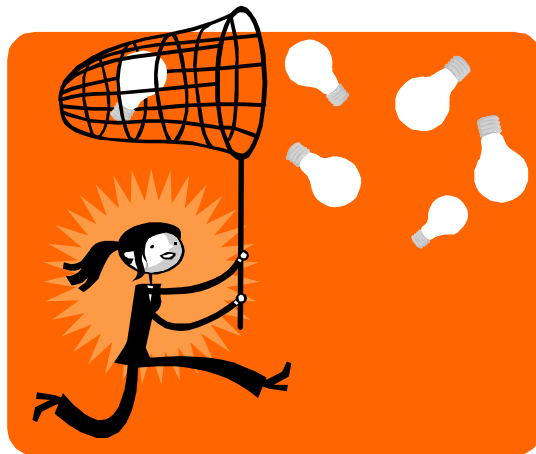


# **ASHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL START PROGRAM PARENT GUIDE**



**2006-2007**

## **WHAT IS THE ASHLAND ELEMENTARY START PROGRAM?**

The school-based program in grades kindergarten through third is for students identified as potentially gifted in general *or* specific intellectual ability. Students receive direct services geared for their strengths in language, social studies, science and mathematics. The gifted education curriculum is designed to extend, supplement, and enrich the county curriculum. One of the strengths of this program lies in its responsiveness to student interest and abilities. Another important aspect of the program is its emphasis on developing independent study skills and problem solving techniques.

### **ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES**

The Ashland Elementary START Program aims to...

- provide structure which allows for individual learning styles with varied academic outcomes
- provide experiences that extend disciplines introduced in the regular classroom
- provide experiences that explore areas not available in the regular curriculum
- challenge each student to think at higher levels
- develop independent research skills
- familiarize the students with learning tools
- assist in the development of organizational skills

### **AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES**

The Ashland Elementary START Program aims to...

- assist students in recognizing their own abilities and limitations
- provide a safe place for the exchange of ideas and academic risk taking
- promote leadership and cooperation among students
- foster respect for individual differences
- encourage students to assume responsibility for their own learning

## **WHICH STUDENTS DOES THE PROGRAM SERVE?**

The START program provides service to identified students in the category of Intellectual and Specific Ability in grades kindergarten through third. At the present time, school and division level committees identify students using multiple criteria, including ability test scores, achievement, recommendations, and strong support by teachers and/or parents. The student's profile may also include samples of his/her work, an observation and/or an interview by the Gifted Resource Teacher. The Virginia Department of Education identifies five areas of giftedness: Specific Academic Ability; Visual and Performing Arts Ability; Psychosocial Ability; Creative and Productive Thinking Ability; and Intellectual Ability. The START Programs in Prince William County directly serves only those students in the category of Intellectual and General Ability.

## **WILL MY CHILD AUTOMATICALLY CONTINUE IN THE PROGRAM?**

Every child identified for placement in the START Program remains in the START program until the end of third grade. At that time, students are re-evaluated for placement in the SIGNET gifted program.

## **WHAT ARE THE CHILD'S RESPONSIBILITIES?**

Students are expected to respond to the educational opportunities available in their classrooms as well as to those in the START resource room. Since each START class occurs during the student's regular school schedule, classroom assignments missed during START should be adjusted to include only those things considered essential. Students should keep up with newly introduced concepts as well as areas of interest or concern.

Student responsibilities at START include using time wisely and creating products which show quality of thought and effort. Establishing mutually considerate relationships with peers is necessary for all students to achieve maximum results in START.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IN A TYPICAL START CLASS?**

Student activities fall into three main categories: independent study, teacher-directed lessons, and critical and creative thinking exercises. Independent studies are available through a variety of learning stations, or centers, based on topics of interest within the fields of mathematics, humanities, and science. Teacher-directed lessons are conducted to assure that all students will receive group instruction which encourages higher level thinking skills. Units of study for these lessons enrich and extend the regular grade-level curriculum.

## **WHAT DO STUDENTS STUDY IN THE INDEPENDENT STUDY CENTERS?**

Because independent studies comprise approximately 40% of student time at START, great care is taken to direct and monitor individual progress. Each center has a contract, which delineates the student activities expected for successful completion. To encourage decision-making, contracts will often offer choices. Students can choose from among the following topics:

### **MATH**

Math and Beyond

### **SOCIAL STUDIES**

Ancient Civilizations  
Colonial America

### **LITERATURE AND WRITING**

Newsroom  
Unexplained Phenomena  
Tunnel to the Future

### **SCIENCE**

Rainforest Safari  
Ocean Resort  
Space Station  
Animal Adventure  
The Land of Simple Machines  
Fun Time Gears  
World of Toy Design and Structure

## **HOW IS STUDENT WORK EVALUATED?**

The evaluation process in the START Program is designed to be a learning experience for the student. Thinking skills are not easy to measure objectively. It may be difficult for others to “see” what thinking went into a particular product. Therefore the student and teacher discuss what was learned, how information was gathered, and how products were made. The student then does self-evaluation, examining his work for strengths and weaknesses. The student looks for those activities which were done well and those which might be improved. The student and teacher each fill out a grading rubric which tells what was best about the work and what might have been improved.

## **HOW DOES THE START TEACHER COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS?**

Approximately every nine weeks, parents will receive all of the student work that has been completed and evaluated up to that point. Progress reports will be sent home twice a year. In the event that a student is not progressing satisfactorily, or if the START teacher is concerned about a student’s progress, a conference will be requested.

Parents are urged to initiate calls or conferences if they feel that more communication is needed.

### **WHAT IS THE START CLASS SCHEDULE?**

Tuesday	9:15-10:45	Second Grade
Wednesday	9:15 -10:45	Third Grade
	12:50 - 1:50	First Grade

### **HOW DO I CONTACT MRS. EDMONDS?**

You can reach me via school email at [edmondmm@pwcs.edu](mailto:edmondmm@pwcs.edu) or via home email at [melissa.edmonds@comcast.net](mailto:melissa.edmonds@comcast.net). You can call me at school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Please feel free to also call me at home at (703)-730-8769.