists involved in meeting the needs of particular gifted students.
- The SAIL coordinator will play a special role in assisting with **articulation** as this special needs population is promoted from one grade to the next.
- The SAIL coordinator should also be responsible for compiling school wide SAIL records to provide **aggregate information** to the district about how each school is implementing SAIL programs.

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The SAIL coordinator should be responsible for coordinating meaningful **assessment and goal setting** for SAIL students to measure achievement and needs.

- It is not adequate for an assessment of a gifted student to indicate that the student is “above grade level.” Meaningful assessments need to measure what a student has achieved at the beginning of an instructional time period (such as a school year) and how that **achievement has grown** by the end of that instructional time period.
- It is reasonable to expect that goals should be set in a manner that takes into account **what a student already knows** – for example, mastering 5th grade math is not an appropriate annual goal for a 5th grade student who has demonstrated mastery of 5th grade math during his 3rd grade year.

The SAIL coordinator needs to assist classroom teachers in **finding appropriate assessment tools** to measure SAIL student achievements and needs. For example, the SAIL coordinator should be ready to supply reading and math tests that measure beginning of year and end of year proficiency on a variety of dimensions at a wide variety of grade levels. An example of this sort of test is the Leslie and Caldwell qualitative reading inventory, which measures comprehension, decoding and fluency. Another example is the Silver Burdett Ginn math inventories which help teachers assess grade level mastery as well as individual math topic mastery.

- SAIL coordinators should also assist classroom teachers in **collecting portfolio** type assessments to document SAIL student achievement during the course of a school year.
- SAIL coordinators should assist with **using the results** of end of year assessment to set appropriate goals for the upcoming school year.

The SAIL coordinator should be prepared to **advise** SAIL students with particular needs related to their SAIL status. Many studies have shown that gifted students may have an unusual set of social/emotional needs. The SAIL coordinator should be prepared to give group or individual guidance to gifted students with these needs. The needs may range from coaching for interactions with age-peers, development of study skills, coping with self esteem issues, to career counseling and more.

Instructional Time

Differentiated instruction must occur during parts of the school day that are designated as **usual instructional time**, not during lunch or recess or otherwise outside of usual instructional time

Gifted kids need the same scheduled breaks from academic work that all kids need. Gifted kids should not give up the social, rest, physical activity, and free choice opportunities that occur during lunch, recess and before and after the normal school day in order to receive instruction at a level that meets their academic needs. This instruction must occur within the time frame designated as usual instructional time. Some gifted kids are at particular risk for difficulty with same-age social interactions, and this risk should not be exacerbated by removing gifted children from the usual opportunities to interact with age-peers in unstructured time.

District Wide Goal

We recommend that the district adopt a **new district wide goal**:

To meet the needs of all diverse learners within our district, including a strong special education program, an excellent core curriculum, and a leading program to address the special needs of gifted learners which will serve as a model to other districts.

Montclair is a diverse community, with a diverse set of students in the SAIL program in each school. We have the opportunity to become a role model district in developing an outstanding gifted and talented education program that meets the needs of all the gifted students within the district – regardless of socioeconomic status, and tailored to each child’s individual abilities and needs whether those are at the 77th percentile or the 99th percentile.

Class Assignments

We recommend that **class assignments** for SAIL students will be decided recognizing the special need of gifted students to work within an intellectual and social peer group

We respect the district's position that SAIL will not be a pull out program, so in order to give kids the chance to work within an **intellectual peer group**, SAIL kids should be given class assignments that allow groups of gifted students to be classmates. This does not mean that all SAIL students in each grade at each school need to be in one class, but that SAIL students must not be isolated from their academic peer group within a grade by deliberately separating the top students into different classes. Priority should be given when making class assignment to group together, within a single class, top students in a particular subject area. This allows the students to have meaningful academic partnerships on a regular basis without creating a pull out program – it provides the opportunity for flexible grouping within the classroom by subject area. This helps the students (meaningful partners for projects, avoids feelings of isolation from peers) and helps the teachers – more efficient differentiation efforts when students can be grouped.

We also recommend that special consideration be given to **match SAIL students with teachers** who can meet that particular child's needs best. For example, if a student needs acceleration in a particular subject area, and there is a teacher with expertise in that subject area, it makes sense to give priority to placing the SAIL student with that teacher. Also, some gifted learners have particular learning style strengths which should be considered when deciding class placement.

Professional Development

We recommend that the Montclair schools conduct organized, ongoing , district wide professional development focused on the particular needs of academically gifted learners, and in particular about differentiated instruction.

Differentiated instruction can be difficult to enact well. It is a worthy goal and the best teachers in Montclair differentiate their instruction. To facilitate effective differentiation on a wide scale, all teachers need to be involved in professional development supporting this types of instruction. All teachers should have the opportunity to and be encouraged to collaborate regularly, plan lessons and units together, reflect together on their teaching, view classrooms where differentiation is happening (perhaps via videos), and discuss methods and goals of differentiation.

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If money is available, professional developers from outside, can work with teachers to develop elements of a differentiated curriculum. However, regardless of the availability of outside help, we recommend that district leaders, and experienced teachers develop a common vision of good differentiated instruction, one that can be used to identify good differentiated instruction in action and articulate it to others. Once the vision is clear, documented, and accompanied by examples (e. g. from video clips from our district or elsewhere), work can be done in and among schools to expand this vision of good differentiated instruction to more and more classrooms.

We recommend that all district educators, especially those at the smaller elementary schools, collaborate across schools on a regular basis. In some of these schools, there is one teacher in the upper grades who specializes in a particular subject. In these cases, these teachers have no teacher on their grade level with whom to plan their lessons. These teachers need to develop trusting relationships with their colleagues in neighboring schools in order to do their best work.

Adopting Standards

The district should adopt the "**Gifted Program Standards**" of the National Association for Gifted Children.

These standards are cited in New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:8. Project SAIL was developed as a response to this state mandate for every school district to implement a gifted and talented education policy.

Appendix: Suggested items and sample responses for Basic SAIL Articulation Record

The purpose of this form is to record the special achievements of a student during an academic year in which he or she has been a participant in the SAIL program, and to record the accommodations that have been made to support this student's special academic needs.

This form also has the purpose of informing next year's instructional choices to build on successes achieved this year. This articulation form should be written so that next year's teacher can read, understand and implement what is written.

This form will be filled out by the current year classroom teacher(s). The teacher may consult with the SAIL coordinator, with any other school personnel or volunteers who have provided instruction or support to this student, with the parents, and with the student when filling out this form.

- **What SAIL programs has the student participated in this year?**

Sample response: This student participated in a SAIL convocation at (location) on (date). This convocation gave the student the chance for an in depth learning experience about _____.

Sample responses: He participated in six meetings of the chemistry club, led by 5th grade teacher _____.

Sample response: She worked with three classmates and Writer's Room coach ___ twice a week for four weeks on a study of figurative language.

- **What differentiated learning opportunities or acceleration did the student complete?**

Sample response: The student pre-tested out of math units on _____, _____ and _____ and instead spent time learning about _____.

Sample response: The student studied a list of challenge words in addition to the usual weekly spelling list, and regularly showed mastery of the spelling and definition of these words on weekly tests.

- **Note any special resources used for differentiation, and any special demonstrations of mastery of above-grade level material**

Sample response: The student has mastered arithmetic of fractions as shown by a score of 97% on the attached test.

Sample response: He completed a study of figurative language and demonstrated mastery by writing original poetry (attached). He read the collected poems of ___ as inspiration for this study.

Sample response: The student completed bonus work from chapters 2, 6 and 7 in the math book _____.

Appendix: Suggested items and sample responses for Extended SAIL Articulation Record

The purpose of this form is to record the special achievements of a student during an academic year in which he or she has been a participant in the SAIL program, and to record the accommodations that have been made to support this student's special academic needs.

This form also has the purpose of informing next year's instructional choices to build on successes achieved this year. This articulation form should be written so that next year's teacher can read, understand and implement what is written. Goals and benchmarks are to be developed from the present levels of educational performance and be reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress during the following academic year.

If the student needs specific support services to achieve the goals and benchmarks, those will be included in this report.

This form will be filled out by the current year classroom teacher(s) in consultation with the SAIL coordinator, with any other school personnel or volunteers who have provided instruction or support to this student, with the parents, and with the student if the parents choose.

- **What SAIL programs has the student participated in this year?**

Sample response: This student participated in a SAIL convocation at (location) on (date). This convocation gave the student the chance for an in depth learning experience about ____.

- **What differentiated learning opportunities or acceleration did the student complete this year?**

Sample response: The student pre-tested out of math units on ____, ____ and ____ and instead spent time learning about ____.

Sample response: In response to demonstrated aptitude in writing, the student was assigned to work with a writer's room coach to learn the elements of writing a research report. The student's completed research report is attached.

- **What above-grade subject matter did the student study and master, and how was that mastery assessed?**

Sample response: The student has mastered arithmetic of fractions as shown by a score of 97% on the attached test.

Sample response: He completed a study of figurative language and demonstrated mastery by writing original poetry (attached).

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▪ **What resources were used for differentiation?**

Sample response: The student completed chapters 1-7 in the math book _____ and she used the collected poems of _____ for her advanced study of figurative language.

▪ **Who did the student work with (peers, instructors), and how frequently for the various differentiation activities?**

Sample response: She participated in six meetings of the chemistry club, led by 5th grade teacher _____.

Sample response: He received 15 minutes of individualized mathematics instruction from his classroom teacher every Monday, and then worked independently on math for the rest of the week.

Sample response: He worked with three classmates and Writer's Room coach ____ twice a week for four weeks on his study of figurative language.

▪ **Are there special developmental, emotional or social needs that were addressed this year, and what follow up is suggested?**

Sample response: This student is below grade level on handwriting skills, which can negatively affect his performance on standardized tests – his standardized test scores do not reflect abilities demonstrated in other assessments. He has been given extra handwriting practice, and usually writes on pages with a dotted line midway up each row. I recommend that handwriting practice continue next year, with the goal of writing on regular wide ruled paper by mid year.

Sample response: This student has difficulty relating to grade level peers in social situations. She has trouble identifying conversation topics of interest to her classmates, and difficulty making friendships. She does not work well in group learning situations. We have addressed these difficulties with bi-monthly coaching sessions with the school SAIL coordinator focusing on social interactions. This student does relate better to students in higher grades, and works somewhat better with intellectual peers. For the coming year we recommend continued social coaching sessions. We also recommend that the student be given increased opportunity to work on group projects with other SAIL students. In particular, she should be assigned to a classroom with at least two other students who can be her partner in working on science enrichment projects.

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▪ **Suggestions for how to build on the progress that has been made:**

Sample response: This student learns well independently when given challenging material. He usually needs a brief period of weekly instruction on an advanced topic and then he is very effectively able to work independently on this new material while his classmates are studying topics he has already mastered. This student should continue his independent study of mathematics in chapter __ of the text __. If the classroom teacher is comfortable giving instruction in these topics she should do so, or this student should have weekly meetings with a specialist who can instruct him at the appropriate level.

I have observed that this student works particularly well with student ___ who is similarly advanced in writing skills. Both students excelled when they worked together on their month long figurative language project. I recommend that they be given another opportunity to work together on a writing project. I suggest that for the upcoming year the principal give preference to assigning these two students to the same classroom to facilitate this productive peer grouping.

▪ **Appropriate goal setting and benchmarks for the following year, as informed by end of year assessment** (for a student who performs somewhat above grade level, who needs moderate differentiation):

Sample response I: In grade 2 this student has shown an interest in writing and regularly writes at the advanced proficient level, demonstrating ability with spelling and grammar two grade levels above placement. I recommend that for grade 3 this student receive enrichment in the area of writing. The regular classroom teacher or a writer's room coach should give direct instruction and editorial guidance that will help the student create 3 written works that extend beyond the usual 3rd grade curriculum.

Benchmarks:

By November 15 the student has pre-written, written, edited and completed the final draft of a work that demonstrates the use of similes.

By February 15 the student has pre-written, written, edited and completed the final draft of a work that demonstrates the use of meter.

By May 1 the student has pre-written, written, edited and completed the final draft of a work that demonstrates the use of a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs and a concluding statement.

The teacher will send a written progress report to the parents in late November, in late February and in mid-May evaluating the student's success in reaching each benchmark. The 3rd grade teacher and parents will have an end of year conference to discuss the need to set appropriate goals in the area of writing for the following year.

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- **Appropriate goal setting and benchmarks for the following year, as informed by end of year assessment** (for a student who performs substantially above grade level, who needs profound differentiation):

Sample response II: The third grade end of year assessment indicates that this student has mastered all topics in the area of pre-algebra. He has already begun work with solving linear and quadratic equations. I suggest that an appropriate goal for next year is that this student complete his study of topics normally covered in an Algebra I course.

This student will complete daily/weekly homework assignments from an Algebra I book. He will receive direct instruction from his classroom teacher or a specialist on the topics, and progress through the text at a pace that allows him to make sense of the material. This pace may be more rapid or more slow than outlined below. He should be assessed periodically with end of unit exams or other assessments modeled on similar ones from an Algebra I course offered within the district. These exams and assessments should be given in a manner that takes into account that although his math skills are at the high school level, his handwriting skills and speed are appropriate to his chronological age; it would be appropriate for a portion of the exam to be given orally, or for an in-depth project to replace a traditional exam.

Benchmarks:

By October 15 he will be able to write, solve and graph linear equations, and he will be able to solve multi-step linear and quadratic equations and inequalities. He will pass an assessment that covers this material, with a score of 85% or better.

By December 5 he will be able to solve quadratic equations by factoring, completing the square, using graphs or applying the quadratic formula. He will also be able to solve systems of two equations in two unknowns. He will pass an assessment that covers an additional this material with a score of 85% or better.

By January 20 he will be able to write linear equations in the point slope form, the slope-intercept form and in standard form. He will pass an Algebra I midterm with a score of 85% or better.

By April 1 he will have mastered the arithmetic of polynomials, and will be able to graph the features of rational functions. He will pass an assessment that covers this material with a score of 85% or better.

By June 15 he is able to pass an Algebra I final exam with a score of 85% or better.

The parents, 4th grade teacher, math specialist and SAIL coordinator will meet in early September to review this plan, with special attention given to an appropriate choice of text, and to specify who will provide the direct instruction and on what regular schedule.

The parents and 4th grade teacher will meet again in December to evaluate progress towards the annual goal. The math specialist and SAIL coordinator will attend this meeting if benchmarks and goals need to be revised.

The parents, 4th grade teacher, math specialist and SAIL coordinator will meet in late May to evaluate 4th grade achievements and discuss setting appropriate goals for the following year.

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▪ **Special support services** (for a student in an unusual situation):

Special services may include

- *counseling for social adjustment issues particular to gifted students*
- *transportation, for example from a middle school to the high school, to receive instruction at the appropriate academic level*
- *preferential class assignment to match a student with particular needs to a teacher with relevant skills*
- *access to technology to support special instructional arrangements, such as distance learning*
- *arrangements for a mentorship in a particular field of study*
- *instruction from a subject area specialist*