



# DECATUR HIGH ABILITY ACADEMY

5106 S. HIGH SCHOOL RD  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46221



# *Message from the Coordinators*

Dear Families,

We are Decatur Proud to welcome you and your students to the Decatur High Ability Academy! Here at the DHAA we pride ourselves in offering authentic, real-world, learning experiences unlike anything students have had in the past. We plan field trips, interactions with community professionals, and collaborative exercises to enhance the learning and potential of each of our learners.

This year will be all about "first" experiences with technology, community, and collaboration. Learners will be held to higher standards, new types of thinking, and progressive problem solving skills. Students may not feel successful in these new ways of learning at first, but we will strive to give them continuous support and encouragement until they adapt and thrive.

Our goal with this program is for students to learn new ways of thinking and problem solving that will push them to higher levels of success in their future endeavors. This will better prepare them for advanced courses and opportunities at Decatur Middle School, High School, and beyond.

Our teachers and leaders are excited to see the progress that our students and staff make this year! We are Decatur Proud of the chance to provide such an amazing opportunity to our students and look forward to working with you all in the future.

Sincerely,

*Mrs. Rachel Nesbit*

&

*Mr. Jacob Apollos*



**High Ability Coordinators at the Decatur High Ability Academy**

**Contact Us!**

**5106 S. High School Rd. Indianapolis, IN 46221**

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# Culture & Vision

Our Culture is the heart and soul of our school and makes the Decatur High Ability Academy a special place to learn, work, and grow. Our vision is to prepare students to be “tomorrow ready” by providing a rigorous and engaging learning experience that enhances problem solving abilities. Everyone involved in our school should see themselves as an active member of a learning community - including teachers, staff, school leaders, parents, and our students. Learners work together to facilitate the experience of each lesson, encouraging each other to grow, question, and problem solve through various productive struggles. Our culture is focused around three main guiding values that work to support the foundation of learning, safety, and student success:

BELIEF	BEHAVIOR	OUTCOME
<b>Equity</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the needs of all</li> <li>• Remove all barriers</li> <li>• Provide differentiated support</li> <li>• Be courageous</li> </ul>	<b>Everyone is Valued!</b>
<b>Teamwork</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build relationships to foster a safe and productive learning environment</li> <li>• Communicate and partner with community</li> <li>• Value each other</li> <li>• Take responsibility for your actions</li> </ul>	<b>Stronger Together!</b>
<b>Excellence</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embrace all opportunities</li> <li>• Bring positive energy</li> <li>• Grow through productive discomfort</li> <li>• Be elite – be the best version of you</li> </ul>	<b>Do the Work!</b>

These values are instilled in every aspect of our school, activities, and curriculum. From the lessons we plan to the daily encounters between learners, we emphasize equity and teamwork in order to achieve excellent outcomes for our students. These values form the foundation of our daily expectations described below:

## Expectations:

- 1) **Observant** - Learners are expected to train themselves to observe the people, work areas, lessons, and themselves in a detailed & rigorous manner.
- 2) **Welcoming** - Learners are expected to present all peers, visitors, and leaders a safe and welcoming environment. This includes showing respect, friendliness, and acceptance to each person they interact with.
- 3) **Leadership** - Learners are expected to cultivate their natural leadership skills in order to advance themselves and their team to new levels of excellence.
- 4) **Safe** - Learners are expected to maintain a safe environment at all times, conducting themselves so each learner is physically and emotionally safe.

# Academic Approach

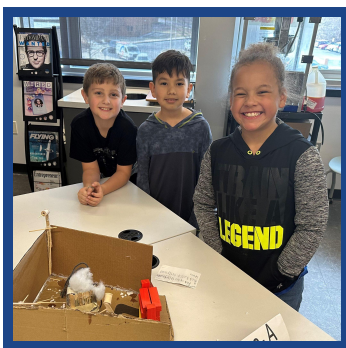
The State of Indiana defines a high ability student as:

“a student who: performs at or shows the potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one (1) domain when compared with other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.”<sup>1</sup>

Research shows gifted/high ability learners want to make significant contributions and impact the world around them. They succeed best when lessons provide complexity and relevance to their lives while making meaningful connections within and across disciplines as they explore big ideas.<sup>2</sup> At the Decatur High Ability Academy (DHAA), our approach to education involves an application of learning that challenges all students while allowing them to work together to achieve new levels of excellence. We use grade level “themes” to create the necessary dynamic that will generate the success of our gifted learners:

- Grade 3 - **Systems:** Studying how various parts work together to produce an outcome.
- Grade 4 - **Changes:** Learning how small shifts can lead to powerful changes.
- Grade 5 - **Bridges:** Learning how thoughts, movements, and ideas are connected.
- Grade 6 - **Impact:** Learning how pressure, when applied under different circumstances, can yield expected and unexpected results.

These “themes” permeate the curriculum, culture, and collaboration throughout the year, and allow learners to grapple with multiple perspectives while examining real-life problems through a variety of lenses (i.e. scientists, engineers, historians, mathematicians, writers, and researchers). The product of this design is that our students receive a rigorous, authentic, and engaging learning experience that enhances their problem-solving abilities and twenty-first century skills. These skills will only work to improve their success in the advanced courses & careers of tomorrow.



<sup>1</sup>IN Code § 20-36-1-3 (2021)

<sup>2</sup>Tomlinson, C. A. (1997, May). *What it means to teach gifted learners well*. National Association for Gifted Children. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from

<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/gifted-education-practices/what-it-means-teach-gifted-learners-well>

# Language Arts & Math

## English Language Arts

Our focus for English Language Arts at DHAA is to prepare students to be “Tomorrow Ready” by training them to be careful, critical readers, effective researchers, and persuasive communicators. English Language Arts includes the study of language arts, literature, history and the visual and performing arts. Teachers provide direct and explicit instruction on reading and writing skills to the whole class and support student understanding in small ability-based groups. Teachers combine short, targeted mini-lessons with practice and application to deepen student understanding of content. The content is connected to the grade level themes and social studies or science content related to their Project Based Learning units of study. Students have opportunities to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways including writing, poetry, performances, videos, green screen recordings, songs, dance, presentations, or plays.

Through these practices, and our core language arts instruction, students at DHAA have many experiences interacting with a variety of texts and literature to nourish their love for reading.



## Mathematics

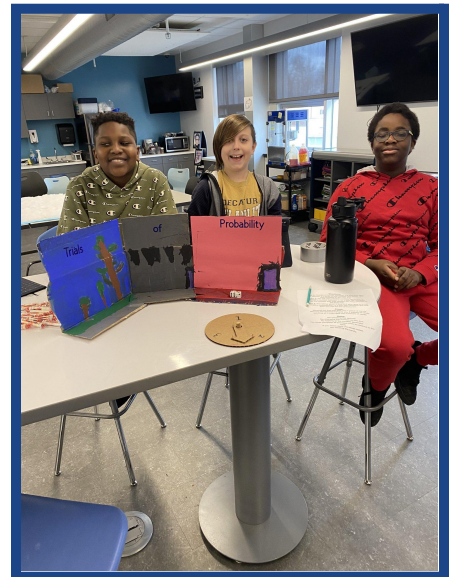
The math curriculum at DHAA focuses on developing a growth mindset in all students so they can become the problem solvers of the future. We do this by challenging our students daily with a rigorous math curriculum and real-life problems to develop their perseverance and stamina. We believe students need opportunities to thoroughly understand how numbers can be used to monitor and explain the world around them. This is done through daily number sense lessons combined with practice, analyzing mathematical reasonableness, and authentic application of computational thinking through project-based learning experiences. Students have opportunities for personalized and accelerated math instruction at their individual level through the weekly use of technology tools. Our 5th and 6th grade students use the *Reveal Math Accelerated* curriculum for their core math instruction. This prepares them with the skills necessary for Algebra and other higher-level courses at the middle school level.



# Project/Problem-Based Learning

Our project/problem-based learning (PBL) time is dedicated to the authentic discovery and application of a blended curricular experience. Students have the opportunity to discover and demonstrate concepts related to science and social studies, while also applying the skills they have learned from their math and ELA lessons. For example, students in fifth grade researched and read about the Revolutionary War and then created presentations over different colonies, topics, and/or battles fought. Throughout the process they wrote a variety of non-fiction narratives that displayed the concepts and facts they had discovered. In grade six, the students spent time researching circular economies and how best to incorporate them in our modern world. They used the knowledge they found to create scaled models of futuristic cities, presenting on how they incorporated aspects of a circular economy to solve energy, material, and food needs. Beyond content-specific skills, project-based learning has been linked to life skills that set students up for future success (i.e. collaborative skills, problem solving, critical thinking, perseverance, project management, empowerment, etc...).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>BELL, S. (2010). Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future. The Clearing House, 83(2), 39–43.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20697896>



# Electives

Elective classes are offered in order to give students more choice, ownership, and exposure in their educational experience. Multiple courses are currently offered to stimulate a student's creative, cognitive, and critical thinking abilities, while also working to advance a student's understanding & application of their own strengths in a variety of ways.

## Grade 3-4 Electives:

- **MakerSpace:** At this level the course focuses on basic collaboration skills, introductory level computer science standards, and technology training/certification.
- **Physical Education:** Students will be guided through development of motor skills, movement performance, health/fitness, and athletic rules using the Indiana Academic standards.
- **Project Lead The Way:** Students engage in hands-on activities in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science. They use the engineering design process to solve problems that relate to the world around them.
- **Foreign Language:** Students will be guided through an introductory Spanish course to gain basic conversational skills & cultural awareness.
- **Art & Music:** Students will alternate between art and music units of study each nine weeks. They will learn different modes of art and basic elements of music and reading music.

## Grade 5-6 Electives:

- **MakerSpace:** Students will be trained to use the various pieces of technology offered in our MakerSpace and HUB as part of their "certification" process. They will be given opportunities to conduct personal and group projects that help them practice using these items effectively.
- **Physical Education:** Students will be guided through development of motor skills, movement performance, health/fitness, and athletic rules using the Indiana Academic standards.
- **Project Lead The Way:** Students engage in hands-on activities in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science, utilizing the engineering design process.
- **Foreign Language:** Students will have the choice to continue their Spanish training with a teacher or study another language using online resources.
- **Art & Music:** Students will have a choice to learn about a more specific form of art or how to play an instrument of their choice during their elective time.
- **Competitive Robotics:** Students will work with team members to design, build, & manipulate a VEX robot, to score points in a predetermined challenge.
- **Journalism:** Learners will be responsible for learning appropriate investigation skills to write and record a school newspaper or broadcast. Students may apply their skills to yearbook design & creation as well.
- **Typing:** Students will complete typing lessons using a variety of online resources to improve typing speed and accuracy.



# Technology

Technology at the DHAA is treated as a tool that, when used appropriately, can enrich the educational experience, expand collaborative abilities, and improve efficiency in research, writing, and the sharing of information. These tools work to provide the rigorous, authentic, and engaging learning experiences our school strives for!

Every learner at the DHAA will have one iPad, one MacBook, and one Apple Pencil. These devices are utilized throughout the school day and enrich the math, ELA, PBL, and elective classes. Our MakerSpace Hub has a variety of other technological tools that can be used in addition to the devices assigned to each student. All students, starting in grade three, will receive special training in the use of age appropriate pieces of technology. By grade six, every student will be DHAA “certified” to use these tools within their projects & lessons (individually or as a group) to push their educational outcomes to ever higher levels. Such tools include:

- Cricut cutting machines
- 3D printers
- Laser Cutters
- Drone video recorder
- Green screen & media recording technology
- Sewing machines
- Sphero robots
- Arduino boards & sensors
- VEX IQ robot parts & challenge field
- General tools & cutting equipment





# Additional Information

## Daily Schedule:

Amount of Time each day	Subject/content
75 mins	Math
90 mins	ELA: grammar, reading, writing
30 mins	Lunch
30 mins	Recess
60 mins	Electives
60 mins	Project/Problem based learning
20 mins	Reflection/Study Hall

## Competitions & Challenges:

High ability students thrive in an environment where they can apply the knowledge & skills they learn from the classroom in real world settings. We utilize a variety of competitions to help facilitate this application, while also engaging students in the competitive nature that pushes them to new levels of achievement & success. Some of the competitions & challenges we participate in are listed below:

- VEX Robotics
- eCybermission
- Various Writing submissions/competitions
- Future City Competition



## DHAA Parent Teacher Organization:

Our Decatur High Ability Academy Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is organized for the purpose of supporting our school's mission. They work to enhance the education of our kids by fostering relationships between the school, our parents/families, teachers, and the community.

A sample of the events and activities they organize are listed below:

- Popcorn Fridays
- Fall Festival & Haunted House
- Someone Special Dance
- Parent's Night Out
- End of the Year Cookout & Celebration
- Sixth Grade Retreat & Night



# *Enrollment Selection Process*

To identify students who may qualify to attend the Decatur High Ability Academy, we triangulate data from a variety of measures:

- CogAT: Assesses Academic Potential
- State-approved Performance Assessments, such as NWEA
- Standardized Test Results, such as ILEARN
- Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (Characteristic Rating Scales)

At least three of the above data points will be considered, along with a holistic review of a student's school records.

# *Innovation School Status*

The Decatur High Ability Academy was opened in 2021 as a program serving high ability students in grades 3-6, within the MSD of Decatur Township. On December 13, 2022, the Decatur Township School Board voted to approve transitioning the program into an innovation school at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

Innovation schools are public schools that, under Indiana law, have the autonomy to make decisions at the school-level. As an innovation school, the DHAA will be part of MSD Decatur Township and will be able to make decisions on curriculum, staffing, and other operational choices that best meet the needs of their students. As an innovation school, enrollment at DHAA is open to students who meet criteria within and outside of MSD Decatur Township boundaries. The DHAA is the first innovation school in Marion County located outside of Center Township.





# 2023-2024 CALENDAR

## JULY 2023

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30	31					

## AUGUST 2023

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## SEPTEMBER 2023

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## OCTOBER 2023

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## NOVEMBER 2023

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## DECEMBER 2023

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### FIRST SEMESTER 2023 (92 Teacher Days, 89 Student Days)

- Fri., July 28 – Teacher Contract Day (No students)
- Mon., July 31 – First Semester Begins (Full day for students)
- Mon., September 4 – Labor Day (No school)
- Fri., September 29 – End of 1<sup>st</sup> Term (44 days)
- Wed., October 4 – Parent Conferences (No students)
- Mon., Oct. 9-Fri., Oct. 20 – Fall Recess (No school)
- Tues., Nov. 7 – eLearning Day (Students work from home)
- Wed., Nov. 22-Fri., Nov. 24 – Thanksgiving Recess (No school)
- Thurs., December 21 – End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Term (45 days)/ End of 1<sup>st</sup> Semester
- Fri., December 22 – Teacher Work Day (No students)
- Fri., Dec. 22-Fri., Jan. 5 – Winter Recess (No school)

### SECOND SEMESTER 2024 (92 Teacher Days, 91 Student Days)

- Mon., January 8 – Second Semester Begins (Full day for students)
- Mon., January 15 – Martin Luther King Day (No school)
- Mon., February 19 – Presidents' Day (No school)
- Fri., March 8 – End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Term (43 days)
- Fri., Mar. 22-Fri., Mar. 29 – Spring Recess (No school)
- Thurs., May 23 – Last Student Day and End of 4<sup>th</sup> Term (48 days)
- Fri., May 24 – Last Teacher Contract Day

#### Student Make-up Days

- January 15, 2024
- February 19, 2024
- May 24, 2024
- May 28, 2024

#### Grading Periods

- July 31 – Sept. 29 (44 days)
- Oct. 2 – Dec. 21 (45 days)
- Jan. 8 – Mar. 8 (43 days)
- Mar. 11 – May 23 (48 days)

Or possible eLearning Days TBA

*\*There will be a minimum of one week between the occurrence of a lost/snow day and the actual make-up day used.*

- Onsite Registration Day
- Teacher Work Days
- School Days
- eLearning Day
- Holidays
- Conference Day
- Breaks

## JANUARY 2024

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## FEBRUARY 2024

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## MARCH 2024

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## APRIL 2024

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## MAY 2024

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## JUNE 2024

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School Board Approved  
February 9, 2022



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