

Gifted Education in the IB Primary Years Programme

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) aim to achieve?

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

2. What are the core concepts of the Primary Years Programme (PYP)?

Launched in 1997, the PYP is a curriculum framework designed for students aged 3 to 12 that incorporates the following elements:

- Whole child focus
- Inquiry driven learning
- Concept-based teaching
- Social and emotional learning
- International mindedness
- Second language development
- Academic rigor
- Real world education
- Learning as a social act
- Coherence of learning
- Emphasis on diversity and inclusivity
- Flexible grouping and regrouping
- Mixed ability grouping
- Differentiation in the classroom
- A community of learners
- Transdisciplinary teaching and learning

3. What does “Transdisciplinary” mean?

Transdisciplinary teaching and learning is defined by the PYP as:

- “Learning that transcends the confines of the subject areas, but is supported by them.”
- “Focus on issues across learning areas, between them and beyond them, for the emergence of new and broader perspectives and for deeper understanding of the interrelatedness of complex issues.”

Transdisciplinary units organized around **key concepts** constitute the heart of the PYP. The themes of the transdisciplinary units **incorporate content from all four core subjects** in order to ensure that student learning is coherent, age-appropriate, and structured to help students learn “to accommodate the range of abilities and perspectives that occur in a heterogeneous classroom.” (*The Primary Years Programme as a model of transdisciplinary learning*). As a result of this commitment to learning that transcends the traditional boundaries of the academic disciplines, the PYP Committee stated in 2009:

“Please note that mathematics, language of instruction, social studies and science need to be the responsibility of the classroom teacher: the teacher with whom the students spend most of their time. Single-subject teaching of these areas is not consistent with the PYP model of transdisciplinary learning.”
(*Making the PYP happen: A curriculum framework for international primary education*)

4. Does my child’s gifted delivery model have to change?

As part of the APS charter school district initiative, four clusters (Jackson, Mays, North Atlanta and Therrell) have chosen International Baccalaureate as their signature program. The PYP transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning requires that children receive all of their core discipline instruction—Math, Science, Social Studies, and the language of instruction—from their primary teacher of record (homeroom teacher). If an IB school uses resource (pullout) as its primary delivery model for Gifted services, it is required to transition to a different GaDOE approved Gifted delivery model that aligns with PYP standards and practices. Over the past year and a half, four currently authorized APS PYP schools have received matters to be addressed for pullout Gifted instruction during their PYP evaluation visits:

School	IB Finding	Matter to be Addressed	Evidence to be Submitted to IB
APS PYP School #1	“To meet their GATE requirements, identified students are withdrawn one day per week for an independent enriched programme.”	“All classroom teachers [...] take responsibility at least for the language of instruction, mathematics, social studies, and science, to support the PYP model of transdisciplinary teaching and learning.”	“Statement from the school indicating how it will modify its practices to be in alignment with IB policy.” “Teacher timetables showing fulfillment of the requirement.”
APS PYP School #2	“The school has a one full day per week pull out program for gifted and talented students. Gifted and talented teachers follow a prescriptive curriculum provided by the district.”	“The PYP is implemented in an inclusive manner, so that all students in the grade/year levels in the school [...] are engaged with the PYP to the maximum extent possible.”	“Statement of the school governing body and leadership that includes actions taken to integrate the gifted and talented students into the PYP as it is delivered in the regular classroom.”

School	IB Finding	Matter to be Addressed	Evidence to be Submitted to IB
APS PYP School #3	“Gifted students are pulled from their homeroom class for a significant amount of time each week. [...] Gifted and talented instructors feel compelled to abide by district requirements which differs [sic] from essential elements of the PYP.”	“The PYP is implemented in an inclusive manner, so that all students in the grade/year levels in the school [...] are engaged with the PYP to the maximum extent possible.” Note: This is the exact same language as APS PYP School #2	“Statement from the school governing body and leadership that includes actions taken to teach PYP in an inclusive manner so that all students [...] are engaged with PYP to the fullest extent possible.”
APS PYP School #4	“Single-subject teachers and teachers of the gifted and talented are not using the [curriculum] framework.”	The school “demonstrates its commitment to the Primary Years Programme as the framework for all planning, teaching and learning across the curriculum, in particular, by using the planner and the programme of inquiry.”	“An outline of how the programme for students identified as gifted/talented is implemented at the school.”

At authorized IB schools, these matters to be addressed must be corrected no later than the next IB programme evaluation visit (occurs every five years). IB Candidate schools must ensure that PYP is implemented with fidelity prior to the verification visit (usually scheduled in third year of Candidacy).

5. How will students receive their Gifted services in current and prospective PYP schools?

Gifted students will be served in their content area classrooms through the cluster or collaboration model. While the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has approved four models for the delivery of Gifted services in Georgia, **only cluster grouping and collaborative services align with PYP requirements:**



GaDOE Approved Gifted Delivery Models



- **Resource Class:**
 - Teacher is gifted endorsed
 - **Students are pulled** for whole day interdisciplinary instruction
 - Curriculum is focused on **interdisciplinary enrichment activities**
- **Advanced Content:**
 - Teacher of record is gifted endorsed
 - **Students are homogenously grouped by achievement**
- **Cluster Grouping:**
 - Regular classroom teacher is gifted endorsed
 - Gifted instruction and services are delivered through the general content (differentiation)
 - **Up to 49% of the class may be identified as Gifted**
- **Collaborative Services:**
 - Classroom teacher is not gifted endorsed
 - Gifted content is delivered through the general content (differentiation) in collaboration with a Gifted-endorsed teacher
 - **No more than 8 students per homeroom may be identified as Gifted**

IB schools may decide between these two approved models. For example, Deerwood Academy has chosen to implement the cluster model, while Beecher Hills has chosen to organize Gifted services with a combination of cluster and collaboration models.

Authorized and candidate IB schools have the flexibility to determine how best to phase in the new Gifted service model. **Full phase out of practices prohibited by PYP should be completed prior to the school's next IB programme evaluation (authorized schools) or verification visit (candidate schools).**

6. What are the requirements of the cluster model?

The homeroom teacher/teacher of record has the Gifted endorsement, and **no more than 49%** of the students in the class can be identified as Gifted. The homeroom teacher will differentiate and apply Gifted standards, strategies, and pedagogy into the core content areas through the PYP units of inquiry.

7. What are the requirements of the collaboration model?

The homeroom teacher does not have the Gifted endorsement, and **no more than eight** Gifted identified students in the class. The homeroom teacher will collaborate during a designated planning time with a Gifted endorsed teacher in the building to incorporate Gifted standards, strategies, and pedagogy into the core content areas through the PYP units of inquiry.

8. If Gifted is considered to be an area of Special Education, why can't my student continue to be pulled out for Gifted services?

In Georgia, Gifted education is not aligned with Special Education, and is not a federally mandated program because Gifted definitions, identification procedures, and programmatic elements vary by state.

Additionally, GaDOE has identified four delivery models that schools can use to serve students: resource, advanced content, cluster grouping and collaboration. The resource and advanced content models conflict with PYP principles. However, the cluster grouping and collaboration models work well with the PYP model of transdisciplinary teaching and learning.

As part of the flexibility embedded in the APS charter district initiative, local schools may choose from GaDOE approved Gifted delivery models, provided that they do not conflict with their signature program.

9. Who will serve as the Gifted cluster homeroom teacher?

The local school will decide who will serve as the cluster homeroom teacher(s) for each grade level. The number of cluster homeroom teachers required depends upon the number of Gifted-identified students in a school. Some schools with relatively few Gifted-identified students may be able to schedule one Gifted cluster class per grade level. Other schools may need to require every homeroom teacher to become Gifted endorsed as part of the school-wide cluster grouping model.

10. What if my school does not have enough Gifted endorsed teachers currently on staff to support a transition to the cluster grouping model?

Each year APS provides Gifted endorsement cohorts. Funding has been requested to provide sufficient additional teacher training cohorts to accommodate the needs of the students in each current and prospective IB school. The timing and number of staff to participate in APS Gifted endorsement cohorts should be a key consideration as schools plan to phase in their new chosen Gifted service model.

11. How can schools ensure the integrity of Gifted instruction while changing the service model?

Changing Gifted education delivery models is a big step for schools and requires careful planning and implementation to ensure integrity of services. School leadership and GO Teams in partnership with the APS Gifted office must carefully evaluate local needs when choosing one of the two GaDOE Gifted service models (cluster and/or collaboration) that fit with PYP standards and practices.

It is strongly recommended that each school identify one or more Gifted Lead Teachers to help classroom teachers plan and deliver differentiated instruction for Gifted learners as part of PYP transdisciplinary units. Similar to Special Education Lead Teachers, the Gifted Lead Teacher provides ongoing leadership, training, and resources to Gifted cluster and/or collaboration classroom teachers in support of the transition away from resource model services. Duties and responsibilities include:

- Coordinates Gifted instruction school-wide
- Ensures quality and continuity of Gifted and Talented services
- Meets weekly with each PYP grade-level team
- Designs Gifted differentiated content as part of IB units
- Team teaches some Gifted content with classroom teachers
- Facilitates Gifted student participation in district and state competitions and exposure opportunities
- Manages Gifted testing and identification processes
- Coordinates scheduling of Gifted students
- Serves as the APS Gifted Office point of contact

Providing one or more Gifted Lead Teachers exceeds GaDOE requirements for cluster model Gifted services and represents a significant investment in our Gifted students and teachers.

12. How did APS schools become authorized as PYP World Schools with our current resource Gifted model in place?

Like all large organizations, the IBO has changed over time.

The PYP has always been structured around transdisciplinary teaching and learning since its launch in 1997. Also, since 1997, it has remained committed to keeping the PYP “community of learners” together as much as possible, always preferring push in to pullout services as part of its emphasis on diversity, differentiation, and inclusivity in the classroom.

But it was not until 2006, right about the time that the first APS PYP schools were becoming authorized, that the IBO explicitly required that the classroom teacher take responsibility for teaching core subjects. Concurrent with unprecedented growth from 1000 to 4000 IB World Schools over fourteen years, the IBO began to adjust its program evaluation procedures to more rigorously and systematically measure a school’s adherence to the IB program standards and practices (implementation rubric). Each of the last four APS PYP schools to be evaluated under these new programme evaluation procedures received numerous matters to be addressed related to pullout Gifted instruction.



PYP Development Over Time



- 1997 Launch of PYP focused on Transdisciplinary teaching and learning
- 2001 1000 IB World Schools
- 2006 PYP Committee requires core classes to be taught by the classroom teacher
- 2006 Launch of IB Learner Profile
- 2006 Garden Hills, Smith become authorized IB World Schools
- 2007 2000 IB World Schools
- 2007 Rivers, Brandon, Jackson become authorized IB World Schools
- 2010 3000 IB World Schools
- 2010 Bolton, Deerwood become authorized IB World Schools
- 2011 Beecher Hills becomes authorized IB World School
- 2012 IBO changes Programme Evaluation documents and procedures
- 2015 4000 IB World Schools

It is interesting to note that one of the most distinctive elements of IB programmes, the IB Learner Profile, also launched in 2006. Currently authorized APS PYP schools embraced this change to IB programming right from the start and have been implementing practices related to the Learner Profile for years.

APS current and prospective PYP schools are required to adjust to the realities of recent IBO programme evaluation feedback and must revise their Gifted delivery model to ensure alignment with PYP transdisciplinary teaching and learning requirements.