



Parent/Family Newsletter

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Summer 2023



Gifted/Talented Programs

Amplifying Student and Family Voices

Each school year, Gifted/Talented Programs analyzes data and reflects on our work in order to improve services for students, educators, and families. This year, to engage more families, we replaced our Annual GATE Parent Conference with bi-monthly **GATE Parent/Family Webinars** on a variety of high-interest, frequently-requested topics. We also created **GATE Parent Hour** – a monthly virtual opportunity for families to connect with Gifted/Talented Programs staff in an informal Q&A format without a specific focus or guest speaker. GATE Parent Hour was a huge success with families! Many families expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share, network, ask questions, and learn from the experiences of others. Based on participation data and feedback from families, we plan to continue GATE Parent/Family Webinars and GATE Parent Hour sessions next school year. We are pleased to share that over 5,000 family members attended our GATE webinars, informational meetings, and events this school year!

In order to amplify student voices as well, we piloted a **GATE Student Advisory Committee** at Kennedy High School this year. We will be implementing the GATE Student Advisory Committee Districtwide next school year. The purpose of this committee is to obtain feedback directly from students about the effectiveness of LAUSD GATE programs and policies. The committee will be open to middle school and high school students who are identified as gifted or talented, attending a Schools for Advanced Studies (SAS) site, attending a Gifted or Highly Gifted Magnet, and/or participating in the Conservatory of Fine Arts. Information on how to participate will be shared with students in the fall.

We would love to gather additional feedback as we plan for the 2023-24 school year. Please complete our **GATE Parent/Family Survey** linked [here](#). We wish you a restful and enjoyable summer with your family!

Summer Ideas for Families

Summer with the Library

The Los Angeles Public Library hosts a summer reading program and a variety of free events at local branches all summer long. This year's theme is My L.A. For more information, go to <http://lapl.org/summer>

LA Kids

The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks hosts a variety of free sports and activity programs for children ages 6-15. For more information, go to <http://laparks.org/lakids>

Every Body Plays

Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation is hosting a drop-in recreation program at numerous County Parks, including free meals. For more information go to <https://parks.lacounty.gov/everybodyplays/>

Preparing Your Child for Intellectual Ability Testing

Students, families, and educators all want to feel prepared for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) assessments. Gifted/Talented Programs asked Aaron Socie, Designated GATE Psychologist, to share advice for preparing students to do their best on Intellectual Ability testing.

When testing day arrives, designated GATE psychologists sometimes encounter students who are surprised or confused. Questions such as, “What is this for?” or “Why am I here?” may indicate that a student may not be “test ready.” When students know when and why they are being tested, the experience goes more smoothly and students are able to focus on doing their best. Teachers and families should share this information with students in an age-appropriate way, emphasizing that GATE testing helps families and teachers understand how students learn and what they need in school.

Although families may be tempted to avoid discussing GATE testing with anxious students, it is often best to talk it out prior to the assessment date. Although anxiety is a valid concern, openly discussing ways to address these feelings prior to the assessment will prevent the anxiety, discomfort, and underperformance caused by a surprise test. Consider equipping students with strategies for reducing anxiety such as deep breathing and positive self-talk. All designated GATE psychologists are trained to make students feel at ease during the test experience. However, families may also speak to their school's GATE coordinator or teacher about other ways to support. When students are well-prepared for testing, it results in their best performance and a positive experience.

Families, educators, and students know basic ways to prepare for an important test – get a good night’s rest, eat a healthy breakfast, and arrive on time for school. However, there are other ways to prepare a student’s brain for a GATE assessment. Although pre-exposure to a particular test will invalidate results, exposure to the types of thinking that are featured in an assessment can help students to demonstrate their full potential. Students who frequently engage in reading and discussions will have broader general knowledge and vocabulary with which to understand and respond to questions. Beyond this, it is important to foster critical thinking skills in students. This means that students should demonstrate analysis instead of simply guessing when presented with tasks or questions. This may include asking clarifying questions, utilizing process of elimination, and engaging in internal dialogue, e.g., “I understand the example I was shown, so how can I apply that to this question?” These are critical thinking and problem-solving skills and habits that are developed over time and will greatly benefit students beyond GATE testing.

A good start is encouraging students to ask questions and then seek answers for themselves. Another way to facilitate critical thinking is through games and activities. One card game that helps to develop visualization and logical thinking is SET, which was distributed to all elementary schools during the 2018-19 school year by Gifted/Talented Programs. SET is a fun and research-based way to develop visual perception skills.

To summarize how families can best support students as they prepare for GATE testing:

1. Establish strong communication between home and school to prepare your child for when and why they will be assessed.
2. Provide frequent opportunities for reading and discussion outside of school.
3. Foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
4. Provide additional games and activities that support skills such as visualization and use of logic.
5. Prepare your child mentally and physically prior to testing, e.g., tools for reducing anxiety, get a good night’s rest, and eat a healthy breakfast.

Important Dates

- ◆ **August 15:**
First day of school for the 2023-2024 school year
- ◆ **September 1:**
Admissions Day -
No school
- ◆ **September 4:**
Labor Day Holiday
- ◆ **September 25:**
Unassigned Day -
No school