

Great Falls Elementary
Advanced Academics Program (AAP)
Frequently Asked Questions

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Each year, we receive a number of questions about the AAP Program and how the Levels of Service are delivered to students at Great Falls Elementary. Below are the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) by parents and visitors. We hope you find this resource helpful to better understand how GFES provides students with an enriched curriculum and experiences with a focus on integrating the nine Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies.

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What is the AAP Program? Is it the same as Level IV?

AAP and Level IV are not the same thing. Level IV is part of a continuum of Advanced Academic services provided by the Advanced Academic Program (AAP) in FCPS. The continuum of services consists of four levels. Through a continuum of services (AAP Levels I, II, III, and IV), students engage in complex subject matter, preparing them for more challenging and rigorous opportunities, they receive AAP Level I, and II, services by their classroom teacher within their grade level classroom and Level III services in a once a week group with our Advanced Academics Resource Teacher (AART). Great Falls Elementary's Advanced Academic Program (AAP) utilize 21st century skills, Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies and experiences specifically designed to meet the unique learning profile of a broad range of advanced learners.

Great Falls Elementary houses an AAP Local Level IV, which accepts 3rd – 6th grade students from only Great Falls Elementary, unless they are in the Japanese Immersion Program (JIP). Children identified for AAP Level IV services exhibit performance capability in academic, intellectual, and creative endeavors. In order to meet their needs and develop their potential, these learners require a curriculum differentiated in the depth, breadth, and pace of instruction *in all four core subject areas*. Adaptations are made to the curriculum in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for these learners with a strong emphasis on critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. The AAP Level IV program environment allows students to explore and express their ideas with other AAP Level IV identified peers using the AAP curriculum and supplemental resources. Students in the Level IV are accelerated by a least one year in mathematics, however, Advanced Mathematics is available school wide to students outside of Level IV if appropriate.

Do students in General Ed receive AAP services at Great Falls Elementary?

At Great Falls Elementary, all K-6th grade students receive opportunities to learn content through AAP strategies and are instructed with resources from the Advanced Academic Program (AAP) curriculum framework. The expanded AAP curriculum in Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies are differentiated to meet students' needs. There is a strong emphasis on higher

level thinking skills. Adaptations are made to the curriculum in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge for these learners with a strong emphasis on critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, and decision making. Students in the Grade Level and AAP Level IV classrooms utilize units and resources from the AAP Curriculum Frameworks to receive differentiated instruction based on the students' needs.

Children need to develop skills necessary for flexible problem solving through opportunities to think critically and creatively in this rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, and interconnected world. To support their continued growth, all classrooms focus on the use of the FCPS Portrait of a Graduate traits: Communication, Collaboration, Being an Ethical and Global Citizen, Critical and Creative Thinking, and Being Goal-oriented and Resilient. Classroom experiences provide students with opportunities that lead to deeper understanding of grade level content. All students also receive instruction infused with the nine Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies of: Questioning, Plus/Minus/Interesting, Encapsulation, Visualization, Point of View, Decisions and Outcomes, Analogies, Mindmapping, and Fluency/Flexibility/Originality and Elaboration to elicit a higher level thinking response and stretch students' thinking in order to help them grow both academically and personally. In addition to in-school use of the nine critical and creative thinking strategies, the Advanced Academic Programs office provides articles for how parents can use the strategies to nurture critical and creative thinking at home. By infusing the AAP curriculum and resources into the Program of Studies for all students, Great Falls is able to provide intellectual stimulation and challenge to our entire population through advanced thinking and problem solving.

What opportunities do students have to grow as a learner and be challenged in the Grade Level classrooms or Level IV classrooms?

Students in the Grade Level and AAP Level IV classrooms utilize units and resources from the AAP Curriculum Frameworks to receive differentiated instruction based on the students' academic needs. This expanded AAP curriculum in Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies allows all students to benefit from higher order thinking and expanded opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding of grade level content.

In K-2nd grade, the classrooms have access to AAP Units in different subject areas that used across the entire grade level.

I saw a section of the progress report that says “Level of Advanced Academic Services”, how many levels of service are there and what do they mean?

FCPS has four AAP levels of service. Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) offers a continuum of advanced academic services for all students in grades K-8. Learning experiences are designed to develop higher-level thinking through enrichment, acceleration, and extension of the Program of Studies (POS). Teachers, administrators, and Advanced Academic Resource Teachers (AART) work together to provide the following levels of services:

- Level I Critical and Creative Thinking Lessons, Grades K-6

The first level is provided to all students in grades kindergarten through grade six and consists of model lessons that are designed to teach critical and creative thinking skills. The lessons are modeled in general education classrooms by AARTs and the thinking strategies are then used throughout the year by classroom teachers and other teachers who work with students. Student responses to these lessons are used as part of the identification process for levels II-IV. Parents may also practice these strategies during family conversations and activities. A description of the nine critical and creative thinking strategies may be found [here](#).

- Level II – Differentiated Lessons in Areas of Academic Strength, Grades K-6

The AART collaborates with classroom teachers to provide additional challenge through lessons and resources that extend and enrich the Program of Studies (POS). Screening for this level of service is ongoing throughout the school year. The Young Scholars Model begins at this level and is designed to find and nurture advanced academic potential in students from historically underrepresented populations. In the Grade Level classrooms, students will receive differentiated instruction within their classroom through the use of AAP resources during the school year. This is an AAP Level II service because we are differentiating instruction and access to AAP materials off the AAP Curriculum Framework are available to all children at Great Falls Elementary. All 3rd – 6th grade students who show a need for an advanced math curriculum also have an opportunity

to take Advanced Mathematics. This AAP Level II service is provided in the Advanced Mathematics class (Level IV Math classroom). In the Advanced Mathematics program, the curriculum is accelerated by one grade level (3rd grade students take 4th grade math, 4th grade students take 5th grade math, etc.). Students may also receive advanced reading instruction in the classroom based on their reading level and their need for additional challenge.

- Level III – Part-Time Advanced Academic Programs, Grades 3-6
Students identified by a local school screening committee for part-time advanced academic services Level III are challenged through models and strategies designed to extend and enrich the Program of Studies (POS) in one core subject areas of Reading and Social Studies. Screening for this level of service is done in the Spring. Students identified for AAP Level III services in the Grade Level classroom meet with the AART one a week to receive advanced academic services. The AART and the classroom teacher regularly collaborate to ensure that Level III students receive differentiated in the classroom as needed.
- Level IV – Full-Time Advanced Academic Placement, Grades 3-8
Students found eligible for placement in full-time Advanced Academic Programs Level IV through a central selection process receive a highly challenging instructional program in the four core subject areas. Students identified for AAP Level IV services in the AAP Level IV classroom environment receive instruction using additional AAP curriculum and supplemental resources. This environment allows students to explore and express their ideas with other Level IV identified peers. These students receive the AAP curriculum scaffolded to provide them with opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding of the grade level curriculum. All students in a Level IV classroom are required to take Advanced Math. Progress for students in the level IV program is reported using extended standards, available on the FCPS public website. These standards align directly with the differentiated curriculum on the AAP framework. Screening for the Level IV AAP service occurs in fall students are new to FCPS and in the spring for all other students. Additional information is available in the [Advanced Academics Identification and Placement for Elementary Schools](#) section of the FCPS website.

What is the score needed on the CogAT or NNAT test for my child to be accepted to the Level IV Program?

FCPS used to use a cut score to determine if a child qualified for placement into Level IV classrooms. *There is no longer a cut score that guarantees a student will be eligible for Level IV services nor will being in the pool or putting forth a parent referral guarantee your child will be eligible for Level IV services.* The cut score, more accurately called a “benchmark score”, determines the 2nd grade “pool” of students screened for Level IV services, but this still does not guarantee Level IV placement. The 2nd grade students in the “pool” are automatically screened for eligibility but they are not automatically found eligible for the Level IV program.

To better reflect a student's body of work throughout the entire school year, FCPS has a holistic portfolio screening process that is used to identify students for Level IV services. This portfolio includes: an abilities-test score, samples of student work, parent and teacher commentary, a Gifted Behavior Rating Scale, evidence that a child is achieving with advanced Mathematics and above grade level Reading curriculum, and evidence of student performance both in and out of school. The entire portfolio is submitted for review to the central AAP office and a central selection committee made up of educational professionals with different areas of expertise makes the decision regarding eligibility for Level IV services. The committee looks at the body of evidence knowing that no particular test score, work sample, or rating scale is weighted more than the rest of the portfolio. It is a holistic view to determine if a child needs Level IV services.

Why are more students identified for Level IV services at Great Falls Elementary than other FCPS schools?

Great Falls is a Local Level IV school. Each year, FCPS establishes criteria in which 2nd grade students are identified for the “Level IV pool”. This is often misidentified as the “AAP pool”. As discussed earlier, AAP does not mean only Level IV. Great Falls is a high performing school with a school community who values education and provides their children with wonderful experiences and background knowledge. Consequently, Great Falls Elementary has a larger than typical student population who require instruction that goes beyond the typical FCPS curriculum. While some FCPS schools may identify a smaller number of students at a certain grade level, we have more students at Great Falls, and within the Langley pyramid, identified using the same criteria. Traditionally, students identified for Level IV services go to another school to

receive these services. These Level IV center schools are comprised of Level IV students bused from typically three to ten elementary schools.

In the United States, a mean score on an abilities test (such as the CogAt) between 90-110 is typical for any particular grade level. At Great Falls Elementary, a mean score between 113-122 is typical for any particular grade level. *This demonstrates that our students need more than a typical standards-based curriculum. They benefit from critical and creative thinking opportunities and expanded learning, which is why students receive Advanced Academics Programs instruction in all K-6th grade classrooms to help them as they continue to grow as learners.*

Is it possible to refer for Level IV services at other grade levels?

Students who are not in the 2nd grade “pool” and any other 3rd -7th grade student can be screened for Level IV services through referral. These students’ screening portfolios are assembled and sent for review to determine eligibility, just the same as the students in 2nd grade pool. In 3rd – 7th grade, parents may initiate the screening process and creation of a file by submitting a referral for level IV services by the deadline published each year. This screening file then follows the same process as above. If found eligible, the student may receive Level IV services the following school year. **Level IV services are available for students in grades 3-8.**

How can I refer my child for Level II and Level III services at the school?

At any time during the school year, parents can complete a Referral Form for possible Level II or Level III services, depending on the child's growth and success with the curriculum, and submit it to our AART. The GFES Advanced Academics Screening Committee considers available ability and achievement test scores, the Gifted Behavior Rating Scale (GBRS), progress reports, and parent/guardian input to determine if Level II or Level III services are needed to further support your child’s academic development in the Grade Level classroom. This decision is a school-based committee decision and allows for us to adjust the level of service during the school year.

What is an AART and how do they support students?

An Advanced Academics Resource Teacher or AART's role is to build and support the continuum of AAP services at each school. The AART provides resources for all school staff to be able to appropriately challenge students using

approved curriculum from the AAP Curriculum Frameworks. The AART works with all teachers to be able to utilize AAP curriculum on a regular basis. Her role is to work with students and provide Level I, II, and III services to students in conjunction with classroom teachers. She also serves as a resource for Level IV classroom teachers as they work to implement AAP curriculum in their classrooms full-time. Additional information about the AART role is available on the AAP website.

At Great Falls Elementary, the AART collaborates with each grade level team (Grade Level classrooms and Level IV classrooms) to plan Critical and Creative Thinking Strategies, how to utilize AAP curriculum and to plan for differentiation to challenge advanced learners. A large part of the AART's time is spent working with all teachers in grades K-2 and all teachers in grades 3-6 who teach Grade Level in order to deliver AAP Level II and III services. The teachers and our AART work closely to deliver differentiated instruction using AAP curriculum in the four core subject areas by planning together. She also meets with small groups of students in grades 3-6 once a week who are receiving AAP Level III services to extend their learning in Languages and discuss their advanced reading material in book groups, or extend their learning in Social Studies and discuss their learning through advanced differentiation strategies (Socratic Seminar, Touchstones, Great Debate, DBQs, etc.).

What subject areas offer middle school Honors classes and how can my child enroll in Honors classes?

Honors classes, aligned with national standards for gifted and talented education, are open to all students who seek academic rigor. The goal of Honors classes is to provide extensions to the Program of Studies that add depth and complexity. Resources, units, and lessons are designed to nurture and develop advanced academic potential in all learners. The extensions in Honors classes encourage students to think conceptually; to make connections across time, place and subject; to perform as a practitioner or scholar in a discipline; and to self-assess and reflect on their learning and the learning process.

Fairfax County offers open enrollment in Honors social studies, english, science, and mathematics classes. Students who have demonstrated high achievement, interest, and/or potential in one or more academic areas and who seek academic rigor may enroll in Honors classes. Students eligible for full-time Level IV center placement have the option to take Honors classes in all core subjects at their local middle school. Each spring during the course selection process,

parents/guardians may choose which Honors classes will best meet the needs of the their child.

Mathematics 7 Honors is open enrollment for all students. This course is an acceleration of mathematics curriculum which requires students to master the content assessed on the Mathematics 8 SOL assessment. Students who have not completed Advanced Mathematics 6 may need support and/or require additional effort and study to be successful. Both Mathematics 7 and Mathematics 7 Honors prepare students for Algebra 1 or Algebra 1 Honors in Grade 8.

Algebra I Honors is open enrollment for all 8th grade students; however, there are specific requirements for enrollment in Algebra I Honors in 7th grade:

- Successful completion of the Advanced Mathematics Grade 6 curriculum or a year-long accelerated mathematics program
- Score at or above the 91st percentile on the Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT)
- Score a pass advanced (500 or above) on the grade 7 mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) test

How is the middle school AAP Level IV center program and IBMYP different from the middle school Honors?

Rising seventh grade (7th) Level IV center-eligible students may attend the assigned full-time Level IV center (Cooper for GFES). The Level IV center program for students in grades 7 and 8 offers identified students a full-time, highly challenging instructional program in all core subjects: English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The Level IV center program at the middle school is only available to Level IV center-eligible students. *If a student was in a Local Level IV school are a guest or principal placement they are not eligible for the Level IV center at the middle school.*

- International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (IBMYP): Selected schools, Grades 6-10

The IBMYP is designed for students ages 11-16. The program helps students develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills necessary to participate actively and responsibly in a changing world. The curriculum

is supported by the fundamental concepts of intercultural awareness, holistic learning, and communication.

- Honors, Grades 7-8

Advanced and/or accelerated classes are available for students in grade 7-8 through an open enrollment process. Students receive instruction that is differentiated for advanced learners in the four core subjects in one or more areas of academic strength or interest.