Catering for Highly Capable Students at Secret Harbour Primary School

Giftedness and Talent
A “gift” is a natural trait, such as a facility for numbers or an ability to draw. With dedication and lots of practice, (and encouragement and mentoring,) a gift may become a talent. Interest and passion are a very useful attributes when pursuing talent development. Passion helps kids to maintain their effort through the long period of practice and refinement needed. Does your child have a special interest or have you noticed something he or she is particularly good at?

Thinking
We want our children to:
- think deeply
- build rich understandings
- develop transferrable skills
- consider alternative viewpoints
- imagine possibilities
- reason and develop arguments
- positively redefine the future

As teachers we work to help “make thinking visible.” When children can articulate the thoughts and outline the steps they take in their learning, we can work through processes to fill gaps in understanding, check skills and pick up on any misconceptions that need to be dealt with. Think boards and the app “Show me” assist students and teachers to draw out the thinking behind their understandings.

Skills and Understandings
There are some key skills and understandings that all children need in order to meet their learning potential. At SHPS we use explicit teaching, warm-ups and small group work to instil and practise vocabulary, maths skills such as times-tables, reading comprehension strategies, investigation skills and other essential building blocks for learning. When children are able to retain and apply these skills, they are free to focus on higher learning, explore rich topics, solve more complex problems, investigate and critically evaluate sources of information.

Reading
Reading is an enormously important component of learning. In the early years, children focus on learning to read. Once they can read with a reasonable level of understanding and competency, the focus very much shifts to reading to learn. Some of our students become highly capable readers at a very young age. Classroom teachers use the PM Benchmark Reading Assessments to monitor student progress in reading and ensure an appropriate level of instruction is provided to engage and support the student. In this busy and complex world, the opportunity to regularly engage with books and to practise reading, is a wonderful gift you can provide for your child.

NOTE: Gifted and Talented education often involves children working collaboratively - also enhancing their social and communication skills.
Mathematics
High achievement in mathematics in the early years of schooling is a significant indicator of later ability, success and employment potential. We work to help students build mathematical skills, see the patterns and relationships inherent in the number system and develop complex understandings that enable them to tackle multi-faceted maths problems. Games and fun learning help us to engage student interest, which is then maintained by Maths Games Club, the Australian Maths Competition, Fluency Term and the use of online learning to extend and broaden mathematical thinking. Is your child capable and interested in mathematics? Try some interesting problems at: http://www.amt.edu.au/wuamc.html

Difference
Children have different abilities and interests. Some enjoy the arts and some are very keen on sports and physical education. Some children are driven to find out all about numbers and mathematics and some are passionate about science or writing stories. Some children love reading (and it is difficult to separate them from the latest book.) Many children have a wide range of interests while others are keenly focussed on one particular area. Families and schools play a major role in supporting children’s interests and shaping their learning. At SHPS we help children to identify their interests, pursue their strengths and develop their talents in a number of ways.

Supporting high levels of ability in our students at Secret Harbour Primary School

External Programs
• Primary Extension and Talent (PEAC)
PEAC is a state-wide program for children in government schools in year 5 and year 6. The local PEAC program is based at Comet Bay College and runs for two cycles each year. Children are selected for entry to PEAC through a test completed in year 4. The test consists of two components, the SPM, which is a non-verbal test of reasoning and logic and the TOLA which measures language and reasoning. From a possible 100 points, students need a score of 99 or over in the SPM or a score of 98 or over on the TOLA to gain access to PEAC, (very high levels of difficulty!) Students who are successful have the opportunity to participate in PEAC for one day each week while the course runs.
This year the first PEAC program is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program run at Comet Bay College. Transport to and from PEAC is the responsibility of parents (often on a shared basis.)

• Nautilus and Nautilus Master Class
Nautilus is a Gifted and Talented Program offered at Comet Bay College for year P-4 students from local primary schools. It is funded and staffed by the college, which also coordinates the selection process. To gain entry, students require a reading age three or more years above their chronological age. Once this criterion is met, the child’s teacher and parents complete profiles provided by the college that are submitted along with any additional evidence provided. This program is restricted by the number of places available and we are very lucky to have achieved significant access for our students. We are enormously appreciative of the college and Mrs Jody Lewin for the opportunity. Mrs Lewin also runs the Nautilus Master Class program for students in years five and six.

NOTE: Gifted and Talented teaching is not about more or harder worksheets. It often involves plans and diagrams, constructions and messy notes!
**Extension Opportunities at SHPS**

Secret Harbour Primary is a dynamic learning environment; responding positively to change and always working to find ways to provide additional challenge and support for our students. We cater to the learning of 700 children; seeking innovative opportunities to maximise scarce resources. Programs change from term to term in response to student needs and interests, and the availability of staff. Students are generally nominated by classroom teachers. In recent times opportunities have included:

- Maths Olympiads
- Spelling Bee
- Extension Literacy and Numeracy in the early years
- Chess Club
- Lego Club
- Brain Explorers
- Ancient Civilisations program
- Junior Challenge play ground
- Maths Games Club
- Writing Club
- Sustainability
- Indonesian Club
- Maths Wizard

**Musical Extension**

The “Talent Show” is a much anticipated event that showcases musical talent at SHPS. Our Specialist teacher, Mrs Anson, offers Music classes across the school, but also provides significant additional opportunities for budding musicians to extend and enrich their musical learning. Mrs Anson runs Drumming workshops, Recorder lessons and Ukelele classes as well as leading our junior and senior choirs. In 2015, Mrs Anson started our school band for children who play musical instruments. The band largely consists of students from the SIM (School of Instrumental Music) program.

**SIM**

The SIM program extends instruction in instrumental music, as well as providing a pathway to music and band programs in government high schools. Students are selected following a Musical Aptitude Test in year 5, to participate in one of the following classes:

- Guitar
- Brass (trumpet or trombone)
- Clarinet
- Flute

There is a cost of $130 per student – which covers maintenance of instruments and equipment for the year. Tuition is provided by specialist visiting SIM teachers. Mrs Anson was recently successful in applying for additional tuition for SHPS students and as of 2016, SIM classes will commence in year 5 following a year four assessment.

**Physical Education and Sport**

A number of our students are highly competitive in the Sporting Arena, and our Phys Ed Specialists, Mrs Van Koolbergen and Mrs Bransby, provide lots of opportunities for budding athletes at school and inter-school level. Running Club provides challenge for our budding runners.
Goal Setting
Setting goals and striving to attain them is a key feature of learning at SHPS. Writing Goals in particular assist our students to pinpoint a path to success in writing. Teachers work to support children in self-monitoring, setting personal goals, determining strategies for progress and celebrating attainment. Principal, Ms Lisa Fletcher regularly checks in with students during assemblies, encouraging and supporting goal-setting as a key to learning success.

Extension and Enrichment in the Classroom
Teachers at SHPS differentiate instruction in the classroom to meet the specific learning needs of individuals and small groups. During Literacy Block and Numeracy Block, children work in groups; completing activities to build appropriate skills and strategies to move to the next level of learning. Key programs such as I Maths, Sound Waves and Jolly Phonics, enable access to online resources for the extension of students with higher levels of understanding and skill.

Extending Learning through technology
Computers and iPads are used to support differentiated learning at SHPS. The library computer lab was recently extended and upgraded and allows for all students from a class to each work on an individual computer. Computers offer a unique opportunity to work in ways that motivate and provide immediate feedback. They enable students to explore the wider world and undertake extended research. Computers assist us in individualising the teaching and learning program.

iPads are booked out by classes in sets of five and are used to support small group work. They are loaded with carefully selected apps that extend and enrich student learning.

Identifying Highly Capable Students
- Classroom teachers are usually quick to identify students who learn rapidly and require a varied program.
- Parents often communicate valuable information about their children’s special abilities and interests.
- System assessments such as the On-Entry Assessment in pre-primary, and NAPLAN in years three and five, provide useful information about student achievement.
- The PEAC test in year four is a recognised indicator of student potential.
- PM Benchmark assessments quickly demonstrate precocious reading ability.
- I Maths investigations and tracker books pinpoint mathematical ability, (soon to be augmented by access to online access for all students to the Pat Maths Assessment Tool.)
- We also offer screening using the Acer General Ability Test (AGAT) when more specific information is needed about the ability profile of high achieving students.
- When required, students with higher abilities can be referred to Student Services

Special Circumstances
On very rare occasions, acceleration to the next year level is considered for students who are extremely capable. This option is only considered when children are deemed able to perform at the “top” of the higher year level, when associated factors have been fully considered by all parties and the principal approves acceleration as the best way forward.

Websites
Secondary Selective Entry Programs
http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/giftedandtalented/detcms/portal/
Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of WA
http://www.gatcawa.org/
What you can do at home to support a highly capable student

1. Fill your home with books, magazines and software.
   Not all the same type, but a range of resources; who knows what may spark your child’s new obsession!
   Access to a variety of literature from comics to National Geographic to class literature is very important.

2. Allow opportunities for creativity.
   So your home looks like a tornado has swept through and upended the contents of a recycling truck in your child’s bedroom – great!! Encourage your child to explore and create, to paint, to sculpt, to make music (or even just interesting combinations of noise!), to dance, to enjoy those taking time to unwind and tinker about with new and interesting ideas.

3. Time with peers
   Children need to be able to spend time with same age peers, and same ability peers. This may mean spending time with children of a range of age levels, but this allows them time to develop those all important social skills.

4. Provide choices
   Some autonomy goes a long way. By involving your child in making some choices you are helping them to feel respected and valued, and fostering their independence.

5. Have patience
   Highly able children can possess some interesting traits like bossiness, perfectionism and excessive questioning to name a few, however if you redirect these positively and have patience, you are allowing your highly able child to be themselves.

6. Check in regularly
   Talk to your child often about what’s going on in their life. What’s happening at school? What’s going on with friends? What book are they reading? Stay connected and ‘in the loop’!

7. Set reasonable expectations
   Avoid placing pressure on your child to overachieve. The level and pace of anything your child does needs to be appropriate for them, and helps to avoid them placing unhealthy levels of pressure on themselves.

8. Maintain a relationship with the teacher and school
   Stay in touch and check-in regularly. Don’t wait if you have any concerns or questions, raise them and take a team approach to your child’s education.

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It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

Albert Einstein
Other Useful Web sites to explore with your child

- **AskJeeves 4 Kids**  
  A fantastic search engine for kids to explore all those What, Where, Why, How questions.

- **Austega’s Gifted Resource Centre**  
  Dedicated to parented and teachers who have gifted children.

- **Center for Talented Youth: Resources for Gifted Education**  
  A division of The Johns Hopkins University (USA), this site provides support and information for educators, parents and gifted students.

- **discoveryschool.com**  
  Follow the link ‘for students’ to access study tools, games and learning adventures.

- **Educational Assessment Australia**  
  Provides access to a suite of skills based assessments and competitions known as the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS).

- **Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC)**  
  The world’s largest source of education information.

- **Education World**  
  Provides information on professional development, technology integration, school issues, resources and much more.

- **Gifted Children Monthly**  
  A networking and information medium dedicated to making a difference in the pursuit of educational excellence for children of special talents and abilities.

- **Gifted Development Center**  
  This site provides excellent resources and articles to support gifted individuals of all ages.

- **GT World**  
  An on-line support community for parents of Gifted and Talented children.

- **Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page**  
  A comprehensive range of articles, links and practical strategies for parents, educators, kids and teens.

- **How Stuff Works**  
  This is a great site to surf and find out all about computer, auto, electronics, science, home, entertainment, health, money, travel and people ‘stuff’.

- **Kathy Shrock’s Guide for Educators**  
  A categorised list of sites useful for enhancing curriculum and professional growth.

- **Neuroscience for Kids**  
  A great site that has been created for all students and teachers who would like to learn about the nervous system.

- **New Horizons for Learning**  
  Successful educational strategies on teaching, life long learning and special needs.

- **The Educator’s Reference Desk**  
  Includes resource guides, lesson plans, question archives and access to search the ERIC database.

- **The Learning Toolbox**  
  James Madison University provides a unique website dedicated to providing tools and resources to enable students with learning difficulties to be better learners.

- **The Question Mark**  
  An educational magazine, devoted to questions, questioning, sound intelligence, strategic reading and quality teaching.

- **Windows to the Universe**  
  An awesome site to develop your understandings about the Earth and Space sciences in a user-friendly learning system.