

## OUR VISION AND MISSION



The goal of Mesa Elementary School is to provide our students with the foundation, skills, and habits of mind necessary to take advantage of advanced academic and other opportunities at elementary, middle, and high school levels. We are structured to accomplish this vision through our integrated curriculum which promotes an academically, socially, and emotionally-supportive learning environment that prepares all students to become self-directed "New Century Graduates" and lifelong learners. Mesa Elementary's unique Triple-A focus on "Academics, Arts, and Athletics" provides students with a well-rounded educational experience, and by utilizing this Triple-A focus, it is our mission to nurture the development of the "whole child."

We carry out our vision and mission to address the needs of Mesa's Talented and Gifted (TAG) and Twice Exceptional learners through: classroom differentiation by highly trained and skilled teachers; a variety of enrichment opportunities; and, if appropriate, a TAG curriculum delivered once a week in grades 3 through 5. Together, these strategies aim to address students' academic, social and affective interests and needs.



## Characteristics of a Gifted Child:

- ◆ They see relationships and patterns that others miss.
- ◆ They learn at an accelerated pace and to greater depth.
- ◆ They are intellectually stimulated by complexity.
- ◆ They have precocious reasoning ability usually seen in older children.
- ◆ They have heightened personal and emotional sensitivities.
- ◆ They almost always have a prodigious memory.
- ◆ They have heightened concerns about justice and fairness.
- ◆ Some tend to be perfectionists (with both positive and negative results).

See Janice Szabo's list below, which contrasts a "Bright Child" with a "Gifted Learner," and provides some observational help in distinguishing one from the other.

### Bright Child

Knows the answer  
Is interested  
Is attentive  
Has good ideas  
Works hard  
Answers the questions  
Is in the top group  
Listens with interest  
Learns with ease  
Needs 6-8 repetitions for mastery  
Understands ideas  
Enjoys peers  
Grasps the meaning  
Completes assignments  
Is receptive  
Copies accurately  
Enjoys school  
Absorbs information  
Is a technician  
Is a good memorizer  
Enjoys straightforward sequential presentation of material  
Is alert  
Is pleased with own learning

### Gifted Learner

Asks the question  
Is highly curious  
Is mentally & physically involved  
Has wild, silly ideas  
Plays around, yet tests well  
Discusses in detail, elaborates  
Is beyond the group  
Shows strong feelings/opinions  
Already knows  
Needs 1-2 repetitions for mastery  
Constructs abstractions  
Prefers adults  
Draws inferences  
Initiates projects  
Is intense  
Creates a new design  
Enjoys learning  
Manipulates information  
Is an inventor  
Is a good guesser  
Thrives on complexity  
Is keenly observant  
Is self-critical

## TAG Identification Process:

TAG identification practices at Mesa Elementary align with Boulder Valley District policy and the standards of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAG/T). Nominations can be submitted by teachers, specialists, other staff members, parents, students themselves, or outside community members. We accept TAG nominations throughout the year. Nomination forms may be picked up at the Main office, the TAG room, or may be requested through a child's classroom teacher. Completed nomination forms should be turned in to Mesa's main office. With few exceptions, we do not assess kindergarten and first grade students.

Once nomination forms are received, TAG Coordinators will collect information from classroom teachers and specialists and administer an assessment. Once all necessary information is collected, the TAG Committee meets to review the collected data and make a decision about TAG designation. The committee consists of the principal, a TAG Coordinator, designated classroom teachers, and specialists and/or other staff, as appropriate. In addition, the nominated student's classroom teacher is also directly involved in the determination. Parents may advise the TAG Committee, but they do not participate in the final identification decision. Once a decision is made whether or not to make a TAG designation, the parents and teachers of the student will be notified, and the student's name will be put onto a District TAG list. Parents can accept or decline the designation before the student's name is added to the District list. Once formally identified, there is no need to be re-tested. The designation follows a student into middle and high school, unless parents request to have it formally removed. The entire process should take no longer than ten school weeks.

**TAG Evaluation:**

Multiple bodies of evidence are gathered to provide a comprehensive picture of the student's demonstrated or potential ability and achievement. The identification procedure highlights the strengths of all children who are evaluated. Valuable information about the student can be used for appropriate educational planning, whether the student qualifies for TAG programming or not. However, it is not advisable to request evaluation for a student and undergo testing unless there is serious reason to suspect that the student might qualify for TAG. Parents are invited to review the testing results with the TAG Coordinator after TAG Committee decisions have been made.

The following pieces of evidence are used in the evaluation process:

1. An aptitude or ability assessment, e.g., CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Tests), Naglieri (Non-verbal Abilities Tests), Raven's Coloured or Standard Progressive Matrices, Stanford-Binet, WISC, and other tests as needed (Please note: the school does not administer the latter two types of tests but accepts the results from professional testers.);
2. Inventories from the parents, classroom teacher, specialist teachers (Art, Music, P.E., Library), and outside teachers as necessary;
3. Achievement data, e.g., CSAP scores, grades, outside tests, or observational data;
4. Student interview/discussion with the TAG Educational Advisor;
5. Other evidence, as appropriate.

NOTE: In order to meet BVSD qualifications, one of the ability or achievement assessments should include a score at the 95th percentile or above for age and/or grade. The ability to evaluate students for TAG is based on limited personnel hours. Therefore, priority for evaluation is given first to nominations at the highest grade level and next to descending grade levels for students on the nomination list. Special Education students also may qualify as TAG and are designated "Twice Exceptional."

**MESA ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL'S  
TALENTED AND  
GIFTED (TAG)  
PROGRAM**



**TAG: Development of  
the "Whole Child"**

---

Mesa Elementary School  
1575 Lehigh Street  
Boulder, Colorado 80305  
(720) 561-3000

*Josh Baldner, Principal*  
*josh.baldner@bvsd.org*

*Linda Garby & Debra Pentz, TAG Coordinators*  
*Linda.Garby@bvsd.org / Debra.Pentz@bvsd.org*

---

*Josh Baldner, Principal*  
*josh.baldner@bvsd.org*

*Linda Garby & Debra Pentz, TAG Coordinators*  
*Linda.Garby@bvsd.org / Debra.Pentz@bvsd.org*

Phone: (720) 561-3000

## Mesa's TAG Services

**Differentiation/Ability Grouping** - Modifications of K-5 programming and instruction are made within the regular classroom, as appropriate, based on a student's academic need and intellectual ability. This may include flexible re-grouping of students by subject area.

**TAG Staff Support in Classrooms** - In grades 3-5, TAG Coordinator and additional staff time is provided to classroom teachers, as appropriate, to allow ongoing support of students that may need to explore the curriculum in greater depth, complexity, and/or at an accelerated pace. This additional classroom support provides teachers with the means to plan for and work with TAG identified students to better meet their individual learning needs.

**Simulations** - Enhancement of the curricular program, is made possible by use of simulations within classrooms in conjunction with guided independent studies. Past examples have included Immigration Day, Congressional Hearings, and Mini-Society.

**Acceleration** - Grade level acceleration may be possible as indicated by BVSD guidelines.

**Integrated Learning** - Mesa encourages the integration of "Arts, Athletics and Academics" to enhance classroom learning. Examples might include: student created plays, sculpture, and video production.

## Extracurricular Enrichment Opportunities

Mesa believes enrichment opportunities provide a child the chance to grow as a "whole person". We offer many ongoing enrichment activities throughout the school year, either before, during, or after school. Some programs may change in a given year, but some examples include the following.

**Chess Club/Chess Team** - Currently close to 80 students in Grades K-5 participate in our after-school chess club. Beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of play are offered. Through group coaching, beginning players learn strategic moves that help improve their level of play. Intermediate and advanced students may elect to join the competitive Chess Team, which participates in league matches with other Boulder Valley schools.

**Destination Imagination** - Students in Grades K-5 participate on teams of seven members coached by parent volunteers. Each team meets regularly to work out solutions to a problem determined by the Destination Imagination program's national advisors. Grades K-2 students participate in a non-competitive problem and give a performance at the Boulder Valley DI event. Students in Grades 3-5 compete at the district, state, and sometimes national levels.

**District Literary Magazine** - Each spring, the BVSD TAG Office publishes a literary magazine containing poems, stories, and artwork produced by Boulder Valley students. Mesa Elementary School students are encouraged to use their

literary and artistic talents to develop submissions for the magazine. Every BVSD school receives a copy of this publication.

**Mesa Magazine** - An in-house, twice a year, publication open to all.

**Musical Enrichment Opportunities** abound at Mesa, with a before-school Grades 4-5 choral group (the M & M's) and a large Handbell Choir, also for Grades 4-5, whose members audition for a year-long position. The groups perform for parents and the student body. All 5th Grade students may also participate in either band or orchestra.

**Mesa Musicals** - A full-scale musical production, with two casts using all Grade 4-5 students, is staged each Spring. Major parts are auditioned, and this activity meets many TAG students' needs. In addition, Grade K-3 stages a musical production each year.

**Junior Great Books** - Open to all and taught by parent volunteers. Junior Great Books offers an in-depth study of literature in small groups.

**Outdoor Education** - Grades 4-5 participate in a two- or three-day outdoor education program away from school, which provides structure enabling "real life" connections to ecology, team-building, outdoor physical skill development, and orienteering.

**Science Fair** - Open to all students but required for Grades 4-5.

**Geography Club** - Students study world geography. Open to all students and taught by parent volunteers.

**Knowledge Bowl Team** - Open to 5th grade TAG students, this competitive team participates in two national computer-based competitions (Knowledge Master Open) and prepares for these primarily through pull-out classes. Past teams have scored first place in Colorado and within the top eight to twenty teams out of over 250 teams nationwide.

**Twice-Exceptional TAG Students** - The staff at Mesa Elementary has been trained in differentiating for "Twice-Exceptional" students with special needs.

**SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted)** - In coordination with BVSD TAG Office, Mesa promotes workshops to explore affective issues related to a student's being identified as gifted.

