UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

at The University of Tulsa

RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Our world is best served when all people have the opportunity to develop to their fullest capacity. Thus, our program attempts to meet the unique needs of unique individuals by providing opportunities for them to develop their potentialities. We believe, as did Jefferson, that **"nothing is more unequal than equal treatment of unequals".**

The ideas and interests of young, gifted children are often so different from their age peers that they feel out of place and seek older friends. This situation gives the younger child less chance for leadership and less chance to feel positively about his or her abilities. Our school provides a place for gifted children to develop peer age friendships, an opportunity for leadership, and a place where special abilities are valued.

The purpose of our curriculum is to maximize the intellectual, social, and emotional capacities of gifted children. The innate abilities of the gifted child need to be nurtured, stimulated, and rewarded. Our program provides learning experiences to develop those special skills and abilities.

It is our aim to teach students to value and respect the unique abilities of themselves and others. We try to provide a warm, caring environment in which everyone, students and teachers, can learn and grow.

DEFINITION

Gifted children are those who are identified by a variety of measures to demonstrate actual or potential high abilities in creative, academic, or intellectual areas. Students are accepted at University School for their high academic potential.

THE PROGRAM

University School is a full school program for able learners from age three through eighth grade. The purpose of the school is to provide an emotionally supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment that rewards both creativity and socially responsible behavior. We believe that a person learns best in a supportive, but kindly firm, atmosphere where he or she is actively involved and has some control over what occurs. We know that each student is an individual and therefore we do not expect uniform educational results.

Flexible pacing is provided for all children at our school. A new student told his teacher with delight, "This is a school where you just study what you need to learn." One of the most widely used methods is open-ended materials and activities. The other is grouping of students according to specific academic skills. Our low pupil/teacher ratio, approximately 200 students and 50 teachers, allows us to provide a great deal of individual attention to children.

EARLY CHILDHOOD LEVEL: Ages 3 to 4

The Early Childhood curriculum seeks to challenge children intellectually; there is no pressure to push into the academic areas. Teachers are sensitive to the individual development of young gifted children and know appropriate learning experiences for them. The goal of this program is to maximize the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of the children. Children are encouraged to be active, independent, and creative learners while also learning to be responsible and cooperative.

PRIMARY LEVEL: Ages 4 to 8

Within each classroom, primary level children are flexibly grouped according to reading and math skills, social and emotional maturity, and intellectual interests. Many of the activities are individualized and arranged in learning centers. Reading is introduced in a personal, organic method so that the important aspects of each child's life are part of her first reading vocabulary. Just as children select their first oral vocabulary, in our reading program they select their first reading vocabulary. A young child selects single words and short sentences while older primary students write and edit their own stories. As a way of sharing creative endeavors, children are encouraged to read their stories to other classes.

Math is a combination of hands-on manipulative, teacher-led activities, Kumon, and Saxon Math. Kumon Math is an individualized, self-paced, learning approach to math that emphasizes repetition, speed, and accuracy. Developed over 35 years ago in Japan by Toru Kumon to help his son, Kumon helps students internalize basic math skills, extend concentration, and develop task commitment. Saxon is a spiral based curriculum, and each class works at least one year above grade level. The Saxon curriculum was selected to expand, enrich, and complement Kumon and the other aspects of the math program.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: Ages 8 to 14

Students in the Intermediate Level are divided into Intermediate I, Intermediate II and Older Intermediates. Intermediate 1 and 2 and Older Intermediate 5 and 6 are self-contained classes. The Older Intermediate 7 and 8 classes, which are departmentalized, consist of a wide variety of language arts, science, math, PE, computer, Spanish, music, band, drama, art, and social studies classes. All students at this level take Kumon and are involved in independent research projects.

ALL LEVELS

Interdisciplinary learning is encouraged. Thus a variety of disciplines often focus on a single theme. All students are taught the Talents Unlimited model in which creative brainstorming techniques, called productive thinking, are encouraged and respected. They are also taught planning, decision-making, communication skills, and forecasting – all of which helps students to develop a variety of individual talents and thinking skills. Students at all levels take Spanish, Chinese, music, art, and computer.

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

SCHOOL HOURS

Early Childhood – Primary 3: 9:00-2:40
Intermediate 1 – Older Intermediate: 8:45-3:00
Extended Day – 7:15-5:30 (additional fees apply)

GROUPING OF STUDENTS

Our grouping of students is flexible. Basically, three's turning four are in the Early Childhood class and four's turning five are in Early Primary. The Primary group is for children approximately five to eight years of age. Our Intermediate groups have children whose ages range from eight to ten and Older Intermediate have students generally ranging from ten to thirteen. Within these groups, children are grouped according to reading, math, other abilities, personal interests, and sometimes according to age. Placement will also depend on the development of fine motor skills, task commitment, social and emotional development, and interest in more abstract tasks.

TYPES OF INSTRUCTION

Students learn to work independently, in small groups, and in large groups. Differences in learning styles are taken into account in planning activities. Students are involved in self-directed and teacher-directed activities.

FACULTY AND STAFF

In addition to the lead classroom teacher and assistant teachers, there is a computer consultant, music consultant, Spanish consultant, art consultant, and science consultant. Administrative personnel include the Director, Assistant Director/Admissions and Administration, Assistant Director/Curriculum and Finance, Communications Coordinator, and Administrative Assistant.

ADULT EDUCATION

The teaching staff is involved in approximately 60 hours of in-service development during the school year. Teachers give presentations and attend professional gifted conferences such as The Oklahoma Association for Gifted, Creative, and Talented (OAGCT) and The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). A variety of lectures and workshops are provided for parents.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Evaluation of the program is a continuous process that involves a number of written descriptions of the program and measurement instruments that measure program goals, plus an extensive daily informal and formal evaluation by the staff. Standardized tests are given yearly for all classes with the exception of Early Childhood.

THE CURRICULUM

The Enaction Curriculum attempts to develop the capacities for thinking and problem solving and to provide stimulating and challenging knowledge. The Enaction Curriculum is a curriculum based on Enaction Theory (Ohlsson, 1983), (Newell & Simon, 1972) and domain specific knowledge (Glaser, 1984). Enaction theory postulates that thinking is a matter of running a simulation in one's head. The three steps involved are creating a mental model, manipulating that model, and developing a strategy for problem solving.

ENACTION THEORY

The first step of the Enaction Curriculum is developing the mental model or schema of an object system. In this step, activities are focused on ways to develop the mental model more fully, such as drawing, creating simulations, building models, participating in concept attainment, and reading. The next step involves all the things that could be done to a model. Here activities involve experimenting and manipulating models. The third step focuses on what has been learned, how it was learned, and what might be done to make learning more effective. Ideas for making learning more effective are discussed with the children at this step.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT

Coupled with the process-oriented Enaction Theory is an emphasis on Thematic content. This content emphasis was selected because a great deal of research (Glaser, 1984) has found that thinking is strongly influenced by experience with new information. It has been found that expert problem solvers are those with conceptual and procedural knowledge in a specific content area. Problem solving, comprehension, and learning are based on knowledge. There cannot be problem solving, evaluation, or thinking without subject matter, content, or knowledge. Productive thinking, planning decision-making, communication, and forecasting are taught at University school through content areas using the Talents Unlimited model. In addition, students are encouraged to pursue their academic interests with in-depth independent study and research projects following the Renzulli Triad model.

THE UNIVERSITY CONNECTION

Another essential component of the curriculum involves making use of our relationship with the University of Tulsa. The University Connection consists of TU Exploration, in which children visit classes, professors, staff, students, and exhibits, and TU Input, in which those resources come to us. Our relationship with the University provides us with tremendous unique resources that few schools can match.

OTHER CURRICULUM STRATEGIES

The Enaction Curriculum, while providing structure and direction for our curriculum, is flexible enough to encompass a variety of other research-based approaches with national and international recognition. We use Renzulli's Triad Enrichment approach to children's independent investigations and the Talents Unlimited model to develop multiple talents in our children. Classroom meetings are used as an approach to social and emotional development and problem solving. These approaches work well with the Enaction Curriculum because they are hands-on, experienced-based approaches. Our curriculum structure is open enough to use other outstanding approaches which have also proven to be effective.

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

There is no other school in the nation whose curriculum is based on Enaction Theory. Presentations about University School have been made in numerous states, Canada, and Europe. Our school has received a large United States Department of Education Javits Grant for teachers training and curriculum development.

Articles about the University School curriculum have been in leading national magazines, newspapers, and journals. Dr. Patricia Hollingsworth, Director of University School has written many of the articles.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIVERSITY SCHOOL

Our school is a visitation site for university students and professors, public and private school teachers, and other professionals, such as psychologist, doctors, and child development specialists. Our school also serves as the practicum site for the University of Tulsa's M.A. degree with specialization in gifted education.

SERVICES TO TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND HELPING PROFESSIONS

The University School sponsors events for both teachers and parents of gifted and talented youngsters. The Convention for Parents and Teachers of the Gifted has been an annual event since 1985. The director and other staff persons act as consultant and speakers for groups of teachers, parents, and others in the community. Teachers from our region of the country come to our school to observe and seek information. Staff persons are consulted for identification and testing procedures, curriculum information, staff development and in-services training, parental problems, school placement problems, and a variety of other reasons.

The University School publishes a directory of private schools in the Tulsa area as a community service project. The directory gives information concerning cost, hours, philosophy, special features, scholarships and contact persons for each school. The directory is distributed to new persons in the community, doctors, and others in the helping professions.

SERVICES TO GIFTED STUDENTS THROUGHOUT OKLAHOMA

University School sponsors a variety of opportunities for local gifted and talented students to exhibit academic and artistic projects. The annual Winter Drama Festival is a chance for students to write, produce, and perform plays at the University of Tulsa. These students also have an opportunity to exhibit their projects and to interact with professionals in their own academic interest area at the Creative Producers International festival held each spring.

A PROVEN SUCCESS

The school has proven to be a place where gifted and talented students are valued, respected, and treated as individuals. We believe that the curriculum should be fit to the child not the reverse. Our small classes and caring staff are developing children, who not only succeed academically, but who enjoy doing so.

We have endeavored to describe our program as fully and accurately as possible; however, any aspect of our program is subject to change without notice.

IDENTIFICATION AND ADMISSION

The task of selecting students for any gifted program is one of the most controversial issues in gifted education. Some programs emphasize selection according to achievement. Other programs emphasize potential. All selection is an *in*exact science with many uncontrolled variables. Selection for one gifted program in no way guarantees selection for any other gifted program.

High verbal abilities have been found to correlate with high intelligence. The instruments we use measure verbal, quantitative, perceptual, and creative abilities. Professional recommendations, interviews, and parent inventories are also considered.

In order to be considered for admission, a student should be tested by a psychologist using either the WPPSI-R, WISC-4 or the DAS. The WPPSI-R or the DAS are used for younger children and the WISC-4 for older students. We generally accept children who score in the 90th percentile or above if the psychologist and our admissions committee recommend placement in our school.

When the test results and application for admission are received, the University School Admissions Committee will review submission and any other pertinent information before making a placement recommendation. We will then contact the parents with the decision made about admission.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Ms. Debra Price, Assistant Director of Administration and Admissions
800 South Tucker Drive
Tulsa, OK 74104
debra-price@utulsa.edu
(918) 631-5060 Fax: (918) 631-5065
www.uschool.utulsa.edu

FOUNDED

-December 1981 as a preschool on The University of Tulsa campus
-Spring 1982 was the first semester of operation with five preschool students and one teacher
-1982-1983 began two preschool classes & Rainbow Arts Day: Dr. Hollingsworth, teacher/coordinator

STAFF

Dr. Patricia Hollingsworth, Director
Ms. Debra Price, Assistant Director of Administration and Admissions
Mrs. Gina Lewis, Assistant Director of Curriculum and Programs
Total number of teachers and staff: 50

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Parent-Teacher Institute (Fall Semester)
Winter Drama Festival (Spring Semester)
Creative Producers' International (Spring Semester)
Network News Quarterly for Parents & Teachers of the Gifted

Recommended Psychologists:

Dr. Paul Schwartz 918-493-7185	Testing generally lasts 45 minutes to 1 hour Call for current fees.
Dr. Mary Rineer 918-747-8282	Testing generally takes 2 to 3 hours Call for current fees.
Dr. Cleatta Shumate 918-794-2847	Testing generally takes 2 to 3 hours Call for current fees
Gina Kingsley/Dr. Ann Taylor 918-584-4321	Testing generally lasts about 1 hour Call for current fees.

After testing is completed, you may forward copies of the results and the completed Application for Admission form with $25 application fee to University School and we will activate a file for your child. Depending on test scores and openings in the class, we will forward an application for enrollment or you may request that your child be put on the waiting list.

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

The University School Extended Day Program (EDP) is a service provided for students enrolled in the regular hours of operation of our school. There are three EDP options for each regularly scheduled school day, in accordance with the University School calendar. The options are:

Early Option (7:15 – 8:45): Morning EDP students meet in the school gymnasium, where they play actively. At 8:00 a.m., older students go upstairs to work or read quietly until morning class time. Younger students remain in the gym until 8:45 a.m.

Study Hall (2:45 – 4:00): Immediately following their last class of the school day, all EDP participants report to their designated Study Hall classrooms. Students bring a snack to have at this time. We do not provide snacks. Kindergarten – Older Intermediate-8 (K-OI8) students work on assigned homework until completed, and then they may read a book. K-OI8 Study Hall is designated as a quiet study time. Students in Early Childhood (EC) and Early Primary (EP) classes have some outdoor or gymnasium playtime and structured age-appropriate activities. A quiet resting or napping place is provided for those students demonstrating a need for rest.

Enrichment Option (4:00 – 5:30): Enrichment EDP begins immediately after Study Hall. K-OI8 students who have finished their homework relocate to the gymnasium and have a daily period of active play (outdoors when weather permits), organized games, or enrichment activities. Priority is given to finishing homework in the school-age group of students. EC-EP students also have some outdoor or gymnasium playtime and other age-appropriate activities. Cross-age grouping of students is possible depending on the number of students and the nature of planned activities.

Students may be enrolled in all three options, Early Option only, Study Hall only, or both of the afternoon options. Many University School EDP students also participate in clubs or organizations at school during Study Hall time, and they may rejoin the EDP program at the conclusion of their meetings.

Fees: Please call for current EDP fee information.