



# Elementary Gifted and Talented Referral and Assessment

**2007-2008**

PACE provides services for academically gifted and/or talented students in grades K-12 who have demonstrated the need for advanced, differentiated instruction.

The Plano I.S.D. conducts open, rolling referral, meaning that any student may be referred at any time during the school year, however, elementary students are assessed only in the second semester. Students in grades six through eight are assessed in either the fall or the spring semesters; students in grades nine through twelve should see the campus PACE teacher or their sub-school principal for referral information. Students may be referred for the gifted program by teachers, parents, principals, counselors, or by the students themselves. Students are assessed at their home campus during the regular school day.

Referral packets need to be completed and returned to the gifted specialist at your child's school by the appropriate deadline listed below.

## **ELEMENTARY REFERRAL DEADLINES FOR 2007-2008\***

<b>Kindergarten</b> (assessed in January)	<b>DECEMBER 14, 2007</b>
<b>Grades 1-5</b> (assessed in March / April)	<b>FEBRUARY 29, 2008</b>

\* Dates are subject to change.

Parents of current fifth grade students seeking to have their student assessed in sixth grade should contact their middle school's gifted specialist in August 2007 for referral packets.

**Referral packets must be completed and returned to the gifted specialist at your child's school by the appropriate deadline. Referrals received after the posted deadline will be held for the next assessment cycle.**

# PACKET 1: General Information

PLEASE KEEP THIS PACKET OF INFORMATION FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

## General Information

Individuals often demonstrate their gifts and talents in many ways; one individual may possess exceptional academic talents and another may be an exceptional artist, musician, athlete, or performer. Plano Academic and Creative Education (PACE) is designed for the student who demonstrates the need for advanced academic challenges and for opportunities to develop his/her creative thinking. PACE may not meet the needs of students whose gifts and talents are in areas other than advanced academics. Accordingly, PISD is proud to offer high quality, challenging courses at the secondary level in the fields of visual arts, performing arts, and/or athletics. Participation in PACE is not a prerequisite for these courses.

Demonstrating academic gifts and talents often is developmental, so not all gifted and talented students exhibit the need for advanced academic challenges at the same point in their education. Furthermore, some gifted and talented students excel in one area yet require grade level instruction in other areas. The younger the student, the greater the possibility that his/her skills are developing at different rates in different subject areas. As the child ages, these differences often are minimized through instruction, life experiences, and/or maturity. It is possible that a young student does not develop the skills needed for success in the PACE program until later in his/her school experience, a relatively common occurrence among kindergartners and first graders. For these students, the issue may not necessarily be one of giftedness, but may be an issue of timing given general classroom performance and/or the expectations of the PACE program. Consequently, PISD allows students to be assessed for PACE at any grade level. Parents considering having their child assessed for PACE should reflect on their child's overall educational needs, intellectual curiosity, degree of self-motivation, task commitment, willingness to work independently, awareness that tasks sometimes have more than one correct solution, and comfort with connections between language arts, history, science, and math.

Teacher referral is not required for PACE assessment. You may refer your child *in lieu* of a teacher's referral. Since referrals may be initiated by the parent, the teacher, or the student, neither referral carries more weight. This packet includes an explanation of the tests, the assessment process, and an overview of the PACE curriculum. If you decide to have your student assessed for PACE, please **complete the information in Packet 2**, and return the materials to your school by the due date. If you have additional questions, please contact the Gifted Specialist at your school.

## Assessment Timeline

- ▶ Packet 2 must be returned to the Gifted Specialist by the date and time indicated on the bottom of the Referral Information page.
- ▶ All PACE tests administered during the published assessment windows (below) are conducted at the student's home campus during the regular school day.
  - Kindergartners are assessed in January. The assessment results are mailed in mid-February. Services begin soon thereafter.
  - Students in grades 1 through 5 are assessed between mid-March and mid-April. Assessment results are mailed in May. Services begin the following fall.

## PACE Assessments and What They Mean

Decisions regarding participation in the PACE program are based upon a preponderance of information gathered during the assessment process, including both test scores and behavioral data provided by the parent and the teacher. PACE administers selected parts of several aptitude and achievement tests. Results are not considered IQ scores. Instead, the scores reflect specific academic skills and abilities related to the expectations of successful PACE students. A campus committee consisting of at least three individuals reviews the results and the behavioral data to make participation decisions. Only assessment data gathered from PISD administered tests are utilized in making these decisions. Gathering information from identical sources allows a common standard to be used when measuring student abilities. Test results and/or assessment information from outside practitioners, clinicians, and/or psychologists are not admissible.

**Aptitude tests** measure students' ability to learn. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and the Naglieri Non-Verbal Abilities Test (NNAT) collect verbal, mathematical, and non-verbal reasoning data for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Aptitude scores are considered a representation of the ability "to learn new tasks or solve problems, especially in the absence of direct instruction." (*CogAT Administrator's Manual*, page 1) These are important skills in PACE since much of the instruction is abstract, open-ended, and student-directed, meaning that the student is expected to make complex connections in his/her reasoning and to work and think independently. The aptitude tests are read to students in kindergarten through second grade and are not timed. The tests are timed in grades 3 through 12. Preferred target scores are 130 or above out of a possible 150. The aptitude sub-tests administered are:

- Verbal aptitude – verbal classification, sentence completion, reasoning through verbal analogies,
- Quantitative aptitude – quantitative relationships, number series, equation building (arithmetic computation is not assessed), and
- Non-Verbal aptitude – figural classification, figural analogies, figural analysis, figural sequencing.

**Achievement tests** measure what students have learned. Beginning in the second grade, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) test is administered one grade level above the student's current grade to measure advanced reading comprehension and advanced math problem solving. For example, a second grade student is administered the third grade test, etc. (Kindergarten and first grade students complete district developed activities in place of the achievement tests.) Preferred target scores are 98% or above out of 100%. Each test is timed. The achievement sub-tests administered are:

- Reading comprehension – short and long passages from fiction and non-fiction that require students to make inferences or to generalize about what they have read,
- Math concepts and estimation – math ideas, relationships, visual representations, number properties, operations, algebra, geometry, probability, statistics, estimation, and
- Math problem solving and data interpretation – word problems, math 'stories' that sometimes require students to select the best way to solve the problem rather than asking them to compute an answer, tables, graphs, and discovering relationships between data.

Though in the conventional sense, it is not possible to 'study' for these tests, some find it useful to practice making generalizations from short conversations or passages and having children consider how to solve mathematical problems rather than just completing computation. Others find that exposing their child to any test format at home in a 'fun' way is useful in preparing the child to take a standardized test. (Local bookstores stock age specific examples of a variety of tests.) Naturally, the age-old advice to have a restful night's sleep prior to the testing sessions and to eat a normal breakfast remains wise. Scores are mailed home as indicated in the Assessment Timeline and are shared with your child's classroom teacher. The goal of assessing students is to gather important information about how your child learns, whether or not PACE is recommended to meet your child's needs at the time.

## **PACE Curriculum Design**

The PACE elementary program is a pull-out program in grades 1 through 5, which means PACE students leave their general education class several hours each week for specialized instruction. Students continue to receive their basic math, language arts, science, and social studies instruction in the general education class. PACE is not a separate class for these subjects.

Students in grades 1 through 3 attend PACE pull-out two hours each week. Students in grades 4 and 5 attend PACE pull-out three hours each week. Classroom teachers differentiate general instruction for PACE students as needed to allow for the pull-out time.

Although the PACE class involves some homework, the curriculum is structured to accomplish most of the work during the pull-out time, which means PACE students are not assigned a steady stream of additional homework.

Students do not receive a traditional grade in the PACE pull-out class. Instead, families receive a progress report twice each year showing how their student has performed.

In general, the PACE elementary pull-out curriculum:

- extends selected aspects of the general education curriculum, emphasizing greater depth and complexity.
- is interdisciplinary (language arts, math, science, and social studies skills and content are interconnected in broad topics of study).
- emphasizes creative thinking, analysis, problem-solving, discovering information through research, and presenting ideas in multiple formats including through the use of technology.

## **PACE Curriculum Syllabus**

Elementary PACE students study at least one common unit district-wide at each grade level. Additional studies are selected from the district's list or appeal to class /student interest.

### **FIRST GRADE**

An introduction to creative and logical thinking, students learn about deduction, comparing, ordering, and drawing conclusions through different types of logic problems.

### **SECOND GRADE**

Students search for clues to a problem by solving mysteries or completing experiments as they make different 'stops' around the globe in game-like fashion. This study emphasizes problem solving skills, research skills, geography skills, science skills, and technology presentation skills.

### **THIRD GRADE**

Students learn that ideas and theories sometimes develop over time in this interdisciplinary study comparing and contrasting what the concept 'universe' has meant throughout history. Students explore historical perspectives of the universe beginning with Ptolemy, Galileo, and Copernicus, then contrast these views with current research. Our study of NASA, constellations and their related myths, the use of scientific notation in the math/science world, and the use of modern technology in space research engages students in a creative adventure 'somewhere out there.'

### **FOURTH GRADE**

While exploring the relationship between one generation's science fiction and another generation's science fact, students practice scientific thinking and variable manipulation through an interdisciplinary study of robots and the basic principles of robotics. Students learn team-building skills as they design and build a robot, program their robot through icon-driven sequencing, and create their own unique robotic performance tasks.

### **FIFTH GRADE (two common units)**

Unit 1: In preparation for middle school PACE expectations, students analyze, interpret, compare, contrast, and reflect upon a variety of works rich in connotative and figurative language and learn to recognize abstract themes within and between selections. This unit prepares students for the interpretive and creative expectations of the middle school PACE program.

Unit 2: In preparation for middle school PACE expectations, students apply their logic and analysis skills while learning about Constitutional law. Students review cases, both fictional and factual that relate to selected amendments, identify facts, interpret documents, analyze opposing points of view, and support arguments for both sides of the case. This unit prepares students for the analytical, evaluative, and expository expectations of the middle school PACE program.

## PACE Program Placement Process

**1**

Students may be referred for assessment at any time during the school year, though assessment occurs in January for kindergarten students and in March/April for students in grades 1 through 5. Referrals received after the stated deadline for upcoming assessment are held until the next regularly scheduled assessment cycle. The deadlines are sent home at the start of each school year, are published in school newsletters, and are on-line under "Gifted" on the district's web-site. ([www.pisd.edu](http://www.pisd.edu)) A student may be referred by a teacher, a parent, themselves, or an adult familiar with the student.

**2**

Testing completed during the regularly scheduled assessment windows is administered at each elementary school during the regular school day. Only tests administered by PISD are used; test results and/or assessment information from outside practitioners, clinicians, and/or psychologists are not admissible. All students complete an aptitude test which provides information on how they solve problems using verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills. Students in grades 2-5 also complete an achievement test in reading comprehension and math problem solving designed for students a full grade above their present grade levels. Kindergarten and first grade students complete a reasoning or verbal activity in place of the achievement test. Parents complete an information survey, and the student's classroom teacher provides observation and behavioral information.

**3**

Participation decisions are made by a committee rather than by an individual. The campus committee meets at each school to consider each assessed student and his/her special needs as indicated by the data collected in the assessment process. The committee is made up of at least three members including the gifted specialist, a campus administrator, and a classroom teacher.

**4**

The committee's decision is mailed to each assessed student's home. Parents of students recommended for participation in the PACE program will receive and must complete permission forms before the student's enrollment in PACE is complete. Forms must be returned to the gifted specialist.

**5**

All PACE students are reviewed annually to determine if performance warrants continued participation.

## PACE Program Appeals Process

The following procedures shall apply when a parent requests that a placement decision be reconsidered.

### Conditions for appeals:

- a condition or circumstance believing to have caused a misinterpretation of the testing results exists
- an inequitable or inappropriate application of the identification process is alleged
- parents have substantial evidence to introduce that, when added to the existing information, creates a compelling 'preponderance of evidence' regarding the student's need for program services

1

The parent confers with the campus gifted specialist within 14 days of the postmark date on the PACE Assessment Report to review the assessment process and discuss the results. If the parent wishes to file an appeal based on one or more of the appeal conditions, the gifted specialist explains the process to the parent and informs the campus placement committee.

2

All appeals must be submitted in writing to the campus gifted specialist, with all paperwork complete, within 30 days of the postmark date on the PACE Assessment Report OR no later than the last day of school, whichever comes first, and must include information supporting that one or more of the appeal conditions exist. (Note: Only assessment data gathered from PISD administered tests are utilized in making decisions. Test results and/or assessment information from outside practitioners, clinicians, and/or psychologists are not admissible.)

3

The Campus Placement Committee does not have the authority to grant an appeal or to place a student. The Campus Placement Committee also may not table the appeal. Instead, the Campus Placement Committee screens the packet to verify that the appeal: (1) is submitted according to procedure, (2) that the information is complete, and (3) that the appeal focuses on one or more of the conditions stated below, whether or not the committee is in agreement with the details. After reviewing the packet, the principal or designee forwards the appeal information to the appointed district officer.

4

The PACE District Appeals Committee convenes to review the information submitted by the parent. The committee may include the Coordinator of Gifted Programs, additional curriculum coordinators, educational diagnosticians, principals, teachers and/or other district employees. The committee considers the information and examines the profile created by this information in conjunction with the student's assessment file and makes a final decision. The committee may decide to place the student or may decide not to place the student. The committee submits its decision to the Superintendent and notifies the parents and the campus in writing.

## PACKET 2 : REFERRAL INFORMATION

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM AND THE PARENT OBSERVATION FORM

### STUDENT INFORMATION

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Current Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Birth  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Gender (circle) Female Male

Current School \_\_\_\_\_ Homeroom Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

School Attended Previous School Year: \_\_\_\_\_ (if different than current school)

Referred by: (circle one) Parent Teacher Student Other (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Has your child been tested for PACE previously? Yes / No If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_

What language is spoken in your home **most of the time**? \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child speak any languages other than English? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, to what degree? \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENT INFORMATION

Parent/Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

### ELEMENTARY REFERRAL DEADLINES

Kindergarten: 3:00 p.m. Friday, December 14, 2007  
Grades 1 through 5: 3:00 p.m. Friday, February 29, 2008

I have read the assessment information included in Packet 1 and Packet 2. I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ to be tested for the gifted program and for the Gifted Specialist to gather all necessary information to complete the assessment process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Packets received by the campus after the deadline will be held for the next regularly scheduled testing session.

# PARENT OBSERVATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Gifted and talented individuals frequently display intellectual and personal characteristics or talents beyond specific performance in school. Please share any information, news, or examples that you believe would help a committee understand your child more completely. Sharing your child's interests or talents is not bragging. Specific examples are very useful. You may use additional paper.

## Intellectual Characteristics

1. intellectual curiosity / asks important questions

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2. understands big ideas and perceives relationships between big ideas

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3. clever / out-of-the-box

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4. analytical thinker / methodical thinker

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5. views situations, problems, or issues from multiple perspectives

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6. interprets information in a wider context (social, political, economic, technological, environmental implications)

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7. expresses ideas in a variety of ways including advanced vocabulary use

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8. learning style / enthusiasm for learning / initiative / rapidity and depth of learning

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**Personal Characteristics**

9. persistence / goal-oriented / commitment to task completion / attention span

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10. independent worker / ability to work with others

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11. sense of humor / type of humor / use of humor

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12. sensitivity / empathy / awareness of other's emotions, needs, and perspectives

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13. variety of interests / intense focus

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14. handling advice or criticism from others / self-criticism

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15. leadership in family, among peers, or in outside activities

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16. talents in art, music, writing, or performing for audiences

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17. activities / sports / clubs / hobbies

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18. recognition / honors / awards

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19. Are there any special needs or special concerns that you would like to share?

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