

Tacoma Public Schools  
*HiCap* Highlights

By Connie Wick,  
Principal on Special Assignment  
Highly Capable Programs

September 20, 2010

School is well underway in the Tacoma School District and the Highly Capable Program is buzzing with excited students, staff and parents. Our summer was spent attending highly capable workshops, staff development opportunities, identifying students for our programs, testing and on-going research regarding exemplary highly capable program practices. We will be forming our Highly Capable Advisory Committee in September. Please watch for an application on the website and other information about the process of committee member selection and appointment and our first meeting date.

This newsletter will give you an update on progress and developments that have taken place this summer.

News about our **SAIL** Program

**In late July, 2010, the decision was made to create an additional SAIL classroom at Browns Point Elementary School. This class was created to accommodate the increasing number of highly capable students in our district and to alleviate the long bus ride for students in northeast Tacoma. On September 2, 2010, the new classroom opened with 24 students. Our SAIL classrooms are currently serving approximately 95 students across the district.**

**Our SAIL teachers include Christine Koukles, Maureen Goff, Barbara Pinckney, and Mary Szentesi.**

Our SAIL (Self-contained Advanced Individual Learning) Program is a full-time self-contained program and serves students in 4th and 5th grade. Students are enrolled in a self-contained classroom all day, five days a week. The full-time program is designed to meet the needs of students who have exceptional ability by stimulating curiosity and developing higher-level thought processes. Basic learning objectives found in the regular classroom are compacted, allowing for in-depth extensions of the curriculum and creative expression.

The curriculum in the full-time program includes:

- Literacy

- Math
- Social studies
- Science
- Health
- Arts

SAIL classrooms are differentiated from a traditional classroom by:

- Intellectual rigor
- Accelerated pace
- Autonomous learning
- Greater depth and breadth of content
- Structured inquiry

Students who are placed in the SAIL program must enroll full-time at their assigned SAIL school. Those students who reside within district boundaries are provided district transportation to their SAIL school site. Students residing outside the district must provide their own transportation. Programs are housed at the following district elementary schools:

- Lister – one classroom, serving fourth and fifth grade students
- Wainwright – two classrooms, one fourth grade classroom and one fifth grade classroom
- Browns Point – one classroom, serving fourth and fifth grade students

#### News about our JAWS Program

**Our JAWS Program is growing each day. We currently have 222 students in our JAWS program assigned to 11 different classrooms. We hope to identify more students in the coming weeks for this program. Our JAWS classrooms are held at the following schools:**

- **Browns Point**
- **Fawcett**
- **Lowell**
- **Skyline**

**Our JAWS teachers include Janice Thorne, Teresa Troy, and Patricia Krick.**

Our JAWS Program will begin the week of September 20, 2010. JAWS stands for *Joining Ability with Subject Matter*. It is a pull-out enrichment program for students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade.

Students attend their home school four days a week and their JAWS learning enrichment classroom one day a week. The JAWS enrichment classrooms are located in several elementary schools throughout the district. The JAWS program is designed to meet the needs of students who have exceptional ability by offering challenging and enriching

learning experiences through differentiated instruction. Challenge comes from an advanced content, interaction with intellectual peers, and projects and activities that create a need for organization, and study skills. Teaching strategies include an emphasis on problem-solving, critical thinking skills, creativity skills and the development of research skills.

Bus transportation is provided from the student's home school to their JAWS site. Students are bussed back to their home school before the end of the school day. We are piloting an alternative transportation procedure for the JAWS students who attend Browns Point Elementary School on Wednesdays and Thursdays. JAWS students in northeast Tacoma will be picked up near their homes at a bus stop and will be taken directly to the school and will return to their bus stop after dismissal. Their JAWS program will match the regular school day from 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM. We will be evaluating the effect of the time spent in JAWS using this procedure compared to picking up JAWS students at their home schools and returning them to those schools prior to the end of the regular day.

### News about our GATE Program

**Our GATE Program is off to a great start this year at Downing Elementary School. The classroom serves 22 students from grades 3, 4, and 5. It is taught by Mrs. Eileen McCaffery-Lent.**

The GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) Program is a multi-age classroom that serves students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade.

A school centered program is another option for Highly Capable education in Tacoma Public Schools. It is called GATE (Gifted and Talented Education). This program has many benefits:

- Recognition of the talents of children beyond what the current assessments for SAIL and JAWS reveal about our students.
- It is housed in student's neighborhood school.
- The educators who know our students well are the ones who make the final selection regarding placement.
- Students will benefit from working with the same teacher for up to three years. They will study thematic units on a variety of topics, and the teacher will encourage the liberal use of the arts.

This program is offered only at Downing Elementary at this time. Information about application and placement can be obtained by calling their main office. The decision for placement is done by the individual school and appeals will not be accepted at the Tacoma Public School Highly Capable Program office. The purpose of the program is to use formative, summative and anecdotal information that can only be obtained from day to day knowledge of student performance.