

WHAT DO STUDENTS LEARN IN THE (HIGH SCHOOL) GIFTED PROGRAM?

Beginning in the elementary and middle school SIGNET program and continuing through high school seminars, the Prince William County Schools Gifted Program curriculum is designed to build the student toward mastery in thinking. It is not so much to teach students *content* (what to know) as it is to teach a *process* - to train them *how* to think well. Students and their gifted resource teachers use an annual evaluation that assesses growth in four areas of thinking. By high school, the goals are set at a level which challenges most adults. Each year uses different seminar topics to gradually build from concrete and approachable to abstract and complex, while simultaneously introducing and emphasizing skills which build toward independence at graduation.

Seminars	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Theme (The topics of the seminars)	Order and Chaos in Who we are and What we do	Foundations, Limits and Possibilities of Scientific Thinking	American Dream and Identity Intro to Philosophy	The Big Questions: Identity, Reality, Ethics, Knowledge, Aesthetics, Success
Skill Focus (Cumulative)	Collaborative Learn to how to think as a group	+ Conceptual Start to understand abstract ideas	+ Critical Evaluate ideas and take positions	+ Creative/Reflective Consider beliefs about big questions

Listed below are the four areas of thinking used by the Gifted Program and a brief explanation of the mastery level of each. These are the goals the entire program strives to foster in gifted students by graduation:

COLLABORATIVE THINKING – RESPECTFULLY THINKING WITH A DIVERSE GROUP SO THAT ALL MEMBERS LEARN

1. Model respect and sensitivity as you try to deepen the discussion and make it successful for everyone.
2. Always choose to think about today's topic and provide helpful and encouraging feed-back to others.
3. Strive for a deep understanding of the topic and encourage new perspectives and ideas from classmates.

CONCEPTUAL THINKING – UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLORING IMPORTANT ABSTRACT IDEAS LIKE REALITY, TRUTH AND BEAUTY

1. Explain abstract and complex ideas quickly and completely.
2. See new aspects of ideas, how they developed and what they mean next.
3. Develop your own consistent viewpoint based on evidence, not just opinions.

CRITICAL THINKING -ANALYZING IDEAS FOR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AND FORMING YOUR OWN POSITIONS

1. Think through your comment and explain yourself quickly and completely.
2. Check your bias to consider and critique all conclusions -- even the ones you agree with.
3. Build a case that holds together and give feedback with reasons.

CREATIVE/REFLECTIVE THINKING – MAKING IDEAS YOUR OWN AND APPLYING THEM IN NEW WAYS

1. Ponder the ideas in focus while comparing them to your personal experiences to make connections, gain new awareness and have deeper insight.
2. Be curious and contemplate today's ideas with the goal of understanding. Connect them with other ideas to make them all matter in new ways.
3. Purposefully work on improving your thinking skills and be willing to take correction when given feedback.