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Supports, Services and Programming for Advanced Differentiated Learners

District 90 is committed to its mission of supporting each child to reach his or her potential. The District and the Superintendent's Leadership Council (SLC) have identified an enhanced focus on supports, services, and programming for Advanced Differentiated Learners as a key area of investigation and examination during the 2012-2013 school year.

Differentiation is the process used in identifying students' needs, and supporting skills, gifts, and talents in every child. The terminology of "gifted and talented" carries different meanings to different people, and can lead to bias and misunderstanding in decision-making without careful definition of these terms and labels. "Advanced Differentiated Learner" (ADL) has been selected by the SLC as the preferred umbrella term for the examination of and planning for advanced students in District 90.

The dedicated work of the SLC is to better understand and support children who are far enough outside the bounds of a typical River Forest classroom that they may need more or significantly different levels of instruction, resources, and supports. The SLC is made up of three teacher representatives from each of the three schools in District 90. In addition, Superintendent Ed Condon, Roosevelt Principal Larry Garstki and Director of Student Services Martha Ryan-Toye are part of the SLC this year.

The SLC has examined and identified three key areas for study: 1) current differentiation practices at the K-4 level, 2) current ATP placement matrices, and 3) inquiry into other school districts' practices and programs.

Future steps for the SLC will include re-examining and identifying students in need of challenge and support. The nature and identification of children with significant gifts and talents will be embedded in this process.

The SLC will oversee the work of action teams dedicated to these areas of analysis:

1. A renewed commitment to differentiation, ensuring the delivery of the necessary supports and services for student success
2. An examination of the ATP qualifying process and programming
3. The examination of supports and services to meet the needs of high ability/gifted learners

The action teams will involve District staff beyond the SLC. These action teams will provide an in-depth examination of these areas, and will report to the SLC and District 90 School Board during Spring 2013.

The SLC will also provide guidance for the District in terms of future professional development needs, recommendations specific to the ATP matrix, and recommendations for additional programs and supports for Advanced Differentiated Learners.