

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Advanced Learner Program**

### ***Who are Advanced Learners?***

According to the National Association for Gifted Children, advanced learners “are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence in one or more domains.” Students may be advanced in general intellectual, specific academics, visual or performing arts, leadership, and/or creativity. See the Advanced Learner Program Handbook for further information.

### ***Who do I talk to if I have questions about the Advanced Learner Program?***

After you have read the Advanced Learner Program Handbook for details about what students are advanced learners and specifics about our program, there are professionals you can talk to for more information. The points of contact (in order) are your child’s classroom teacher, the school’s Advanced Learner Program Specialists, and the principal. If a parent has further questions, she or he may contact the district’s Advanced Learner Coordinator.

### ***Who do I talk to if I suspect my child is an advanced learner?***

While conference times may be convenient, you may call, email, or ask your child’s teacher for a meeting at other times during the year. Parents may also contact the building-level Advanced Learner Program Specialist (ALPS) with questions regarding advanced learner identification, differentiation, and next steps. If assessments are warranted, parents will be contacted for permission. The team will analyze assessment data and identify advanced learner needs. The results of assessments regarding formal identification will be communicated by the identification team to parents.

### ***How will I know what services my child will receive?***

Students identified as having Tier I and Tier II needs will be provided a variety of services appropriate to their educational needs. Conversations with teachers and Advanced Learner Program Specialists at parent-teacher conferences or individual meetings will provide information about each student’s services. A full Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) is developed for students identified at Tier III, and modified versions of the plan are created for Tier I and Tier II students. Identified students will be reevaluated each year and parents/guardians will be contacted on an annual basis in regard to their student’s programming. (See handbook page 19 for more detailed descriptions on the Tiers.)

### ***What does it mean to differentiate instruction?***

Students come to school with varying levels of readiness to learn, different ways in which they learn, and a wide range of interests. Differentiating instruction means that a teacher recognizes those academic differences and modifies classroom instruction in order to help each child reach his or her academic potential.

### ***How will I know if my child is receiving differentiated opportunities?***

Differentiation is designed to occur in all subjects and all grade levels throughout the entire school year. In many cases, a child may not be aware that adaptations have been made to meet his or her needs, but parents are encouraged to ask their child and/or their child’s teacher about assignments, groupings, projects, and opportunities that occur in his or her classes.

### ***How can I best prepare for a meeting with the teacher(s)?***

Feel free to call or email your student’s teacher introducing your child and describing his or her perceived needs before the school year begins. At your child’s conference, share what your child enjoys about school and share your insights about your child. Present yourself as a supportive parent who recognizes the teacher’s efforts to meet all students’ needs. The following questions for teachers may help you obtain more in-depth information about your child:

1. What do you see as my child’s strengths and areas in need of further growth?
2. If my child already has a solid grasp of the subject matter in a class, what additional opportunities are available? Does s/he take advantage of the opportunities?
3. How can I support my child outside of the classroom?

### ***How do I find out what enrichment opportunities are available for my child?***

Most district opportunities will be communicated by teachers or are available on the district’s website. Students are encouraged to explore and develop their interests. These activities come to students through many avenues including parents, teachers, schools, or the district. Families are also encouraged to explore activities offered by outside organizations such as the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth and the Greater Dane Advanced Learner Network.