

## Answers to Commonly Asked Questions

Over the years, people have asked a variety of questions about programs that Northville Public Schools (NPS) offers students who have qualifying scores for advanced programming. The questions in this section are a compilation of the most frequently asked questions.

### Elementary Level

**1. What does Northville Public Schools (NPS) offer in advanced programming at the elementary level?**

- In addition to the rigor of the general education classroom where teachers use different strategies, an Alternative Program for Students (ALPS) is offered.
- In grades 3, 4, and 5, NPS offers a magnet (all day) program at Amerman Elementary School, for students who qualify for this programming option.

**2. Why did Northville Public Schools choose to offer magnet programming?**

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 students who have qualifying scores for advanced programming differ from others, primarily in degree and dimension, and recommended that these students have opportunities to be grouped together.

**3. How do students qualify for ALPS?**

Students must have qualifying scores as evidenced through Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and other test scores (e.g. MEAP, DRA), classroom performance, and any additional information that is available. Once the data is evaluated, parents are notified if the student qualifies for the program. Those that accept will be admitted into the program in the **fall of 2011**, as space allows.

**4. What are the advantages of a magnet (ALPS) classroom to the child who qualifies for advanced programming?**

In a magnet class, the 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 academically talented 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.

**5. How is the ALPS program different from the general education program?**

The ALPS program is designed to challenge the academically 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.

**6. 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.

**7. 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.

**8. What other opportunities for students are available either at Amerman Elementary School where the program is housed or at other schools?**

ALPS students participate in physical education, music, art, media, and world 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. For information about other schools, please refer to their school websites.

**9. 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's true is that these things take time to correct. Parents and the school will need to work closely together. Many students face a period of adjustment to a new school, new classmates, and being in a class with all very bright students.

**10. Will children make friends?**

Parents should expect an adjustment period as students enter the program. Students become very close and supportive as a group as they spend time in the program. In a classroom where they are grouped together, 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.

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 beyond the classroom who share the same interests.

**11. 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.

**12. 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 characteristics and learn quickly.

**13. 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.

In addition, there is an Advisory Council for the Academically Talented (ACAT). It is a committee of Northville staff and parents that focuses on the needs of academically talented learners and provides a ListServ and support base for parents in all buildings. To join the ACAT ListServ or learn more about the committee, log on the district webpage at <http://www.northville.k12.mi.us/parents.asp>.

**14. Are students reevaluated to remain in the program?**

Once a student qualifies for ALPS, accepts the placement, and makes progress, 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.

**15. 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. Please see the building principal for the form.

**16. 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 general education Northville students.

**17. 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. Students are tested using the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test and other measures each year and all scores along with other data are considered.

**18. 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.

**19. How will students get to and from Amerman?**

Students arrive at their home school in the morning according to the district transportation plan for their neighborhoods. This might involve walking or being bussed. Once they arrive at their home school, 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 board the correct bus for the return trip.

Dismissal for ALPS bus riders is slightly early so that the shuttle reaches the students' home schools around the standard dismissal time. Once at the home schools, the students board the buses to their subdivisions or walk according to the district plan for their neighborhoods.

All students are expected to return home in the same way everyday unless there is a signed note from the parent indicating a different plan.

**20. 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.

**21. Where is there additional information concerning Northville Public Schools' advanced educational programs?**

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 Sue Hanley, Administrative Assistant (248-344-8467 or [hanleysu@northville.k12.mi.us](mailto:hanleysu@northville.k12.mi.us)) or Mrs. Janice Henderson, Curriculum Coordinator (248-344-8447 or [henderja@northville.k12.mi.us](mailto:henderja@northville.k12.mi.us)) in the Office of Instruction, or view the district website at [www.northville.k12.mi.us](http://www.northville.k12.mi.us).