

**Pathways to College Preparatory
Advanced Academic Offerings
in the Anchorage School District**

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Introduction

There are many ways a child in the Anchorage School District (ASD) can access advanced course offerings. To a parent these pathways may seem complex. ASD offers options for gifted and highly gifted students at the elementary and middle school level, and accelerated, and enriched learning opportunities such as honors and advanced placement courses at the secondary level. These opportunities, though linked, are not the same, nor do they necessarily follow from one to another in a straight path. Moreover, pathways to and through these opportunities can be quite different. Offerings are different at the elementary, middle and high school levels, with differing qualifications and eligibility. And, some of the programs are only offered in a few particular schools. This variety provides lots of flexibility. It also creates a complex path of choices and decisions. *In all of these pathways and choices, active advocacy by a parent is necessary to ensure that their child receive the best and most appropriate opportunities.*

In this report we describe the many advanced and accelerated learning opportunities available in Anchorage elementary, middle and high schools, and the ways students can access these opportunities. We provide visuals including figures, tables and text to highlight the pathways to and through advanced offerings from Kindergarten to 12th grade.

This document is based upon publicly available information. We have combined information from the ASD gifted program website the ASD High School Handbook, the ASD High School Program of Studies guide, and minutes of the ASD Board meetings. We also spoke with staff in the gifted program at ASD. Individual school-level issues that are outside of ASD policy and procedures have not been included.

This report focused on the services, programs and schools within the Anchorage School District that service as pathways to college preparation and advance academic course offerings. As we describe in more detail in this report, there are very different offerings and paths at the elementary, middle and high school. In general, there are gifted and highly gifted programs at the elementary and middle school level, and a highly gifted program at the high school level. At all school levels, the highly gifted programs are offered at a limited number of schools. In high school, all students (including those in the highly gifted program) have the opportunity to take honors and advanced placement classes. Math is not included in the middle and high school gifted program. Math instead is a curriculum progression. Advanced math opportunities usually start in 6th grade, when students can choose placement into math courses that are a higher than the usual level. Opting for advanced math in 6th grade puts a student on track to reach Algebra I in 8th grade and calculus in 12th.

At the elementary school level ASD operates gifted programs in all schools and a highly gifted program in one. There are also alternative and optional schools, which offer accelerated and enriched learning environments.

If a student is in the highly gifted or gifted program in elementary school, he or she usually transitions to gifted and highly gifted middle school programs. In middle school these programs

include gifted language arts and science classes. Students who were not a part of the gifted program in elementary school can access the middle school gifted program, by testing in. Many optional and alternative programs provide enriched and accelerated classes to all students in them.

For high school students there is a greater variety of advanced offerings. Starting in 9th grade there are honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Credit-by-Choice options, and optional programs within the high schools and alternative schools. Students in the middle school gifted and highly gifted program have the opportunity to transition into the high school Highly Gifted Program.

The following table provides a look at advanced offerings at different school levels. Each of these offerings is discussed in the report.

Availability of Advanced Offerings by School Level

Advanced Offering	School Level Availability		
	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Gifted	X	X	
Highly Gifted	X	X	X
Honors			X
Advanced Placement			X
Alternative Schools	X	X	X
Optional Programs			X
Credit by Choice		X	X

Glossary of Terms

There are a number of terms that arise when exploring the topic of college preparation and advanced academic course offerings. A list is provided here with brief definitions.

Gifted (refers to students and services)

Alaska defines 'gifted' as "exhibiting outstanding intellect, ability, or creative talent" (Alaska Administrative Code §52.890) Definitions of gifted vary by state (a clickable map at www.nagc.org makes it easy to compare state definitions).

Alaska Statutes mandate that every school district establish educational services for gifted children. Therefore, every Alaska school district has a plan of service for gifted students. The district's definition of gifted can usually be found in a district's "Gifted Plan of Service." Qualifications for gifted services vary by school district.

The ASD Gifted Program Plan of Service is located in the ASD School Board minutes as ASD Memorandum #290 (2014-2015) dated June 15, 2015. The ASD describes students in gifted services as "academically and intellectually gifted." Gifted program services are available at ASD neighborhood elementary schools; 10 of 11 middle schools; and one high school.

Highly Gifted (refers to students and services)

Every school district defines highly gifted. The definition can usually be found in a district's "Gifted Plan of Service." Qualifications for highly gifted services vary by school district.

The ASD describes highly gifted is a subset of "gifted." In the ASD, highly gifted programs are offered in a limited number of schools at all grade levels.

High Achieving (students)

High achieving students are not the same as gifted students. These students work hard, are bright and do well. They may not score high enough in testing to qualify as gifted but get good grades. Sometimes students in this group get missed. An example is when a student who gets straight A's in courses but scores a few points below qualifying as gifted when tested. In ASD, students and parents may request retesting in these scenarios.

Honors (courses)

The term honors course is a common label applied to courses, predominantly at the high school level, that are considered to be more academically challenging and prestigious. Students enrolled in honors courses generally receive greater academic recognition and possibly, if the course awards weighted grades¹, a numerical advantage when it comes to grading. Historically, honors courses have entailed more demanding college-preparatory coursework, and they were intended for the highest-achieving or most academically accelerated students in a school. In many cases, students need to meet certain prerequisites, such as a teacher recommendation or an average grade of B or higher in a previous course, to gain admission to an honors course.² Admission to honors courses is a school by school decision in ASD.

¹ Weighted courses have the potential of awarding up to 5 points in the grading scale: A = 5.0 or 4.5, B = 4 or 3.5, C = 3 or 2.5, D = 2 or 1.5, E/F = 0. An unweighted grading scale tops out at 4: A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0.

² <http://edglossary.org/honors-course/> accessed 9/27/2016

Advanced Placement (courses)

Advanced Placement is "...a program developed by the College Board where high schools offer courses that meet criteria established by institutions of higher education. In many instances, college credit may be earned with the successful completion of an AP exam in specific content areas (as this credit varies between colleges and universities, it is suggested that questions about this process be forwarded to the college or university of the student's choice). Offering AP courses is not equivalent to offering a gifted program."³

Accelerated (teaching approach or strategy)

Acceleration is a teaching approach or strategy used in courses to serve gifted and high achieving children. An accelerated curriculum gives students the opportunity to move through the curriculum at a faster pace. This can be done many ways, ranging from grade skipping (moving a student to a higher grade level classroom to accelerate their learning), to self-contained classes or cluster grouping (providing an accelerated curriculum to a specific class or group of students), to an informal differentiated structure that serves students where they are (in a classroom varying the curriculum for each student including providing accelerated learning opportunities).

Enriched (teaching approach or strategy)

Enrichment is another teaching approach or strategy. Enrichment extends the curriculum through experiences that add depth. Enrichment is in addition to the regular curriculum. It is something the regular curriculum is not offering – something over and above. The material enriches what the children are learning and is usually more challenging. Examples include pull-out programs, clubs, and mentorships.

Other educational opportunities

The ASD offers educational opportunities beyond the gifted services that are pathways to advanced academic offerings. Please go to the ASD website for more information on the specific schools and programs. If you have any questions about the curriculum or approaches used in these options, contact the school directly. These other educational opportunities are referred to in this report.

Elementary Alternatives/Optional

Alternative schools at the elementary level include ABC (Anchorage Basic Curriculum) schools that use a back-to-basic approach, a Montessori school with a child-centered focus and Open Optional schools that recognize individual strengths, needs and interests.

Middle School and High School Alternatives/Optional

At the middle and high school levels, alternative programs offer a variety of choices from a science focus, to International Baccalaureate, to programs for at-risk teens and many other choices in between.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that offer alternative teaching methods or curriculum. They operate under a contract with the district and have more independence than neighborhood schools.

³ <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/glossary-terms> accessed 9.27.2016

World Languages Programs

The World Languages Program prepares students linguistically and culturally to live and work harmoniously in multilingual communities at home and around the world. Research shows that language learning supports academic achievement and provide cognitive benefits to students.

Qualification Only Programs

Students may only attend these programs through either school recommendation, current life situation or assessment of need. Many of the programs listed below are available through neighborhood schools that also offer a standard curriculum.

Elementary School

There are two programs at the elementary school level administered by the ASD that can help students progress toward advanced academic offerings. The IGNITE program for gifted students, offered in many elementary schools, and the highly-gifted program, only offered at Rogers Park Elementary School. Elementary school students must meet qualifications that are a combination of achievement, ability, and IQ testing. See Elementary qualifications.

Program



The IGNITE program is an enrichment-based pullout program for gifted learners. The program is available to students in grades 2 to 6 at ASD elementary schools.

Program



The Elementary Highly-Gifted Program based at Rogers Park Elementary currently serves students from kindergarten through sixth grade. Designed for the educational needs of those students identified as highly-gifted, this is a self contained program offering academic acceleration and enrichment.

Advanced Academic Programs at the Elementary School

At the elementary school level, the Anchorage School District offers gifted education across the district. The IGNITE program is offered at all neighborhood schools for students grade 2-6. Student can enter this program at any grade provided they meet the qualifications. The district also offers a Highly Gifted Program to students grades K to 6. This program is offered only at one elementary school, Rogers Park. Within the district there are also a number of alternative/optional schools and programs, many of which offer accelerated and enriched courses of study. These schools and programs are open for application by any Anchorage elementary school student. Admission is based upon meeting a given program's qualifications and selection through the lottery process.

The IGNITE program supplements the regular classroom with enrichment via a "pullout model" that provides 2-3 hours of instruction each week during the school year.

The elementary level Highly Gifted Program is designed to meet the educational needs of those students identified as highly-gifted who require academic acceleration and enrichment beyond what can be provided in a standard school environment. It runs as a self-contained program located at Rogers Park Elementary School in which students are clustered into grade level classrooms, but the content, pacing and academic expectations are above grade level.

I think my elementary school child is gifted, how do I get my child into IGNITE?

Parents are the best advocates for their child. Talk to your school's IGNITE teacher, school counselor, or your child's classroom teacher to discuss qualifications and testing for gifted services. Be persistent and follow up. No one teacher or administrator can decide if your child is or isn't qualified for the program. Qualifications are determined by a score achieved through testing. Insist on testing if need be. If you need assistance, call the ASD Gifted Program at 907-742-3794.

What is the process for getting my child tested for the gifted program?

After you request that your child be tested the following will occur:

- Your child's classroom teacher completes the referral form and a checklist of learning and motivational characteristics
- A parent permission for assessment form is sent home to the parent or guardian for parent signatures
- You as a parent agree to the testing by signing and giving permission
- A Gifted Program (IGNITE) teacher conducts the appropriate achievement and ability testing, and IQ testing, if needed, is done by the ASD psychologist
- The Gifted Program (IGNITE) teacher communicates the testing results with the student's parent(s) and the classroom teacher.

This process can take up to 40 school days to complete.

The Anchorage School District has developed slightly different qualifications for Title I, English Language Learners, Military dependents, and Special Education-Dual certified exceptionality for elementary schools. See elementary school qualifications chart for details.

My child is currently in a gifted program in our neighborhood elementary school. We are moving to a different community. Will he/she still be able to be in a gifted program in our new school?

If the child is transferring to another elementary school in the Anchorage School District, their gifted education qualifications should follow them to the new school. If the child is transferring to another school district in Alaska or outside of Alaska, they will have to meet the qualifications established by the new school district.

I’m trying to decide whether my child will go to the neighborhood school or perhaps to one of the optional programs. How similar are the gifted programs across schools or are there significant differences in the kinds of offerings?

In elementary schools, alternative schools and optional programs in the district **may choose** to participate in the IGNITE program, but not all do. The gifted program provides consultation to optional and alternative programs in the areas of testing, identification, student learning plan development, and staff training. Some whole- school alternative and optional programs choose to address the needs of gifted children in their regular classroom setting. Other whole-school optional programs elect to participate in the IGNITE program, as do those optional schools located in neighborhood schools.

Elementary School Gifted Program Qualifications – Highly Gifted

	Highly Gifted Program Qualification
Highly Gifted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ children need to be at least five years old, ▪ obtain at least a 98th percentile score on an achievement test, ▪ an ability standardized assessment score at the 99th percentile, and ▪ a score at or above the 99th percentile on an IQ assessment.

Elementary School Gifted Program Qualifications – Gifted/IGNITE Enrichment Services

In addition to classroom teacher input, nationally normed achievement and ability assessments are used to determine eligibility for services provided by the Gifted Program.

	Gifted/IGNITE Program Qualification
Gifted/IGNITE Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for program placement indicated by classroom teacher on Teacher Rating form ▪ One 96th percentile score on an achievement test ▪ Two 96th percentile scores on ability tests

Qualifications for IGNITE/ASD Gifted program at the elementary levels varies under specific situations. Those exceptions are as follows:

Exceptions	Gifted/IGNITE Program Qualification
Title I schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for program placement indicated by classroom teacher on Teacher Rating form ▪ One 90th percentile score on a standardized achievement test ▪ One 93rd percentile score on an ability test
Students receiving English Language Learner services	<p>Nonverbal assessments can be used as well as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student must be eligible for ELL services or have received services in the past ▪ One 96th percentile on either an achievement or ability test ▪ A significant split between verbal and quantitative scores on an assessment ▪ Support for program placement indicated by classroom teacher on Teacher Rating form ▪ IGNITE teacher observation (if necessary)
Elementary school-age children from military families	<p>Any new-to-district student with an active duty military parent will be provisionally placed in the closest district gifted program equivalent, once gifted program participation in the prior school system is verified. Parents are responsible for providing documentation of the prior gifted placement for this verification.</p> <p>Students whose parents are members of the military on active duty must provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher Checklist ▪ One 90th percentile score on an achievement test ▪ One 93rd percentile score on an ability test ▪ IGNITE teacher observation (if necessary)

Exceptions	Gifted/IGNITE Program Qualification
<p>Special Education-Dual certified</p>	<p>Testing considerations and curriculum modifications will be used for a gifted student with a certified disability in math, written expression, or reading. In order to qualify for IGNITE enrichment services under the dual certified exceptionality, students must meet the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The student has an active IEP for Special Education certification. ▪ Support for program placement indicated by classroom teacher on Teacher Rating form ▪ 96th percentile on either an achievement or ability test (For information on tests typically used, see the Appendix - Assessments Used Chart.) ▪ Professional judgment by the IEP team and the gifted teacher that the student demonstrates definite gifted characteristics as substantiated by the teacher checklist, classroom observation, or review of work samples, and ▪ Significant split between verbal and quantitative scores on an achievement test or a significant split between the performance and verbal score on an IQ assessment.

Elementary Alternative Schools and Programs

A zone exception and participation in a lottery are essential parts of enrollment in alternative programs and schools. Transportation for students in lottery-based programs is the responsibility of parents whose students live outside the neighborhood boundaries of the school housing the alternative program.

ABC Schools

These schools are highly structured and dedicated to academic excellence. ABC schools seek to build a sense of responsibility, patriotism, citizenship, confidence, pride in accomplishment and a positive self-image within each child through academic achievement. Three schools operate this model:

- Birchwood ABC School K-6
- Northern Lights ABC School K-8
- Northwood ABC School K-6

Charter Schools

Charter schools are public schools that offer alternative teaching methods or curriculum. They operate under a contract with the district and have more independence than neighborhood schools. Each has a distinct focus, educational philosophy and structure. Charter schools serving elementary students are:

- Alaska Native Cultural Charter School K-7
- Aquarian Charter School K-6
- Eagle Academy Charter School K-6
- Family Partnership Charter School K-12
- Frontier Charter School K-12
- Rilke Schule German School of Arts and Sciences K-8
- Winterberry Charter School K-8

Denali Montessori

This program emphasizes individualized instruction using materials that are based on the development stages of students. Children progress at a rate appropriate to their ability and level of achievement. Detailed assessments replace traditional grades and chart the accomplishments of each child.

Open Optional Programs

Open optional programs are child-centered, emphasizing the physical, emotional and academic development of the individual child. The optional method focuses on "doing" which is the experience approach to learning. The schools that operate this model are:

- Bowman Open Optional Program K-6
- Chinook Open Optional Program 1-6
- Chugach Open Optional Program K-6
- Eagle River Open Optional Program K-6
- Susitna Open Optional Program K-6

Polaris K-12 School

Polaris K-12 School is Anchorage's only school to have all grade levels from kindergarten to the senior year of high school. This allows for an integrated curriculum and multi-age group learning based on student interests, needs and developmental levels. Polaris is dedicated to the principles of "community" and "self-directed learning." Parental participation is recognized as an important part of a student's learning. Instructional methods focus on "doing"- the "experience approach"- to learning. In practice, this means extensive use of manipulative teaching materials, forming and testing hypotheses, numerous field trips and classroom visits by a variety of resource persons.

World Languages Immersion Program

Language immersion programs offer students the opportunity to become fluent in a world language. There are five elementary schools offering language immersion in addition to the Rilke Schule German School mentioned above:

- Chugiak Spanish Partial Immersion Program K-5
- Government Hill Spanish Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Program K-6
- Sand Lake Japanese Partial Immersion Program K-6
- Scenic Park Chinese FLES Program K-6
- Turnagain Russian Immersion Program K-6

Middle School

ASD offers a gifted program at 10 of 11 middle schools and a highly-gifted program at two: Romig and Central middle schools. Students who were not in the gifted or highly gifted programs in elementary school can request testing. See qualifications on the middle school qualification sheet. Students not enrolled in the middle school gifted program can request placement in gifted language arts and science classes.



Gifted language arts and science classes are offered in the 10 of 11 neighborhood middle schools in the ASD.



Romig and Central Middle Schools host a continuation of the highly-gifted curriculum offered at Rogers Park Elementary School. Students from other gifted elementary programs who show both high test scores (achievement and ability) and a good work ethic are also encouraged to participate in the highly gifted program at Romig or Central upon meeting the eligibility requirements. Romig and Central Middle Schools are the only middle schools offering an uninterrupted gifted program for highly gifted students, providing smooth transitions through the educational levels.

Advanced Academic Opportunities at the Middle School Level

In the Anchorage School District, middle school students can access gifted language arts and science classes (called integrated science). These are offered in 10 of 11 neighborhood middle schools (the exception is the Girdwood K-8 school). Middle school students who are interested in enrolling in these classes but who are not currently in the gifted program should talk with their middle school counselor about placement. The highly gifted program is offered in two middle schools, Romig and Central.

Math is not included in the gifted and highly gifted program classes. Rather, because math is a subject that builds on prior knowledge, students have the opportunity to accelerate their math “track” by taking advanced math courses earlier in their academic career. This includes the opportunity to take pre - Algebra I in 6th grade, or Algebra I in 7th or 8th grade, when the normal progression for students is to complete Algebra I in 9th grade followed by geometry.

There are, at the middle school level, alternative programs and schools that offer accelerated choices that are not labeled gifted, but that challenge students nonetheless, such as Stellar Secondary School. Consult the ASD website for more information on these options.

I think my middle school child should be in the gifted program? How do I get them enrolled?

If your child was not a part of the gifted program in elementary school, you can seek a referral for testing in middle school. Your child must meet the ASD Middle School qualifications for the programs. It is important to note that if a student doesn't enter gifted program and accelerated math “track” by middle school, it can be difficult to enter it in high school. See the visual on Middle School Qualifications.

Parents are the best advocate for their child. Talk to the school counselor, or the teachers in your child's core team to discuss qualifications and testing for gifted services. Be persistent and follow up. One person cannot decide if your child is qualified or not because eligibility for the program is determined by scores achieved through testing. Insist on testing. If you need help, call the ASD Middle School Gifted Coordinator at 907-742-3799.

The Anchorage School District Has developed slightly different qualifications for Title I, English Language Learners, military dependents, and Special Education-Dual certified exceptionality for middle school. See middle school visuals for details

What is the process for testing for qualifications?

The process for referral into the middle school gifted program is as follows:

1. The teacher, gifted contact teacher or counselor, parent, student, or school principal makes a referral for gifted services.
2. The elementary classroom teacher completes a teacher checklist for students transitioning to middle school. A core team teacher completes the checklist if the student attends middle school.
3. The referral/parent permission for assessment form is sent home to the parent or guardian for parent signature(s).
4. The middle school teacher/counselor refers the student for appropriate testing, if needed.
5. Either the middle school contact teacher/counselor or an ASD middle school gifted teacher expert communicates testing results and placement recommendations to parent(s) and to the referring teacher/team.

What services are available if he/she is (middle school)?

At the middle school level, participating gifted students attend daily classes which offer acceleration in the areas of language arts and science. Each middle school has a contact teacher or counselor who oversees student learning plans, evaluation for the program, parent communication, and other gifted-related concerns.

In middle school, highly gifted students are grouped into science and language arts classes which are accelerated and enriched beyond the district's regular and gifted academic plans in these areas. Opportunities for growth are offered by compacting and building on the regular curricula in order to enhance depth and complexity, develop critical thinking skills, and prepare students for advanced coursework in high school.

Does it matter that he/she wasn't in a gifted program in elementary school? Can they still participate in accelerated classes in middle school?

Students who were not in a gifted program in elementary school may still participated in gifted education in the middle school. Students can take can take accelerated language arts and science classes. Talk with the middle school counselor or the teacher on the core team in the subject area of interest.

The Anchorage School District Has developed program-specific qualifications at each level - elementary; middle school; and high school and has slightly different qualifications for Title I, English Language Learners, Military dependents, and Special Education-Dual certified exceptionality. See middle school visuals for details.

My child attends a middle school without a highly gifted program. Does that mean he/she can't be in a gifted program?

A middle school student can be in the gifted program in 10 of 11 Anchorage neighborhood middle schools. Gifted language arts and gifted science classes (called integrated science) are offered in these neighborhood schools.

Does taking high school courses when in middle school count as honors?

When a middle school student takes high school level courses in middle school they can request the credit be added to their high school transcript. For middle school math, students may request middle school course work in math (Algebra I or higher) to be added to their high school transcript any time after their ninth grade year. Upon approval, the credit and grade will be added on to the transcript to the first semester of the ninth grade year. For middle school world languages, to encourage more students to begin language study in the middle school and continue into Level II as ninth graders, the Anchorage School District offers a World Languages Incentive credit-by-choice option.

Middle School Gifted Program Qualifications – Highly Gifted

<p>Highly Gifted</p>	<p>Students must achieve a qualifying score on the Middle School Level Gifted Secondary Highly Gifted Program qualifications to be eligible for the Middle School Highly Gifted Program at Romig or Central. The qualifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achievement Assessment Qualifications 98th or 99th percentile in both math and reading, or a total battery/composite/test total ● Ability Assessment Qualifications 98th or 99th percentile for both quantitative and verbal, or a total battery/composite/test total ● Teachers Checklist/Recommendation (to determine student's academic achievement and need for program services)
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Middle School Gifted Program Qualifications

Middle school students are identified as follows for Gifted Language Arts and Gifted Science (Integrated Science) classes:

	Qualification
<p>Non-Title I Middle School Gifted Classes- Students attending a non-Title I middle school who have no prior history of gifted placement</p>	<p><u>Gifted Language Arts Classes-</u> Students participating in the gifted language arts classes must qualify under the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 96th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the reading composite or the language composite. (Achievement tests should be within the last three years.) <p>*and*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One 96th percentile or above score on an approved ability test for either the verbal composite or the test composite <p><u>Gifted Science Classes-</u> Students participating in the gifted science classes must qualify under the following qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 96th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the reading composite or the test composite. (Achievement tests should be within the last three years.) <p>*and*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One 96th percentile or above score on an approved ability test for the quantitative composite or the test composite. (Non-verbal composite may be used if the score on the quantitative composite of the same test is at least 94th percentile.)

Exception	Qualification
<p>Title I Middle School Gifted Classes- Students attending a Title I middle school</p>	<p><u>Gifted Language Arts Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the language composite or the reading composite *and* ● One 93rd percentile or above score on an approved ability test for either the verbal composite or the test composite <p><u>Gifted Science Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the reading composite or the test composite *and* ● One 93rd percentile or above score on an approved ability test for either the quantitative composite or the test composite
<p>ELL exceptionalty for middle school gifted services - ELL students may score significantly lower on tests containing high language, reading or verbal content. When assessing an ELL student for gifted services, nonverbal assessments can be used as well as the considered qualifications</p>	<p><u>Gifted Language Arts Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the language composite or the reading composite *and* ● One 93rd percentile or above score on an approved ability test for either the verbal composite or the test composite <p><u>Gifted Science Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile or above score on an approved achievement test for either the reading composite or the test composite *and* ● One 93rd percentile or above score on an approved ability test for either the quantitative composite or the test composite

Exception	Qualification
<p>Military exceptionality- Students whose parents are members of the military on active duty</p>	<p><u>Gifted Language Arts Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile score on an approved achievement test for either reading composite or language composite ● One 93rd percentile score on an approved ability test for either verbal composite or test composite <p>(For information on tests typically used, see the Appendix - Assessments Used Chart.)</p> <p><u>Gifted Science classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher Checklist ● One 90th percentile score on an approved achievement test for either reading composite or test composite ● One 93rd percentile score on an approved ability test for either quantitative composite or test composite <p>Any new-to-district student with an active duty military parent will be provisionally placed in the closest district gifted program equivalent, once gifted program participation in the prior school system is verified. Parents are responsible for providing documentation of the prior gifted placement.</p>
<p>Dual certified exceptionality for gifted middle school students- Testing considerations and curriculum modifications will be used for a gifted student with a certified disability in math, written expression and reading.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The student has an active IEP for special education certification ● Teacher Checklist ● One 96th percentile score or higher on an ability test ● Professional judgment by the IEP team and the gifted teacher that the student demonstrates definite gifted characteristics as substantiated by the teacher checklist, classroom observation, or review of work samples, and test scores ● Significant split between reading and math scores on an achievement test or a significant split between the performance and verbal score on an IQ assessment. (Significant is defined as a full standard deviation or greater, which would be 15 points or more on the standard age scores.)

Middle School Alternative Schools and Programs

A zone exception is an essential part of enrollment in these alternative programs and schools. Transportation of students is the responsibility of parents whose students live outside the neighborhood boundaries of the schools that house the alternative program. Here are a couple of examples:

Open Optional

Open Optional Programs provide students with a strong foundation in all academic areas. The program recognizes individual strengths, needs and interests, and supporting social and emotional growth. This allows each child to work at his or her own pace and level of understanding in the various subject areas. Students experience multi-age classrooms, team-teaching, and assessments based on goal-setting, self-evaluations and portfolios rather than traditional report cards. Polaris K-12 and Anchorage Steller Secondary are the two secondary options for this model.

Science Focus

Central Middle School of Science is an outstanding neighborhood and lottery school with a diverse student population. Situated in downtown Anchorage, the school community focuses on science integration in all curricular areas, with high academic standards for all children. Central is data-driven and has a dedicated staff working to ensure that students are instructed and challenged at their individual ability levels.

High School

ASD offers honors and advanced placement classes at all high schools. The ASD also offers a gifted mentorship program for 11th and 12th graders district wide. The high school highly gifted services are only at West High School. See high school highly gifted and other advance academic offerings qualifications.

Honors and Advanced Placement

In 9th through 12 grades, students may select from a variety of Honors and Advancement Placement (AP) classes at ASD high schools.

West High School Highly-Gifted Program

Students in the Highly-Gifted program in 9th and 10th grades must be enrolled in six classes. In 9th grade the program clusters students in highly-gifted English, highly-gifted biology, and highly-gifted social studies, and schedules students individually in math, world languages and electives based on ability and past achievement. In 10th grade, the program clusters students in highly-gifted English and, upon recommendation, places students in honors or AP level social studies. In 11th and 12th grade students may select from a variety of Honors and Advanced Placement classes.

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Gifted Mentorship Program

The Gifted Mentorship program is for 11th and 12th grade students who have the self-discipline and interest to pursue independent study under the direction of a professional or expert in a field of their greatest interest. Mentorship study programs are for high-ability, high-achieving students who often have completed all advanced coursework available at the high school level or who are currently enrolled in coursework that applies to their area of interest. The program gives motivated, mature high school students an idea of what it is like to work in a field of interest by teaming them with professionals who act as their mentors during a 45 to 60 hour program.

Advanced Academic Offerings at the High School Level

All high school students district-wide can access a variety of advanced academic offerings. Starting in 9th grade, there are honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Credit-by-Choice options, optional programs within the high schools, standalone alternative schools, and a highly gifted program.

Any high school student who meets specific requirements can enroll in advanced academic offerings without having been a part of the gifted or highly gifted programs in their elementary or middle school years. Parents and children can talk with their counselor or a teacher in their area of interest. Qualifications for each of these advanced academic offerings are in the High School chart.

At the high school, students who had been in the middle school gifted and highly gifted program have the opportunity to transition into the ASD High School Highly Gifted Program. There are no specific academic course offerings for gifted students at the high school level. Rather, students in this program receive special counseling services and are generally placed in honors or AP classes alongside others from their cohort (though students not in the highly gifted program also enroll in those classes). This program is only offered at only one location - West High School. If a student has not been involved in the highly gifted program in elementary or middle school is it very unlikely they can qualify for the ASD Highly Gifted Program at West High school after 9th grade.

-My child is now in high school, and wants to take some more advanced courses to prepare for college. She/he has not been in any honors or gifted classes before. What opportunities are there for him/her? How do we get access to them?

-How does my child get into an AP class?

Access to Advanced Placement and Honors courses depends on the curricular area as well as prior course completion and achievement in those subject areas or related content areas. You and your child can seek placement in advanced offerings such as honors and AP courses. Talk with the school counselor and teachers in the child's area of interest. *Parents are the best advocate for their child.* Talk to your child's school counselor, or the teachers in discuss qualifications. Be persistent and follow up. If you need help talk to the school principal or the Curriculum Assistant Principal.

-Are Advanced Placement classes the same as honors classes? What's the difference?

Honors and Advanced Placement classes are offered only at the High School level in the Anchorage School District and are offered at all Anchorage High schools. Honors classes are not necessarily AP courses, but AP courses may be called Honors courses.

The term honors is applied to courses that are considered to be accelerated or enriched and more academically challenging than regular courses. Students enrolled in honors courses generally receive greater academic recognition and sometimes, if the course awards weighted grades, a numerical advantage when it comes to grade point averages. Historically, honors courses have entailed more demanding college-preparatory coursework, and they were intended for the highest-achieving or most academically accelerated students in a school. In many cases, students need to meet certain prerequisites, such as a teacher recommendation or an average grade of B or higher in a previous

course, to gain admission to an honors course.¹ Admission to honors courses is a school by school decision in ASD.

Advanced Placement is “...a program developed by the College Board where high schools offer courses that meet criteria established by institutions of higher education. In many instances, college credit may be earned with the successful completion of an AP exam in specific content areas (as this credit varies between colleges and universities, it is suggested that questions about this process be forwarded to the college or university of the student’s choice)... Offering AP courses is not equivalent to offering a gifted program.”²

West High School has two unique programs – Highly Gifted and International Baccalaureate – as well as Honors and Advanced Placement courses. What are the differences between these various options? Can any student get into these programs?

The Highly Gifted program at West High School has qualifications which are set by the ASD gifted services. There is a liaison for this program located at the school. The Highly Gifted Program at West High School is designed for the 9th–12th grade student whose educational needs cannot fully be met within the Honors Programs at the high school level. The first two years of the program offers a smaller learning community through clustered core classes. The emphasis on critical thinking and writing skills encourages depth and breadth of knowledge in all content areas. In the 11th and 12th grade Highly Gifted students can choose from Honors, AP and other advanced academic offerings at West High school and through Credit by Choice.

West High offers the only International Baccalaureate (IB) program in the Anchorage School District. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program (DP) encourages creative inquiry and critical thinking while helping students develop a global perspective. It is “a demanding pre-university program that students can complete to earn college credit... A diploma is awarded at the completion of the IB program, which allows graduates access to universities worldwide.”³ To find out about qualifications for the International Baccalaureate program students or parents need to contact the IB program liaison located at West High School.

West High School also offers a Pre-IB program for students in the 9th and 10th grade who wish to prepare for the International Baccalaureate Program. These students are encouraged to enroll in the following courses: honors English and honors social studies, biology/chemistry, algebra/geometry or higher, a world language, and the arts. IB is a challenging two-year (11th-12th) pre-college course of studies in the tradition of the liberal arts. Diploma candidates must complete studies in six subject areas: English, a world language, history, science, math, and the arts. Additionally, students undertake an independent research project; participate in creative, physical, and social service activities; and take a class called Theory of Knowledge. The IB Diploma encourages students to develop independence of thought, creativity, inquiry skills, open-mindedness, and an ability to think critically and reflectively.

Honors and AP courses are as described earlier in this document. For placement in honors or AP courses a student or parent can talk with their school counselor or a teacher in the subject of interest. As noted above, admission to honors and AP courses is a school by school decision in ASD.

¹ <http://edglossary.org/honors-course/>

² <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/glossary-terms> accessed 9.27.2016

³ <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/glossary-terms> accessed 10.2.2016

Do UAA and APU classes count as honors classes in our high school?

High School students completing college courses can get high school credit for their work under the “Credit by Choice Program”, which is designed to give students the opportunity to choose enriching learning experiences tailored to their personal educational needs, and to have them recorded on their high school transcript. This program is open to high school students currently enrolled in the Anchorage School District. One of these programs is for college course work at both UAA and APU. There is also a program for early admission to college.

The program at UAA is designed to give eligible students currently enrolled in the Anchorage School District the opportunity to receive credit for certain courses through accredited institutions of higher education. The course should correlate with the career needs of the individual. Students must submit applications within two weeks of starting the class. College courses must be 100 level and above. Student must register for at least two (2) semester hours to receive 0.5 high school credit, three (3) or four (4) semester hours to receive 1.0 high school credit or five (5) or six (6) semester hours for 1.5 high school credit. When the student has completed his or her college coursework, he or she must submit proof of grade to the Curriculum Assistant Principal.

The APU Early Honors Program provides admitted and qualified students a two-semester program of study that includes college level coursework that which at the same time satisfies high school graduation requirements. In consultation with the Director of the Early Honors Program and the local guidance counselor, a student develops an Individual Learning Plan to assure that district graduation requirements are met. Students are concurrently enrolled in their home high schools. Because schools will continue to receive federal and state funding for these students, students are not eligible for federal financial aid at Alaska Pacific University, although they may be eligible for university-granted financial aid, based on need.

The Early College Admissions Program allows outstanding students with a grade point average of 3.5 or above to leave high school for college work prior to having the time and credits for graduation. A student has the option of receiving his/her high school diploma after successfully completing the first year of college. ASD graduation requirements must be met in order to receive a high school diploma. The program serves well students who have made definite plans for graduate studies.

Being a high achieving student is not the same as being gifted. High achieving students work hard, are bright and do well. They may not score high enough to qualify as gifted but get good grades. Sometimes students in this group get overlooked. An example is when a student who gets straight A’s in courses but scores “3” points below qualifying as gifted when tested. These students may request placement in honors and Advanced Placement classes.

High School Qualifications for Advance Academic Offerings

Program	Qualifications
Highly Gifted (Only at West High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must score at the 98th percentile or above on tests evaluating cognitive ability and academic achievement • A minimum GPA of 3.5 for 2 of 3 semesters at middle school with no D's or F's. • The achievement score must be current within two years of entering high school. • Students must demonstrate a high level of competency and potential as measured by written work, transcript/GPA, • Teacher recommendations and interview. • Students admitted in the Highly Gifted program, must maintain a 2.5 GPA in core classes to remain in the program.
Gifted Mentorship (Available to 11th and 12th grade students district wide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardized test score with a national percentile rank of 92nd percentile or higher. • Student cumulative GPA 3.2 or higher. • Student transcript showing advanced course work. • Two teacher/counselor recommendations • Interview with the mentorship coordinator • Other experience or activities related to area of mentorship • Online student application
Honors (All High Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Nomination • Parent Referrals (requests) • Regular teacher and school principal referrals • Counselor referrals
Advanced Placement (All High Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Nomination • Parent Referrals (requests) • Regular teacher and school principal referrals • Counselor referrals

Anchorage Schools Alternative Programs and Schools

Within the Anchorage Schools there are a number of optional programs that integrate accelerated and enriched courses of study in their normal curriculum. These programs are open for application by any Anchorage High School students. Admission is based upon meeting the programs qualifications. The program descriptions are located in the High School Program of Study and the Student handbook (These books are available on the ASD website). Each program and school has their own distinct qualifications. Most require the student to enter the program or school in the 9th grade or there are qualifications based on earlier education experience or achievement.

Many, though not all ASD alternative programs and schools have advanced academic offerings. Here are a few examples of options that were not discussed earlier in the report. For a full list of offerings see the ASD High School Handbook or High School Program of Study:

- **ASD iSchool**
ASD iSchool is the Anchorage School District’s online program. It provides high school students with opportunities to earn credit online. Through ASD iSchool’s online classes, students have access to courses that may not be available at their school, that allow students to overcome scheduling challenges, and that meet student needs. Online courses may be taken as an initial course attempt, to replace a grade, or for academic advancement.
- **Bartlett, Integrated Honors High School (IHHS)**
The Integrated Honors Program is a college-preparatory program designed to emphasize academic writing and analysis of classic literature. Beginning in 9th grade, students will take their Honors Language Arts course and Honors History course with a designated “Honor Team” comprised of one Honors Language Arts teacher and one Honors/AP History teacher for each grade level. Experience with the Seminar Method will begin in 9th grade and continue through the program. Students are introduced to the Honors Team in the 9th grade and continue with the honors teams through graduation. “Cross connections are so important to the student’s learning experience, and these connections can be found throughout the curriculum.” In an effort to enhance student learning, the study of literature and history in all honors designated courses will be integrated and team-taught.
- **Chugiak High School Spanish Immersion Program**
The district’s K-12 Japanese, Russian and Spanish language immersion programs have designated feeder schools to ensure that students continue their immersion experience in a seamless, articulated sequence of higher level courses. Chugiak High School is the continuation of the Spanish immersion program from Chugiak Elementary and Mirror Lake Middle schools. In the high school program there are four-year upper level courses designed to increase students’ language skills while learning through content. Spanish courses include Vistas Juveniles del Mundo Hispano, Perspectivas Literarias, Estudios Latinoamericanos, and Advanced Placement Spanish Language. High school immersion courses are designed to be rigorous and challenging for students while preparing them for upper division university coursework.

Program	Qualifications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>West High School Language Immersion Programs</p> <p>The district’s K-12 Japanese, Russian and Spanish language immersion programs have designated feeder middle and high schools to ensure that students continue their immersion experience in a seamless, articulated sequence of higher level courses. West High School is the continuation of the Spanish two-way immersion program from Government Hill Elementary and Romig Middle schools. The two-way immersion program is the only one of its kind in Alaska. Students in this program are both English speakers and native Spanish-speakers who together become bilingual and biliterate in both Spanish and English. Native Spanish-speaking students and heritage Spanish speakers with literacy skills in Spanish are encouraged to enroll in this Spanish two-way immersion program. In the high school program there are four upper-level courses designed to increase students’ language skills while learning through content. Spanish courses include Vistas Juveniles del Mundo Hispano, Perspectivas Literarias, Estudios Latinoamericanos, and Advanced Placement Spanish Language. High school immersion courses are designed to be rigorous and challenging for students while preparing them for upper-division university coursework. West High School is also the continuation of the Russian immersion program from Turnagain Elementary and Romig Middle schools. At the high school level there are four advanced Russian classes designed to increase students’ language skills while learning through content. Courses include Sovremenaya Molodyoj’ i kul’tura (Contemporary Youth and Culture), Vzgl’a’d na Rossiju cherez literaturu i SMI (Perspectives on Russia through Literature and Media), Rossia i Alyska: Istoricheskiye svyazi (Russia and Alaska: Historical Connections), and Advanced Placement Russian Language. High school immersion courses are designed to be rigorous and challenging for students while preparing them for upper division university coursework</p>

Program	Qualifications
<p>Credit by Choice The Credit by Choice Program is designed to give students the opportunity to choose enriching learning experiences tailored to their personal educational needs and to have them recorded on their high school transcript. The program descriptions are located in the High School Program of Study and the Student handbook (These books are available on the ASD website).</p>	<p>This program is open to high school students currently enrolled in the Anchorage School District. These programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Travel Credit may be earned for a planned learning experience gained through participation in a travel/study tour. The Curriculum Assistant Principal must approve both the specific tour and teacher/sponsor before students may apply. Questions concerning specific credit requirements during travel/study tours should be directed to the teacher/sponsor. • Correspondence Course The purpose of a correspondence course is to meet the special needs of students as approved by the school administration. Paramount consideration will be given to the student’s record in completing independent studies. To be approved, correspondence programs must be accredited. Courses must be proctored by certificated staff. • College Course Work – University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and Alaska Pacific University (APU) See above. • Early College Admissions Program See above. • Credit by Examination (Course Challenge) Credit by Examination (Course Challenge) (AS 14.03.073 Sections 2 & 3 of the Alaska Safe Children’s Act) is an opportunity for students in grades 9-12 to receive credit through a testing process. Assessments determined by the Curriculum Coordinators will be used in most instances to challenge courses in mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and world languages by demonstrating mastery of course material. • Community Service and Field Study/ Physical Education Waiver Credit may be earned through a planned community service program that provides learning experiences in the community.

Highlights

In the Anchorage School District, the pathway to college preparatory and advanced academic offerings in high school is **student and parent driven**. The ASD provides the opportunities, but it cannot be stressed enough that **parents (and students) must seek out and pursue these offerings. Don't underestimate your role and influence**. Moreover, don't wait to see if a teacher, counselor or someone else notices your child is potentially gifted or suggest advanced academic offerings. The group of students who get into gifted programs are self-selected; they chose to pursue the qualifications to receive ASD gifted program services.

Optional programs are a choice for advanced academic offerings and college prep. Most often, when thinking about college preparatory and advanced academic offerings, parents and students think about traditional pathways taken by gifted and highly gifted students such as honors and Advanced Placement courses. The ASD has several alternative and optional programs that provide accelerated and enriched curriculum that support college preparation.

High achieving student sometimes get missed. These students work hard, are bright and do well. They may not score high enough in testing to qualify as gifted but get good grades through strong work habits. An example is when a student who gets straight A's in courses but scores a few points below qualifying as gifted when tested. These students should take advantage of advanced academic offerings in preparation for college.

Parents and students may want to look into how to use credit by choice options to receive high school credit for learning traditional subsistence activities such as fish camp and hunting.

There are options for accelerated and advanced learning across the Anchorage School District. ASD provides gifted services in most elementary schools and via the Rogers Park Highly gifted program. 10 of 11 middle schools offer gifted language arts and integrated science courses. In addition, ASD operates the highly gifted program at Romig and Central middle schools. In high school the district provides counseling support for highly gifted students and the clustering of highly gifted students in language arts and social studies courses, and accelerated placement in mathematics and science courses via the West High School Highly gifted program. It is important to remember that advanced academic offerings and opportunities are made on a school by school basis.

Future Research Questions

While this report clarifies Anchorage School District policies around how students access advanced and accelerated learning opportunities, there remain questions about the outcomes of these programs. For example:

What has happened to ASD gifted and Highly gifted students? Have they pursued higher education? What have been their chosen careers?

How do the college careers and work experience of gifted and highly gifted students compare with those who were not in the programs?

The other questions are around how access to these programs can be improved for all students, such as, Are there ways to restructure gifted and honors offerings to encourage more students from a broad range of backgrounds to attempt them?

Are there some students and parents who are discouraged from seeking these opportunities?

What is the best way to make all students and parents aware of these opportunities and to support those who want to reach for them?

We encourage the Anchorage School District to explore these questions further.