

BETA Mini School FAQ

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Program Description

What is the program and what is its purpose?

The BETA Mini-School at Alpha Secondary is designed for students in Grade 8 and 9 to enrich, challenge and support students who have demonstrated high potential, talent and ability. In an inclusive and supportive environment of intellectual peers, the students would participate in rigorous, complex, creative, cognitive challenges. Through engaging, in-depth, collaborative and self-directed study, they would have an opportunity to reach their intellectual, personal and social potential.

Where is the BETA Mini School program located?

The program is currently located at Alpha Secondary School.

Students are required to leave their home schools and become a member of the school community at Alpha.

Who is the BETA Mini School program for?

Students who are successful in the BETA Mini School Program demonstrate:

- a desire to be in a cohort-based learning environment
- a willingness to engage in teamwork and collaborative learning with like-minded peers
- an ability to explore grade level academics in depth and complexity
- an enjoyment of complex and creative cognitive challenges
- a high academic standing
- an ability to engage in a self-directed study in an area of passion or interest

Things to consider:

- Student's willingness to work with others
- Student's ability to self-regulate
- Student's focus and perseverance during challenging tasks
- Student's social emotional well-being in an academically rigorous program
- Student's experience and ability to work on unstructured tasks independently

How will the child get to and from the program?

Transportation is the responsibility of the parent, and this is something that should be considered prior to application.

How to Apply

Who can apply for BETA Mini School?

Students currently in Grades 7 and 8 can apply for the following school year.

A "P" designation is not required to apply.

Who puts in the application?

Parents can submit an application for the BETA Mini School Program. Please notify your home school about the application since information from the school must be submitted to complete the application. Any incomplete applications will not be considered.

Can a student who is twice exceptional apply to the program?

Given the diverse nature of twice-exceptional (2E) learner profiles, 2E candidates are welcome to apply. If a student demonstrates the criteria for the BETA Mini School listed above, and it appears the program would be a fit for the student given their cognitive and academic abilities, then the student's name should be put forward. As with all student applications, class composition will also be a key factor in the selection process.

Application Process

What are the components of the application for BETA Mini School?

- BETA Mini School Application Form
- BETA Mini School Input Form
- Copies of the 2 most recent report cards (submitted by parents)
- If applicable: copies of IEP, SLP, and Psych-Ed Assessment
- Cognitive Screening Assessment and Written Assessment in December

Who will decide who is granted admission to the program?

A district selection committee will review application packages and cognitive test results in December and January for entry into the BETA Mini School for the following school year.

What is the cognitive screening assessment? Why is it being used for the application process?

The screening assessment of the application is a norm-referenced test of cognitive ability and reasoning skills. Testing will be approximately two half days in duration. As the BETA Mini School program is an academically rigorous program, the assessment will provide information regarding the applicant's innate cognitive abilities and will be used as a screening tool. It is not the sole criteria used to determine participation in the program and will be considered in conjunction with the rest of the information provided in the application package.

Is the cognitive assessment used for the BETA Mini School application the same as a psycho-educational assessment?

No, the cognitive assessment used for the BETA Mini School application is not the same as a psycho-educational assessment. It is designed to give a snapshot of a student's cognitive profile but is not a comprehensive report of their cognitive abilities and the scores should not be interpreted as such.

Where will the results from the cognitive screening assessments be kept?

Classification results will be kept in the District's student file. Since the assessment is used as a screening tool, no scores will be available at this time.

Other Considerations

If a student is accepted into BETA Mini School in Grade 8, will they continue in Mini School for Grade 9?

Yes. If they are accepted, they will stay in the BETA Mini School program for the following year.

If a student chooses to leave the program, can they go back to their home school?

The student must reregister at their home school.

Can my child accelerate through core academic subjects in Mini School?

No. BETA Mini School is not an accelerated program. Our philosophy is to go into more depth, complexity and enrich grade level curriculum.

How are students in BETA Mini School programs going to be integrated into the community at their new elementary school?

Students in BETA Mini School will spend only Humanities and Scimatics classes with the Mini School cohort. For all other courses, students will be integrated into the Alpha Secondary community and will have classes with students who are not registered in BETA Mini School. Students from BETA Mini School will also participate as members of the whole school community through assemblies, school events, and extra-curricular clubs and teams.

What will the Mini School time table look like?

Students will spend a half day every day with the Mini School Grade cohort and spend the other half of the day in classes with the rest of the Alpha community (PE, ADST, Languages, etc).

Can students join extracurricular clubs?

Yes. BETA Mini School students are part of the Alpha Secondary community and can join extracurricular clubs.

How much homework will Mini School students receive?

Students have dedicated class time for their assignments, activities, projects, writes, and labs. BETA Mini School provides many opportunities for student choice. When students choose to go deeper on a certain learning task, they will often bring their work home with them. On average, students bring home 1 hour of academic work per day. If students are collaborating on a major group project or reviewing for an assessment, this could require 2-3 hours at home on those occasions. Time that students dedicate to IDS is in addition to their academic work, as this is an off-timetable course.

How to do I contact the teacher about my child's progress?

One of our cornerstone values in BETA Mini School is to support students in developing ownership of their learning. The best way to learn how your child is doing is to check in with them regularly. BETA Mini School teachers will also send home Progress Reports in addition to the Term and Semester Report Cards. Parents will receive the Progress Report about halfway through each term. If your child requires additional learning support to be successful academically and/or socially, then the teachers will be in touch with parents directly via phone or email.