

ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Over the years, people have asked a variety of questions about what Northville Public Schools (NPS) offers for gifted learners. The questions in this section are a compilation of the most frequently asked questions.

1. What does Northville Public Schools (NPS) offer in gifted education?

In grades 3 – 5, NPS offers a magnet (all day) program at Amerman Elementary School, which all students who qualify for gifted programming can attend. Currently there is one classroom at third grade, two at fourth grade and two at fifth grade.

In grades 6 – 8, NPS offers one course a day that meets during Academic Enrichment Hour. Currently there are two sections at each grade level at both middle schools.

In high school, students can elect Honors and AP courses which follow the A/B schedule.

2. Why did Northville Public Schools choose to offer these arrangements?

These organizational styles are arrangements recommended to facilitate differentiation of the curriculum. This was a recommendation of a Citizen-Staff Advisory Committee in 1987. This group believed that the needs of the gifted students differ from others, primarily in degree and dimension, and recommended that all gifted students have opportunities to be grouped together.

Elementary Level

3. How do students qualify for ALPS?

For ALPS consideration, students need qualifying scores on both current (within one year) national standardized achievement **and** ability tests. Total Reading and Total Math achievement scores and summary or Composite ability scores are reviewed. The screening committee meets in April to make placement decisions.

4. How can a parent appeal the Screening Committee's decision?

Students must have qualifying ability **and** achievement test scores. If a parent has additional information that might be of consideration, they should forward that information along with the *ALPS (or AR) Parent Appeal Form* or the *Advanced Math Appeal form (AR and Advanced Math refer to fifth graders only)* by May 1 to the Office of Instruction. This additional information could include other test scores, awards, certificates of accomplishment, outside classes, etc. Some reliable ability tests include the Otis Lenin, CogAT, and WISC IV; some achievement tests include Stanford, ITBS, Kauffman or K-TEA, WIAT, and the Woodcock Johnson.

The Screening Committee will review the information submitted and parents will receive a letter notifying them of the decision in mid to late May.

5. What are the advantages of a magnet (ALPS) classroom to the gifted child?

In a magnet class, the gifted child is more likely to find other children who have similar interests and learn in the same way. This type of class has more flexibility to meet the needs of gifted children to encourage and develop their talents—an answer to the complaint

of boredom some gifted students express when in a regular classroom. Students in a magnet classroom can develop a positive self-image with like peers.

6. How is the ALPS program different from the regular education program?

The ALPS program is designed to challenge the gifted and talented student. All students must qualify for the program and be identified as potentially benefiting from this option. Since the ALPS classroom is comprised of these students, they challenge each other, discuss topics at a deeper level, and learn quickly with less teacher direction. ALPS students are involved in several projects that are of a longer duration and require high levels of thinking and subject integration.

7. How will the curriculum differ in the ALPS classroom?

The curriculum for those students who qualify for the ALPS program is adapted to meet the needs of these students. Basic concepts and traditional curriculum will be covered, but through compaction (determining what concepts can be skipped or abbreviated) and integration (applying the concept in other subjects). Learning will be accomplished at a faster pace and perhaps earlier than in a general education classroom. Appropriate acceleration occurs naturally within the classroom. Sharing learning is an important part of the curriculum. Students learn how to make and present a variety of products. Higher-level thinking skills and the problem-solving process receive a heavy emphasis both in instruction and practice.

8. Will my child have to do more work?

Yes, students are engaged in more work during the school day. Students who don't make good use of class time will certainly have homework. There also will be project-type work that occurs at home.

Work is covered at a faster pace and will often require higher levels of thinking, which is appropriate for students with high potential. This will require more time, thought, and discussion in school and at home.

Teachers encourage and instruct students to become independent learners. Expect that some children will have to learn new work habits and take additional responsibility for their learning.

9. What other opportunities for students are available at Amerman Elementary School where the program is housed?

ALPS students participate in physical education, music, art, media, and foreign language classes as do all other elementary students. They also blend in with the rest of the Amerman population at lunch, recess, assemblies, clubs, and other events.

10. If a child is having difficulty in school, will this program solve these problems?

Not necessarily and certainly not immediately. Success is neither immediate nor guaranteed. The staff continues to hone their skills in addressing some of the problems associated with underachievement and/or emotional behaviors. One thing that is true is that these things take time to correct. Parents and the school will need to work together closely. Many students face a period of adjustment to a new school, new classmates, and to being in a class with all very bright students.

11. Will children make friends?

Parents should expect an adjustment period as students enter the program. However, gifted children are more likely to find others like themselves and develop friendships in the magnet program. Teachers make concerted efforts to provide opportunities for children to

get to know and work with students in the other ALPS classes. Students become very close and supportive as a group as they spend time in the program.

Parents are encouraged to continue to have their child participate in after-school clubs, programs, teams, etc, so the student can continue to have contact with peers who share the same interests.

12. How long will it take for students to adjust to the new school and the new program?

Many students need to “readjust” their self-image when they come into regular contact with many other students as bright as they are. Most students are quite well-adjusted by midyear; however, some need a longer adjustment time. It is important that parents talk with their children regularly and be in close contact with the teacher, especially if there are any concerns.

13. Can a student be successful if he or she enters the program after third grade?

Students can be—and are—successful academically and socially when they enter the program after third grade. Students are excited to be with others who have similar education needs and gifted characteristics and learn quickly.

The ALPS elementary program is organized to include one classroom of third graders, two classrooms of fourth graders, and two classrooms of fifth graders. The bulk of new students are admitted in both third and fourth grades.

14. How can parents be involved?

There are many opportunities for parent involvement including: resource person to the class, field trip participation, parent education programs, assistance with projects, and participation in groups both within the ALPS program and the Amerman school family.

15. Are students reevaluated to remain in the program?

Once a student qualifies for ALPS and accepts the placement, he/she remains in both the elementary ALPS and middle school Academic Resource classes. The appropriateness of the placement is always being evaluated by teachers and parents. Assessment is ongoing, but there is no re-testing.

16. What if a parent decides to remove their child from the program during the year?

This will be considered a yearlong placement. The ALPS staff anticipates open communication between staff and parents to work out concerns. At the end of the year, if a parent still wants to exit his/her student from ALPS, the withdrawal form must be completed by the parent.

17. What will happen if a parent chooses not to have the child participate in ALPS?

The child will be placed in a regular, heterogeneously grouped class in the home school and will receive the same fine educational opportunities offered to all Northville students.

18. What happens if the parent doesn't choose to have the child participate one year, but changes his/her mind the following year?

Students must re-qualify for reconsideration into the ALPS program, space permitting. Northville Public Schools testing is available during the third, fifth and seventh grade years.

19. What has been the evaluation of the magnet classroom over the past years?

Parents and students generally give the program high marks. Rarely does a parent remove his/her child from the program.

20. How will students get to and from Amerman?

Students arrive and leave their home school just as others in their neighborhood, whether they walk or are bussed. If a bus is scheduled, then they should take their assigned home bus. If they would normally walk or are driven by private car to their home school, then they should continue that practice. Once they arrive at their home school in the morning, a special Amerman shuttle bus will arrive to pick them up from their home school and take them to Amerman. A special staff person will have a list of students to help ensure they get on the correct bus.

Dismissal for ALPS bus riders is slightly early so that the shuttle reaches the students' home schools at the standard dismissal time, and the morning process outlined above is reversed for the afternoon.

21. Where could the child enroll in Kids Club?

Students in the ALPS program can choose to attend Kids' Club either at Amerman or their home school, space permitting.

22. Where is there additional information concerning Northville Public Schools' gifted education programs at the elementary level?

For additional information about Academic Resource or advanced math courses, refer to the Middle School information. This would apply to fifth graders transitioning to sixth grade.

If, after reading this material, you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact either Mrs. Janice Henderson, Curriculum Facilitator (248-344-8447) or Mrs. Beth McGlennen, Administrative Assistant (248)-344-8467 in the Office of Instruction, or view the district website at www.northville.k12.mi.us.