The Unicorn Program
For Gifted and Talented Students

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Excellence, Responsibility, Community, Respect
Gifted and Talented

“Giftedness refers to a student’s outstanding innate ability in one or more domains.”

Gagné, 2007

“Talent refers to outstanding performance in one or more fields.”

Gagné, 2003

“Talent emerges from giftedness as a consequence of the student’s learning experiences.”

Gagné, 2003
Gifted and Talented

➢ **Gifted students** are those whose **potential** is distinctly above average in one or more of the following domains of human **ability**:
  ◦ Intellectual
  ◦ Creative
  ◦ Social
  ◦ Physical

➢ **Talented students** are those whose **skills** are distinctly above average in one or more areas of human **performance**
Unicorn Aims

• To provide a stimulating high school education in a supportive environment
• To create opportunities which promote knowledge, concept and skill acquisition
• To encourage independent student enquiry and learning
• To encourage students to develop or realise their potential
• To encourage students to respect the successes of others and to have pride in their own achievements
How do we achieve these aims?

- Creating classes of students with “like minds”
- Classes are taught with the emphasis on facilitation rather than teacher direction
- A variety of enrichment activities are offered to students
- Students may work at a faster pace or study more in depth
- Acceleration
  - Within class
  - Individual subject
  - Whole grade
How does a Unicorn class differ from other classes?

• Unicorn students engage more freely in discussion and debate. Staff allow and encourage this type of learning.
• The capacity for staff to slow down or speed up a topic depending on interest is permissible and encouraged.
• Unicorn teachers are familiar in working with gifted and talented students and have access to professional development in the field.
• Skills are taught and then students are expected to apply them to new situations.
• All Unicorn students follow the same curricula as students in the other classes, they have the same outcomes and are assessed against the Achievement Standards of the Australian Curriculum.
How does a Unicorn class differ from other classes?

- There is a more student-directed approach to selection of activities
- More open-ended questions and subjects
- Able to move at tangents across faculty areas
- Allows gifted and talented students to choose friends who are at a similar stage of intellectual and emotional development
- Additional social and emotional support from G&T Coordinator
- Further testing and interviews to identify other extension opportunities
- External agencies available to provide mentoring
- An individual learning program (ILP) may be initiated in any cases where students are struggling.
Identification

In Year 6
- Information from Primary School Teachers
- Discussion with parents
- Cognitive Testing

Years 7-10
- Peer nomination
- Self nomination
- Teacher nomination
- Cognitive Testing

Testing

- ADHS Cognitive Tests in Term 3 for Year 6s
- Other relevant tests undertaken by psychologists
- Students can only be tested once every two years
Placement

• If successful, students are placed in Unicorn classes for English/HASS or Maths/Science (or all 4) for Year 7 with an expectation they will continue for the four years.

• In year 7 Unicorn, students also engage PE, IT, Art, Design & Technology, Drama, Music, Orchestra and a Language in mixed ability groups.

• In partnership with parents, we can review placement in Unicorn classes at any time

• Unicorn PE (Year 8), Unicorn Performing Arts (Year 9/10) and Unicorn Visual Arts (9/10) are available in later years through teacher/coach recommendation, audition, application and portfolios.
Additional Enrichment Activities

- National Competitions in Maths, History, English, Geography and Science
- Da Vinci Decathlon
- Workshops at ANU, CSIRO and Canberra Theatre
- Engineering Games (ANU)
- Tournament of Minds
- Maths Enrichment and Maths Challenge activities
- Inter-Parliamentary Debating
- Acceleration opportunities
- ANU Mentoring (Coursera)
- Rio Tinto Big Science Competition
- RACI Chemistry Quiz
- Trialing a telescoped curriculum in Science
What are the primary goals?

- **Academic growth**
  - To become better at what you do and how you do it irrelevant of your starting point.
  - Love learning – skills for lifelong learning

- **Wellbeing**
  - To know yourself and those around you
  - To build stronger interpersonal skills
  - To build resilience and the ability to bounce back
A final thought …

When gifted children are asked what they MOST want they frequently answer:

“A friend”

(Silverman, L. 1993)
Q & A

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