

The Unicorn Program for Gifted and Talented Students

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ALFRED DEAKIN
HIGH SCHOOL

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Excellence, Responsibility, Community, Respect

So what is “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**

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

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 inquiry 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



**To be eligible for the Unicorn
Program, students must be
enrolled at Alfred Deakin High
School first**

Classes @ ADHS



- Students are streamed into either mainstream or extended classes for English, Maths, Science and HaSS
- Unicorn is a program that sits *alongside* these streams

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
- An **individual learning program (ILP)** may be initiated in any cases where students require one due to twice exceptionality or whole grade acceleration
- **Learning Agreements (LA)** are in place for students who are struggling
- Additional social and emotional **support** from Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer (GaTLO)

GaTLO Role



- First point of contact for parents/carers
- Identification of gifted students
- Support & advocate for G&T students
- Monitor academic results of all gifted students
- Create and promote enrichment opportunities for G&T students
- Ongoing evaluation of the program
- Communicating with students, parents/carers and staff
- Supporting and training school staff

Connection and Identification



Primary School Identification

- We are continually building our network between our PEA Primary Schools and our program
- There is *some* correlation between primary school G&T programs and ADHS
- We are continuing to increase and improve this connection over the next few years

Other Identification

- Our cognitive testing is major part of the identification process
- These tests cannot be studied for
- Previous enrolment in a G&T program is considered but does not equate to enrolment in Unicorn

2018 Identification & Testing



Identification

In Year 6

- Information from primary school teachers
- Information from parents
- Cognitive testing
- NAPLAN results
- Other literacy and numeracy testing

Years 7-10

- Teacher nomination
- Cognitive testing
- Self nomination *>coming soon<*

Also

- Other relevant tests undertaken by psychologists

All of this information, plus anything you feel would help us make a decision, is used to determine class placement and eligibility for the Unicorn program.

Placement



- If successful, students are invited to join the program in November.
- Students are placed in Unicorn classes for English / HASS / Maths / Science for Year 7 with the expectation they will continue for at least two years. Placements are reviewed at the end of Year 8.
- In year 7, students also engage in 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
- PE, Performing Arts and Visual Arts are available through teacher/coach recommendation, audition, application and portfolios in later years.

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)
- Maths Enrichment and Maths Challenge activities
- Inter-Parliamentary Debating
- Acceleration opportunities
- ANU Mentoring (Coursera)
- Rio Tinto Big Science Competition
- RACI Chemistry Quiz



Live Examples!

Isabella

Year 9 Unicorn

Matilda and Claire

Year 7 Unicorn

What are the primary goals?

- **Academic growth**

- To become better at what you do and how you do it, irrelevant of the starting point.
- Love learning and develop 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
- To accept that failure is a learning opportunity



And finally ...

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

“A friend”

(Silverman, L. 1993)



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Q & A

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