



May 2008

Able Learner Program for Highly Capable Students

For more than 24 years, Central Valley School District has offered the Able Learner Program for gifted and talented elementary school students. With few exceptions, the program has remained fairly constant over the past two decades, although educational standards and teaching practices have changed dramatically.

As the 2008/09 school year approaches and the district is facing a budget shortfall, the Able Learner program will be adjusted to enhance effectiveness and better align with current standards and practices. These adjustments have been endorsed by the Central Valley School District Board of Directors, district and school-based administration.

The goals of the Able Learner Program to “offer appropriate instructional programs to meet the needs of highly capable students” are established in Board policy and remain constant:

- Expand academic attainment and intellectual skills
- Stimulate intellectual curiosity, independence and responsibility
- Develop a positive attitude toward self and other
- Develop originality and creativity

As a state-funded program, Able Learners must serve a demographically-balanced student population. The program is annually reviewed to ensure an economic, racial, disability and gender balance among students served.

Looking ahead to the 2008/09 school year, the Able Learner Program will be adjusted to better meet the learning needs of highly capable students. These adjustments include:

- **Streamline Student Selection Process:** Students referred to the program by teachers and parents are given a state-approved ability test (OLSAT). This test has proven to be an extremely accurate indicator of intelligence and will become the primary entrance test to the Able Learners Program. Use of the secondary intelligence test (WISC-3) will be used as needed to qualify students.
- **Enhance Classroom Learning Connections:** Able Learner students are part of two classrooms – their “home” school and their “Ables” school. The learning connection between these two classrooms will be strengthened through ongoing communication among teachers to provide a more seamless movement for students between their two classrooms.

At a Glance:

- Serves highly capable students in grades 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Students enter program at grade 2 and remain through grade 5
- Two full-time teachers deliver instruction
- Classes are held at Opportunity Elementary with administrative and secretarial support
- Transportation is provided for students; routes will be consolidated in 2008/09
- State-funded program is supplemented with local levy dollars

- **Strengthen Use of Technology:** Students are currently using technology as a tool for research and to complete projects. Looking ahead, technology will become more integrated into learning activities and new ways of using technology will be introduced, including use as a student communication tool outside the classroom.
- **Offer Flexibility for Fifth Grade Students:** The current one-day-per-week format for Able Learner fifth grade students sometimes creates a scenario where students must choose between an important activity with their “home” school and attending Able Learners. Adopting a schedule of two 8-week blocks (for a total 16 weeks) will offer more flexibility for fifth grade students and for scheduling of district activities such as the district-wide Environmental Ed Conference and student middle school transition tours and registration. Students will remain challenged through independent, project-based assignments to complete outside their Able Learner classroom and regular communication with peers through the use of technology such as a Sharepoint website.
- **Improve Transition to Middle School:** The Extended Core program currently serves highly capable students in four Central Valley middle schools. Looking ahead, the Extended Core program will be expanded to all five Central Valley middle schools and will be adjusted to better align with curriculum, teaching practices and assessment in coordination with enhancements to the Able Learner Program. These adjustments should provide a more seamless transition for highly capable students from elementary to middle school.

Comparing the Able Learner Program: *Today and Tomorrow*

Level of Service	School Year 2007/08	School Year 2008/09
Number of Teachers	2.6 (FTE*)	2.0 (FTE*)
Grades Served	2, 3, 4 and 5	2, 3, 4 and 5
Total Students Served	225 (includes 10 private school students)	208 – 214
Grade 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of Students • No. of Classrooms • Frequency 	55 3 One day per week	38-44 2 One day per week
Grade 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of Students • No. of Classrooms • Frequency 	51 3 One day per week	55 3 One day per week
Grade 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of Students • No. of Classrooms • Frequency 	64 4 One day per week	51 3 One day per week
Grade 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of Students • No. of Classrooms • Frequency 	55 3 One day per week	64 4 Two 8 week blocks
State Funding	\$105,000	\$111,000
Local Levy Funding	\$104,500	\$ 76,000
Destination Imagination (DI) Competition	Yes – for up to 10 students	Discontinued

* Full Time Equivalent

For more information, please contact your child’s **home school principal**. Or, you may call Jean Marczynski, Executive Director of Learning and Teaching at 228-5430.