

**Blaine**  
**ALO Program Description**  
**School Year 2007-2008**

**What are the Advanced Learning Opportunities (ALO) for elementary students at Blaine?**

Beginning in 2005 teams of teachers, administrators and parents began meeting to address the needs of advanced learners. As we are committed to meeting the needs of all learners, it was thought a valuable practice to turn a lens on how the needs of our advanced learners were being met. With our 2006 WASL scores showing 84.6% of our third graders and 83.9% of our fourth graders meeting state standards in Reading, and 92.3% of our third graders and 71.4% of our fourth graders meeting state standards in Math, a determined look at how our school community is providing for the needs of our advanced learners made the value of an ALO (Advanced Learning Option) for elementary grades evident.

We wanted to put voice to what was already happening in different classrooms and discover more opportunities. This process became a gathering of the information regarding instructional practices occurring daily in our school. As we respect the differences students have as learners, we must also recognize that teachers are equally diverse in their practice. As educators develop as professionals, and put their passions into practice, classroom models look different while we strive to meet the needs of all learners.

These are a sample of some of the many ways students are challenged in classrooms at Blaine in a differentiated instructional model:

- **Commitment to Rigor –**
  - Complexity - interacting and overlapping ideas
  - Provocativeness - conceptually challenging, deals with dilemmas, engages students in identifying problems, conducting inquiry, taking positions
  - Emotion - arouses strong or unfamiliar feelings
  - Ambiguity - has multiple meanings to be sorted into patterns of significance, rich in symbols, images and multiple meanings
  - Inquiry - involves students in posing questions, forming and testing hypotheses, and using evidence to support their findings and conclusions
  - Knowledge acquisition - engaging students in acquiring and organizing information around concepts central to the topic
  - Problem solving - students concern themselves with pressing or problematic issues and use creative thinking to generate solutions
  - Communication - providing students opportunities to speak, write and elaborate on what they have learned
  - Reflection - students think about and reflect on their own learning
  
- **GLE Expectations and Accelerated Standards –** Teachers use the continuum of standards to best meet the academic needs of each student.
- **Tiered Assignments –** Assignments are developed based on the same concepts and are geared to the differentiated levels of students. Students below, at or above standard work on assignments that best match their instructional levels.
- **NUA Strategies -** The mission of the National Urban Alliance is to help students build knowledge, develop concepts, refine reading and thinking abilities, and fully develop their capacities as learners. The strategies listed here are based on current research in

cognitive psychology and the principles of learning. They are tools for accomplishing the mission. <http://www.nuatc.org/resources/strategy/cogstrat.html>

- **Higher Level Thinking Questions** – Open ended questioning using Blooms Taxonomy and overarching questions such as focus questions in inquiry science.
- **Guided Reading** – Using leveled text for both fiction and nonfiction; Guided Reading is a supported system where the teacher reads with a small group of students. The teacher introduces reading strategies, tailoring instruction to the needs of the students. When the students read, the teacher provides praise and encouragement as well as support when needed. Students are group by skill levels to capture the appropriate challenge levels.
- **Literature Circles** – Student interest surveys guide independent learning and Literature Circles. Students choose their own reading materials based on interest and meet in small, temporary groups with other students who are reading the same book. The teacher acts a facilitator and students lead the discussion groups.
- **Individual Learning Projects and Project Based Learning Activities** – From book studies to literacy boxes to research on spiders; these activities are structured with leveled product expectations.
- **Learning Centers and Reading Stations** – Using flexible grouping classroom teachers and specialists group on ability levels, GLEs and interests. Groups are flexible and change often throughout the year.
- **Writer's Workshop** – An individualized, process oriented approach to the craft of writing, incorporating mini-lessons focused on the Six Traits of effective writing. Students write daily, across genres, with opportunities for prompted and free choice writing.
- **Readers Workshop** - In a reader's workshop the teacher begins by presenting a mini-lesson on a reading skill or concept. Students are then given uninterrupted time to read their various texts and practice a strategy. Afterward students respond to what they have read in a reader's response journal or reading log. Many Reader's Workshops also include time for sharing.
- **Inquiry Science** – Teachers use the Full Option Science System (FOSS). Guiding questions start students on investigations appropriate for their developmental levels. Units are based on Life, Earth and Physical sciences.
- **Technology Integration** – Classroom teachers work closely with specialists to integrate technology into the curricula. Computers are used for research, as presentation tools, and to develop reading skills in both skill study and comprehension.
- **Math Olympiad** – Club members explore a topic or strategy in depth, using Creative Problem Solving in School Mathematics (or other sources), or they practice for the contests, using non-routine problems from Mathematical Olympiads Contest Problems for Elementary and Middle Schools (or other sources). <http://www.moems.org/>
- **Global Reading Challenge**- The Global Reading Challenge is a Battle of the Books program for 4th and 5th graders enrolled in Seattle Public Schools. The program encourages children to have fun and enjoy the sport of reading. After reading 10 books, children take part in a "Quiz Bowl" game to determine the winner for the city of Seattle. The winning Seattle team takes home the Global Reading Challenge traveling trophy and goes on to a videoconference challenge between Seattle, Kalamazoo, Michigan and Fraser Valley and Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada.  
[http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=audience\\_children\\_global\\_intro](http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=audience_children_global_intro)

## **Participation:**

While the overarching goal of an Advanced Learning Program is to continue to provide ways for school to answer the question of how to serve the needs of all students in the classroom, two groups are primarily served by an ALO. They are district-identified students who are academically highly gifted, and teacher identified students who demonstrate skills and readiness for participation in accelerated and rigorous curriculum. Tools for identification of students include DRAs (developing reading assessment), WASL scores, math assessments, class observation and evidence, and work completion.

Access to accelerated learning based on a combination of:

- District advanced learning testing
- Standardized testing including the Direct Reading Assessment, WASL, SPS Math Assessments.
- Classroom assessment and observation of skills, interest level, motivation and engagement.

Progress shown through SPS report cards for Advanced Learners.

## **Professional Development:**

The staff at Blaine will continue to take professional development courses through the SPS district, as they are available. This includes training in ALO report cards, differentiated instructional practices and curriculum development. The Blaine staff is also committed to using some professional development time to visiting other ALO programs, using a book study with Strategies That Work with our literacy specialist, and sharing NUA and DMI practices. In addition if the Seattle School District adopts a new math program, the staff will identify ways to use this program for our advanced learners.