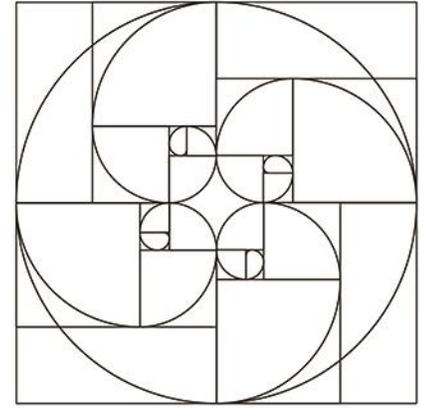


GALASA

GIFTED & ADVANCED LEARNING ACADEMY OF SOUTH AFRICA



CONSTITUTION, POLICY, STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

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Website: www.galasa.org.za

Facebook: Gifted and Advanced Learning Academy of South Africa
NPC Registration No. 2015/276923/08
Trustees D.L. Silman BSc. B Ed (Honours) R. L. Bortz CA (SA)

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1 SCHOOL CONSTITUTION

The purpose of this document is to establish policy and describe the constitution and operational structure of the Gifted and Advanced Learning Academy of South Africa (GALASA). It establishes the principles around which GALASA is operated and managed and elaborates its purpose and vision.

The policy further describes the operational structures of the school, including the higher level management structures of the NPC as well as the internal management structures of the school. The policy also describes the relationship between the school, its pupils and their parents as well as the academic structures and grades.

2 ADDRESSES

2.1 STREET ADDRESS

38 Oxford Road
Parktown
Johannesburg
2193

POSTAL ADDRESS

P.O Box 51682
Raedene
Johannesburg
2124

Policy Responsibilities

This responsibility is currently vested in the two Directors of GALASA, Messrs RL Bortz and DL Silman and is subject to review annually during the month of August for implementation in September of the same year.

Next Review August 2017

Publication 1 September 2015

3 STATUTORY APPLICATIONS

All provisions contained in this constitution conform to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) including but not limited to:

- Children's Act 38 of 2005 and Children's Amendment Act 41 of 2007
- The SA Schools Act as amended (Act 84 of 1996)
- The Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995)
- The Promotion of Access to Information Act (Act 2 of 2002)
- Protection from Harassment Act 2010, No. 17 of 2011
- And
- Provincial regulations as gazetted from time to time.

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4 PREAMBLE

Thousands of intellectually gifted children are falling through the cracks in the Basic Education sector, condemned to continue a life of poverty and exclusion at worst, or at best, consigned to the frustration of working in menial occupations that neither exploit nor reward their innate intellectual potential.

An extremely conservative figure of only two percent of people (*Gross; M.U.M, Understanding Our Gifted; 2000*) with a Wechsler IQ test score in excess of 131 permits the conclusion that of the 12 million scholars in South Africa, there must be at least 240 000 who are intellectually gifted. (*Burt, C. (1968). Is intelligence normally distributed? British Journal of Statistical Psychology; 16. 175-190.*)

Most academics working in the field of human intelligence (*Terman, 1925; Burt, 1968; Silverman, 1989; Gross, 1993*) report that between three and five percent of human populations contain individuals who are intellectually gifted. This higher proportion increases the number of school-going age children in South Africa to between 30 000 and 50 000 in each age cohort from grade 1 to grade 12 who would, if tested, be identifiable as intellectually gifted.

In total, through all grades, there are likely between 360 000 and 500 000 intellectually gifted children in South African schools.

Gifted children from both high and low income families are similarly disadvantaged. Most schools either fail to identify their exceptionalism, or if it is recognised, little to no provision is made to cater to the special needs of these children. Even if schools offer an inclusive curriculum, it is often inadequate or inappropriate and the not infrequent consequence is academic underperformance.

The South African Basic Education sector provides numerically insignificant access to an individually tailored, enriched curriculum, designed specifically for intellectually gifted children, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Aside from the personal loss of a professional career, primarily due to lack of access, the national loss of this pool of talent has found expression in the science and technology skills shortage the country continues to face. These children can and must be identified.

Analysis of NSC results data reveals with a high degree of probability that most of these gifted children either did not reach Grade 12, or if they did, their performance quality was not commensurate with their innate potential, primarily because they were neither recognised nor adequately nurtured.

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5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

- School leavers are ill-prepared to cope with the academic demands of science based courses.
- Failure rate of first year students is very high.
- Quality and number of university graduates is sub-optimal. The required academic habits and discipline of students enrolled in science-based courses was likely not inculcated early enough in their personal and academic development.
- Intervention models implemented have not yielded desired outcomes of sufficient depth and scope.
- Inadequate real world utility value of school acquired knowledge and skillsets.
- CSI contributions are not used to maximum effect and funding often does not reach enough children with high academic potential, resulting in the failure to achieve outcomes commensurate with the quantum of investment.
- Impact of CSI funded programmes is frequently imperceptible to donors, leading to donor frustration and a sense of wasted expenditure.
- In the absence of a coherent and accountable programme structure, funding of uncoordinated, unarticulated interventions continues, with sub-optimal outcomes.

6 SCHOOL MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The Gifted and Advanced Learning Academy of South Africa shall:

- Provide Independent School Education, from Grade 1 to Grade 12, in English, to intellectually gifted learners in accordance with section 29(3) and (4) of the Constitution of South Africa and as defined in the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996, as amended, consolidated or re-enacted from time to time.
- Provide career guidance and counselling services to pupils attending the school.
- Develop and offer programmes addressing the learning, teaching, training, curriculum support, governance, whole school development and safety and security.
- Provide hostel accommodation for pupils.
- Organise, manage and administer the training of teachers.

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- Provide after-care facilities.
- Establish replicas of the school model in each of the nine provinces in South Africa

7 VISION

GALASA recognizes that children who possess exceptional cognitive ability should be granted the direction, time, encouragement, and resources to develop maximally their innate intellectual potential.

In order fully to develop such capabilities, provision must be made for pedagogic and didactic services and activities that are inadequately provided for in Public Ordinary Schools as well as independent schools. GALASA's *raison d'être* is to plug this gap in education provision.

This enriched curriculum provides unique, individually tailored opportunities for the gifted child's cognitive and emotional development, providing a sound, life-long foundation for adulthood.

8 ETHOS

Children respond best to learning when they are secure and happy. Teaching through fear or the application of institutional authority does not challenge or elicit the fullest potential within children and consequently limits their capacity to maximize the benefit of their innate abilities to themselves as well as their external, societal environment, from parents and friends to community, nation and the wider world.

9 TEACHERS

Authority lies within the teacher as a person, rather than in the person of the teacher and respect for a teacher only endures when children recognize the merits of the individual. We all remember a special teacher for their 'humanness', rather than their strictness or even their knowledge or teaching competence.

Too many teachers depend on the institutional authority they believe they possess to maintain control of their charges. They have forgotten if ever they knew, that their role is to assist and guide, to lead towards a goal rather than to push from behind. This coercive method is perceived by many educationalists and parents to be effective 'traditional teaching'. Bullying pupils and overpowering them with institutional authority is a pedagogic tactic that has no place in any school.

10 PUPILS

The intellectual capacity of children is vastly underestimated and schools have tended to become places where children are stored, hopefully safely, while they mature sufficiently to be able to look after themselves in the world beyond school.

School, particularly for intellectually gifted children could, and should be, so much more!

There is no reason why the nature of the work done in schools cannot be enhanced and augmented in terms of complexity; content, relevance and application. The school experience and delivery of the curriculum can be managed in such a manner that children continue to be excited about the experience of being at school, from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

10.1 Conduct of Teachers and Pupils

Choosing to work and learn at GALASA is an explicit choice. Consequently, any activity or behavior that undermines the effective teaching and learning programmes of the school will result in the application of corrective and/or punitive sanctions.

The underlying principle governing conduct is that all people are entitled to be treated with manifest courtesy and respect. In addition, teachers are subject to the ethical provisions of the South African Council of Educators (SACE) code of conduct for professional teachers.

Suspected criminal behavior by any pupil, teacher or parent/guardian will be dealt with in terms of the relevant legislation, on a case-by-case basis, and will be referred to the South African Police Service (SAPS) for investigation.

10.2 Dress code

The purposes of this unisex school uniform are to reduce parental costs and also assists in the prevention of difficulties arising from the expression of clothing fashion as a function of socio-economic status.

- White, school shirt (long or short sleeve)
- Grey trousers/skirt
- Grey socks
- Black school shoes
- Black V-neck jersey

No prescription is applied to:

- Apparel required for religious observance.
- cold weather clothing such as gloves, scarves and jackets.

11 LEARNING AND TEACHING

Teachers should not only be superbly competent in their subject knowledge and schoolroom praxis; these skills are an essential prerequisite to be a GALASA teacher, with the added ability to offer their charges much, much more.

It is possible, practicable and preferable to provide the very young child with the essential basics (3R's) without imposing a particular narrow methodology. Most young children love being read to, and many learn to read and count painlessly while sitting on the lap of a parent reading bed-time stories, rendering automatic that which is routinely pummeled into their heads by traditional teaching methods.

Nevertheless, there is a definite place for the rote learning of some subject content such as multiplication tables, correct spelling and grammar. These skills, concretely acquired, form a sound platform for that which comes later. Number concept formation is the most important factor in assuring a child's mathematical competence in later school grades and the rest of the child's school career is based on the extension and application of these two fundamentals.

All schools follow a syllabus and do not, in the main attempt to exceed it, neither in scope nor depth. The grade 8 mathematics syllabus for example, can be taught, learned, drilled and assimilated in a matter of weeks.

What should follow is the next level of difficulty and application. Instead, schools spend weeks on one concept until the children are bored and dispirited because the challenge has gone. The core of the problem is that teachers do not question why they do what they do, and worse still, teachers believe that their pupils cannot cope with more advanced work until a full academic year has passed.

This practice exemplifies the law of diminishing returns and is particularly toxic to the intellectual development of very bright children.

Many teachers believe the fallacy that the longer they spend on a particular section, the more consolidated the knowledge and its application will become. In reality, the point is rapidly reached when most children will "get it" and the few who do not yet grasp the concepts and master them will not do so simply because more time is spent on the topic. For these children, a differentiated, tailored approach must be implemented to take into account the individual child's needs. One-on one attention in the classroom for a few minutes is often sufficient to bring a child to understanding and competence.

Children need to be given more, not less; the more we give them, the more they want.

This is true of all things, no less true for knowledge and understanding. Why is it that the lessons children enjoy most, are those where they have caused the teacher to divert from the main theme of a particular lesson? Children ask these questions because they want to know the answers. It matters little whether or not the questions are directly related to the topic the teacher intended to present. The reason teachers dismiss children and ignore this type of digression is either because they do not have sufficient knowledge to deal with question or they fear moving beyond the comfortable confines of a syllabus.

Children must be provided with the broadest knowledge base as possible, and by discouraging digressions, teachers often work against their own objectives. This does not imply a kind of classroom 'free-for-all'; rather it leads to a situation where broad-based, inter-linked 'bits' of knowledge are mixed and integrated to form a cognitive matrix within each child, into which limitless, rational information is welcomed and embedded.

The middle years of primary school, grades 4, 5 and 6 are critically important years for the development of a sound, disciplined academic work ethic. This is the phase in which children become uninterested in school because they are overloaded with tedious homework and under-stimulated with respect to that which is interesting, exciting and challenging.

12 HOMEWORK

Often homework is given for its own sake in compliance with school policy, so that the teacher can justify the time spent with the children in school, thereby demonstrating to the parent that “work” is being done. At GALASA, homework is intended to consolidate specific pedagogic content knowledge; it is intended to build self-confidence by giving the pupil the opportunity to demonstrate to themselves that they have mastered functional knowledge and operations regarding specific subject context.

Homework also has the capacity to engender a healthy work ethic and supports the child’s ability to manage time effectively, thereby enhancing self-discipline and personal responsibility.

Teaching methodologies that are modern, relevant and exciting, using ICT and multimedia support materials will form an essential component of the GALASA curriculum.

‘Hands on, eyes on, minds on’ experiential learning opportunities like tours, day trips, field exercises and practical work contribute significantly to interest in school with concomitant excellence in academic performance.

It is common cause that by the time many children reach high school, they are jaded and uninterested. A successful curriculum should produce confident, competent young people. GALASA will provide an individually tailored curriculum to children who are well suited to engage in a rigorous, personally relevant academic programme.

Pupils at GALASA will receive a broad ‘classical’ education in the early high school, years, specializing later in subjects appropriate to their general interests and specific aptitude.

Upon leaving the High School, these young adults will be supremely competent in a field that confers a significant advantage in the Higher Education environment.

The GALASA approach is unique and presupposes that every child has the capacity to achieve and excel. Schools and teachers often suppress the inborn curiosity of children and are responsible in large measure for the production of the “dunces” they so easily dismiss. GALASA will not permit dismissal of children’s questions and in-class contributions.

Children with ‘dual exceptionalities’, i.e. intellectual giftedness coupled with a learning disability; are particularly welcome. There is frequently a significant correlation between high intellectual potential and a recognizable barrier to learning, and as long as a child is cognitively accessible and has an insatiable intellectual wanderlust, he or she will feel at home in this school.

13 SPORT AND CULTURE

Sport, cultural activities and other games should not be considered ‘extra-mural’. Rather these activities will form part of the general educative process. Exposure of children to different activities facilitates and stimulates

their development and growth in a variety of experiential spaces that form part of the continuum of their life experience. Core offerings are Debating, Public Speaking, Dramatic and Creative Arts, Electronics and Chess.

Physical activity is unquestionably beneficial; traditionally this has taken the form of participation in conventional school sports where children with exceptional sporting aptitude tend to participate in after school, club-based activities.

Since the vast majority of children do not reach the highest levels of sport, our emphasis is on positive participation and the inculcation and reinforcement of a life-long enjoyment of physical activity. In support of this philosophy, as an integral component of the GALASA curriculum, the school offers each child the opportunity to pursue an activity of their choice. School fees include gym membership where the indoor pool and a wide range of facilities is available.

The ability to overcome and improve performance is best measured against one's own previous effort, not the external yardstick of 'the other side'. If a child learns that the struggle is always internal, success becomes inevitable.

14 EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

By means of a class size never exceeding 16 pupils, GALASA aims to:

- create an environment that provides an informal but structured mode of operation. The concern is with the child's spirit and mind, and does not depend on the traditional symbols of uniformity and authority structures.
- develop and stimulate the expression of the innate abilities of exceptional children, leading to personal self-fulfilment and high order academic competence.
- produce competent students who are cognitively better equipped and consequently more likely, successfully to complete rigorous, Science-based degree courses.
- provide an ongoing, quantitatively significant pool of very high quality academic talent for Higher Education Institutions.

GALASA also aims to provide an enriched curriculum for learners with superior intellectual potential, with a specific focus on providing educational services to children from economically disadvantaged families.

In collaboration with parents, teachers and allied professionals such as educational psychologists, GALASA will identify intellectually advanced and gifted children and immerse them in a differentiated, enriched instructional milieu based on the South African National Curriculum Statement as elaborated in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

The implementation of the curriculum includes quality management, curriculum management, extra-curricular management and internal and external communication. A complete set of internal policies guide these operations and the management plan includes an annual or ad hoc review of all operations, as well as a system of feedback from professional staff, parents and pupils. This system is never complete.

Only the Trustees of GALASA have the right to make changes to the system and policies.

15 PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND MODALITIES

Pupils will work individually and in small groups on projects and assignments designed to:

- motivate them to maximize their learning.
- nurture creativity.
- develop and enhance accountability and where appropriate, leadership skills.
- engender and inculcate an entrepreneurial and independent mind-set

The needs of gifted children are often best addressed by presenting a differentiated curriculum and by employing a variety of modalities within the classroom setting. Each child will have an individualised education plan (IEP) that will be updated and modified as required.

Projects will involve:

- original work
- experimentation
- independent learning
- cooperative learning
- critical thinking
- problem solving, analysis, synthesis and evaluation
- techniques of flexibility, fluency, elaboration and divergent thinking.

Projects might include open-ended discussions, imaginative play, reader's theatre and drama.

Children will be stimulated and encouraged to generate new ideas by synthesizing current knowledge and transferring it to new applications.

Oral communication such as discussing, listening, questioning, debating, speaking as well as discussion leading will be practiced. Opportunities for the exercise of personal responsibility and accountability, initiative, and integrity will be provided regularly, based on a rigorous set of ethical guidelines drawn from a variety of

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sources. Pupils will be required to research areas of interest, collate and analyse data, and present their findings effectively, using appropriate ICT hardware and programmes.

15.1 Procedural Safeguards

- A parent or guardian will be required to give written permission before a child may be tested on an individual basis.
- The identification process will be non-discriminatory with regard to ethnicity, gender or economic background.
- Records of placement decisions and personal data relating to all pupils or prospective pupils will be held in confidence.
- Parents may review and obtain copies of their child's school record upon request.
- An individualised education plan (IEP) will be developed for each child and updated/modified as required.

Admission

It is widely accepted in the field of IQ assessment that a standard deviation of 15 points applies to IQ test scores. Consequently, although the school exists to serve the needs of the intellectually gifted, the selection of pupils must take into account the possibility of a child performing poorly on the day of the test. It follows then that some pupils may be admitted, despite not attaining an IQ score in excess of 131 points.

This accommodation reflects such inclusion by means of the phrase 'Advanced Learning' in the name of the school. Conversely, the attainment of an IQ score in excess of 131 points neither guarantees nor infers automatic admission to the school.

Intellectually promising scholars will be identified, selected and enrolled, beginning with grades 7, 8 and 9 in the first year of operation, with grades 10 and 11 cohorts being introduced thereafter. In the event there is a cost effective demand for lower grades, these will be accommodated in the following year. Ultimately the school will provide for pupils from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

15.2 Identification by Screening and Assessment

- Teachers in other schools will be encouraged to refer academically exceptional pupils to this school for assessment throughout the school year.
- All prospective pupils will be screened for potential giftedness using the International Wechsler or modified South African Wechsler testing instruments.
- Candidates for whom English is a second language may be subject to the administration of cognitive, non-verbal tests to offset any possible unfairness due to language-based bias.

- Assessment of the prospective pupils is conducted using a combination of formal and informal tests and checklists
- Reading, mathematics and language subtests will be administered.

15.3 General guidelines for referral and identification:

- The parent/s will need to give approval for the assessment to be administered. .
- Wherever possible, the current teacher(s) will need to motivate and provide evidence of the child's exceptional ability in the form of a test script from each of the subjects; Mathematics, Science, Home Language and First Additional Language.
- The child will be willing to be challenged.

15.4 The Highly Gifted and Grade Advancement

Children with IQ scores in excess of 131 are considered intellectually gifted. Other indicators of exceptional ability are observed in children who:

- demonstrate ability to function at three or more grade levels higher than age.
- have taught themselves to read at very early ages
- make notable progress in academic subjects without instruction

GALASA recognises that children with exceptional abilities need more educational intervention than do others. Teachers and parents need to determine a child's level of ability and then provide appropriate opportunities to develop these abilities.

In such instances, grade advancement is possible. The school principal, in consultation with teachers and allied professionals, and in compliance with appropriate regulations, will determine if grade advancement should be considered.

Of supreme importance is consideration of the child's best interests and overall welfare.

16 FEES AND FUNDING

GALASA is a not for profit company and receives no Provincial subsidy. Consequently, school fees must be levied to sustain it.

In order to mitigate the risk of non-payment, this fee is payable quarterly in advance of each school term. Similarly, parents are assured that in the event they wish to withdraw their child from the school, the entire balance of fees paid for whole, future months will be returned, on condition that notice is given on or before the 7th day of the month of intended withdrawal.

- Parents may pay in cash, by credit card or EFT.
- The annual fee is R55 800.
- The quarterly fee is R13 950.00.

There is a non-refundable application processing fee of R1500.00. Funding for children from financially constrained families will be sought through direct and indirect sponsorship by philanthropic individual and corporate citizens. Consequently, donors and sponsors will be issued a section 18A certificate which then qualifies the donor for a tax rebate for the entire sum, provided that the donation does not exceed 10% of the donor's income.

Ten percent of the annual school fee will be reserved for subsidising children whose parents encounter unexpected financial distress. In the event of non-payment of fees, the school will accommodate the affected child and will assist with finding an appropriate alternative schooling solution. Such pupils will be permitted to complete the current academic year but will not be enrolled in the subsequent year until arrears are paid in full. The school reserves all its rights with respect to collection of unpaid fees. It is intended that the ethical value of 'paying forward' will have been inculcated and entrenched to the extent that graduates of the school will naturally contribute to the financial support of future generations of needy GALASA scholars.

17 PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Teachers and Allied professionals will work creatively and flexibly to:

- conduct broad-based screening to identify gifted children.
- assess in-depth those children who meet screening criteria using formal and tests and checklists.
- match individual pupil's needs with programme options.
- offer professional training and support to teachers and parents related to gifted education, with a particular focus on matters pertaining to the gifted child.
- provide psycho-social support and guidance to children
- use recognized learning and teaching strategies such as cluster grouping, compacting, curriculum differentiation, acceleration, advanced course placement, independent study, mentorship and competitions.

Only suitably qualified staff, registered with SACE, and able to deliver the learning programmes expected of them by the GALASA curriculum will be appointed, with vacancies being advertised from time to time using various media platforms. All appointments are made in compliance with appropriate labour and employment legislation.

The Chief Executive Officer appoints the Principal who is then responsible for the appointment of the rest of the academic staff. The Chief Financial Officer appoints administrative and non-academic support staff. All employees must sign an employment contract which protects the interest of the employer and employee.

18 GALASA EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

The school provides education in the following phases:

- Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3)
- Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6)
- Senior Phase (Grades 7 to 9)
- Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10 to 12)

18.1 Representative Council of Learners

At the beginning of every year a Representative Council of Learners (RCL) is chosen by the learners as their representatives. The RCL management meets with the Principal on an ad hoc basis.

18.2 Parents/Guardian/Sponsors

An open and honest relationship between the school and parents is non-negotiable. The most effective way to bring this about is through constant and regular communication. A Parent Committee may be formed to create a platform from which parents can engage and support the school as the need for individual or small group discussions arises.

18.3 Language

The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is English.

19 OWNERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL

GALASA is a non-profit company registered with CIPC and is held in trust by three directors.

20 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

20.1 Governance Structure

A Board of Directors/Trustees exercises full and effective control over GALASA. This Board must consist of not less than three directors/trustees:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Generalist Trustee

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20.2 School Management Structure

The following represents the academic management structure of the school. Positions are filled as and when required. Other operational functions such as maintenance and administration are not shown here, but report directly to the CFO.

- CEO
- Principals of Primary and High School
- Subject Heads
- Subject Teachers

20.3 Financial Management Structure

The following represent the financial management structure of the school.

- CEO
- CFO
- Bursar
- Clerks

21 AFFILIATION

GALASA is to be registered with the relevant Provincial Department of Education and UMALUSI. This constitution can only be changed by a two thirds majority of concurring trustees.

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