

New! Recently Asked Questions Regarding Highly Capable Services

Question: What is Differentiated Instruction?

Answer: Differentiated instruction can be defined as a way of teaching in which teachers anticipate and respond to a variety of student needs in the classroom. To meet students' needs, teachers may differentiate by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).

Differentiated instruction in the general education classrooms will be designed by the classroom teacher to accelerate and enrich the content taught (English Language Arts, Math, etc.) based on the needs of the individual student. The teacher will pre-assess students to determine their skill level and needs before they dive into teaching particular content areas. In a differentiated classroom, the teacher is constantly doing quick, formative assessments to determine the on-going needs of the student and where the instruction might be modified, if necessary, in order to ensure student learning is happening.

Question: What is the difference between a regular classroom and a Highly Capable self-contained classroom?

Answer: The Highly Capable self-contained classrooms are comprised of students who have all met the criteria to receive Highly Capable Services. These classrooms are housed in designated elementary school sites. The curricular resources for English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science used in these self-contained classrooms are the same resources used in a general education classroom. The instructional pacing and depth of the content may be different depending on the skills the students demonstrate. Teachers in these classrooms differentiate instruction by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).

Not every student in the general education classroom has been identified as needing Highly Capable Services. The teacher in the general education classroom provides differentiated instruction to identified Highly Capable students in their classroom that is designed to accelerate and enrich the content taught based on the skill level and instructional needs of the individual student. These teachers also differentiate instruction to students that have not been identified as needing Highly Capable Services...this response to instruction will look different

depending on the student need. This model allows the student to receive services while participating with other students within their neighborhood school community.

Question: What is different or specific to the “Highly Capable” student compared to the rest of the students in the general education classroom?

Answer: The concept of "Differentiation" in and of itself allows for students to have their needs met, regardless of what their needs are. Children are different and often times their needs are different as well. So, students identified as Highly Capable and are participating in a general education classroom likely will have some modifications in the content, process or product of their learning that could look different from what other students are doing.

Any school site, or a team of teachers at a specific grade level, or a classroom teacher may choose to group students who have met the criteria to receive Highly Capable Services together for instructional purposes in a given content area based on similar needs. Each school site will make determinations of how they will meet needs of students. While the school sites have district support in making these determinations if needed, the determinations are not district directed.

Question: If I choose to leave my child in their neighborhood school, how will they receive the differentiated instruction?

Answer: Your child’s classroom teacher will be the person responsible for meeting her instructional needs in the classroom based on the student’s skill level and needs within the content area being taught (English Language Arts, Math, etc.)

Question: Are students pulled out of their classroom to receive the differentiated instruction or is it up to the teacher to try and incorporate it?

Answer: The ways in which students might receive differentiated instruction will vary depending on the needs of an individual student, the school sites and/or the classroom teacher. There could be a situation where a student receives all of their instruction in the classroom with their teacher through a variety of whole group, small group and individual instruction. Another situation might be that a student receives reading or math instruction from a different teacher and the rest of their instructional day in their homeroom class. And, there could be an entirely different situation as well! It really depends on the instructional practices being employed at the building level.

Question: Are there professional development supports that are made available to general classroom teachers?

Answer: Vancouver Public Schools has provided two different professional development course offerings specific to meeting the needs of Highly Capable students in the general education classroom. These course offerings have been available to elementary teachers on various dates throughout the school year since June of 2015.

In addition to continuing the above course offerings throughout the 2016-17 school year, the district is in the process of developing a third course offering for elementary teachers.

As a supplement to these face to face professional development offerings, VPS is also developing some internal online Highly Capable resources as well as resources on Differentiated Instruction that teachers will be able to access.

Question: Do students who are already participating in a language immersion classroom really have the option of participating in the self-contained classroom?

Answer: We would like for all parents of students meeting the criteria for Highly Capable Service to provide us with their preference of whether they would like their child to participate in the self-contained Highly Capable classroom option or have their child remain at the school they are attending now.

The self-contained Highly Capable classroom option is on a space available basis. It is important to know that if parents prefer the self-contained classroom option and their child is placed at a site with the self-contained Highly Capable classrooms, their child will no longer be able to participate in the Language Immersion Program.

Parents do have the option of having their child remain in the Language Immersion Program. Their child's teacher for next year will be notified that they have met the criteria to receive Highly Capable Services. The immersion teacher will be able to differentiate the target language (Spanish or Mandarin) and English instruction based on the skills and needs that your child has.

Question: How does a boundary exception work if my child makes a change from participating in an Immersion Program to participating in a Highly Capable self-contained classroom?

Answer: If your child is placed in a school that has the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms, parents will need to complete the boundary exception paperwork for that specific school site.

Question: If I prefer the self-contained classroom option for my child, what school will my child be assigned to?

Answer: The district is currently in the process of receiving all of the Parent Preference forms in order to have a better idea of how many families prefer the Highly Capable self-contained classroom option. Once we have this information, we will be able to determine which elementary schools will be "assigned" to the school sites with the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms. (Part of our new processes for Highly Capable Services includes assigning each elementary school site to a school that contains Highly Capable self-contained classrooms).

Question: We would like to receive more information about the school schedule, class size, and class structure at the sites housing the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms.

Answer: In regards to school schedules, the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms operate on the same daily school schedule as the general education classrooms that are at the same school site. The school day begins at 8:30 and ends at 2:50. Class sizes in Highly Capable self-contained classrooms operate under the same VEA contractual class size as general education classrooms do (24 students in grades K-3 and 27 students in grades 4-5). The Highly Capable self-contained classrooms are straight, self-contained grade levels in grades 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Question: Tell me more about the curriculum and instructional practices in the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms.

Answer: You can find more information regarding the goals of the Highly Capable Program as well as Curriculum resources and instructional strategies on our website at <http://vansd.org/highly-capable-services/>. Scroll down to about mid-page, on the left hand side you can click on "Goals" and "Curriculum" to read more information. Typically the teachers employ a mix of traditional teaching strategies as well as some project based learning components.

Question: Is there an Open House provided for the students to get an idea of what the Highly Capable self-contained classroom would be like and also allow parents an opportunity to ask questions at the building level?

Answer: The school sites that house the Highly Capable self-contained classrooms offer an open house for parents whose children have a placement at that site. Typically, these open

houses are scheduled at the end of May or the beginning of June. The school site will notify parents as to the specific date and time.

Question: If my child is placed in a Highly Capable self-contained classroom, can my other school age children also attend the same school site?

Answer: Siblings of highly capable students enrolled in a self-contained classroom and wish to attend general education classes at the same school site as the Highly Capable self-contained program must follow procedures listed in the Vancouver School District Regulation 5115. Basically, parents need to apply for the boundary exception at the school location. The school principal makes the determination.

Question: If my child is placed in a Highly Capable self-contained classroom, is it possible to change our minds and opt for differentiated instruction at our neighborhood school?

Answer: Yes, you have the option of declining the placement in a Highly Capable self-contained classroom and have your child continue to attend their neighborhood school to receive differentiated instruction in a general education classroom.

Question: If a parent selects the option of differentiated instruction at their child's neighborhood school, can they later opt into the self-contained classroom option if they change their mind?

Answer: Parents who have changed their mind could "opt in" to choose the self-contained option; however, this option is based on available space at the designated self-contained elementary site. The parent would need to contact the Highly Capable Services office to make them aware of their preference.