

*For (highly) gifted  
students, their parents,  
primary school teachers  
and internal coordinators*

# TALENT<sup>HZM</sup> 2023/2024



**HUIZERMAAT**  
MAVO / HAVO / VWO / GYMNASIUM



**TALENT<sup>HZM</sup>**



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*'Discovering your own  
cognitive norm for further  
development'*

## TALENT

Talent<sup>HZM</sup> is an educational program specifically designed for (highly) gifted students. Our goal is to help gifted children develop into self-aware adolescents – individuals who recognize and appreciate their own talents and skills, enabling them to find their place in society at their own level.

The education at Talent<sup>HZM</sup> is characterized by a special didactic approach that emphasizes ample room for cognitive challenges and the strengthening of executive functions and skills. There is extensive interaction between subject lessons and mentoring, creating an environment where students can optimize their learning strategies, problem-solving skills, and their school identity. We encourage our students to shape their own development, ultimately becoming independent and self-assured adolescents during their years in secondary education. To make this possible, Talent<sup>HZM</sup> continues to invest significantly in the training of teachers, mentors, and other stakeholders. This training primarily focuses on Talent-specific teaching methods and the approach to this specific target group.

During the lower grades, Talent<sup>HZM</sup> classes consist of homogeneous groups with a maximum of 20 (highly) gifted students. In the upper grades, the students attend heterogeneous pre-university classes (vwo) with additional mentor guidance. This guidance adopts a coaching approach, helping students utilize school as a means of personal growth. In the upper grades, there are numerous opportunities for tailored enrichment, expansion, and acceleration.



### Three pillars form the foundation

This brochure provides a brief overview of the three pillars which form the foundation of the Talent<sup>HZM</sup> concept, along with how we translate this vision into our daily education practice.





*'I can do so much more than I thought and I also dare to do much more'*

## ACCORDING TO STUDENTS



### I chose Talent because ...

- I wanted support for my high giftedness
- I wanted to be in class with others like me
- I wanted to be challenged and to feel understood



### At Talent, I learned that ...

- you can learn in many different ways
- I can be myself and it's okay to make mistakes
- it's not strange to ask for help
- collaboration is not only enjoyable but often leads to a solution
- I can be completely myself, and that's super nice



### In Talent I learned about myself that ...

- I don't have to adapt to fit in
- I can do so much more than I thought and I also dare to do much more



### What makes Talent unique is that ...

- everyone in the class is gifted
- your mentors are always there for you
- there are many challenges, including some very difficult ones. And actually, that's a lot of fun

### The best thing about Talent is that ...

- it doesn't just focus on your grades or how many passing marks you achieve, but on how you truly grow and whether you're making progress in your learning journey
- you have a lot of contact with your mentors and always have the opportunity to talk to one of them
- you get the chance to develop yourself
- they take your feelings very seriously





**TALENT** 

## Vision on Education and Learning

### PILLAR 1

## COGNITIVE CHALLENGES

Talent<sup>HZM</sup> offers education that aligns with the cognitive abilities of highly gifted students. These students often possess knowledge and capabilities far beyond the established norms for pre-university education. However, when forced to conform to these norms, they may lose sight of their own cognitive potential. Therefore, unlike in regular education, we embark on a journey with the students to discover their own unique cognitive norms.

*'We search with the students  
for where learning begins for them.'*

### Challenge

There is no one way in which highly gifted students react to education that lacks cognitive challenges. Some may conform to the system, enjoying high grades without truly pushing their limits, while others may calculate their way to barely passing with minimal effort. There is also a group that disengages entirely from school. It can not be taken for granted that highly gifted students use school as a means of learning, and they seldom explore what they are truly capable of or what education could mean for them.

At Talent<sup>HZM</sup>, we encourage students to explore their own norms, starting from where learning truly begins, and from there further develop their cognitive potential. This point naturally varies for each student and subject. According to the Russian educational psychologist Vygotsky, learning occurs in the zone of proximal development – the area bordering what you already know and can do. For highly gifted students, this zone might lie in an unexpected place, and it can quickly shift due to their ability to rapidly grasp new material.

### Personal Learning Objective

Talent<sup>HZM</sup> frequently presents students with complex open assignments, allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills within a given subject-related context, emphasizing personal interpretation and the interconnectedness of learning objectives within a subject. Additionally, a top-down approach is used, starting with the ultimate learning objectives as the foundation of each lesson, and from there, shaping the learning process. Teachers assess where each student begins and how they progress toward the learning objectives. This approach quickly identifies areas where new information and/or teacher guidance are needed, enabling personalized education.







## Mindset

To reach the point where learning begins, Talent<sup>HZM</sup> also applies psychologist Carol Dweck's mindset theory. She discovered that many gifted students perceive intelligence as a fixed attribute (fixed mindset) rather than something that can be developed (growth mindset). In short, students with a fixed mindset avoid challenges, hindering their ability to learn from failure or persevere – crucial skills for learning. Additionally, students with a fixed mindset do not equip themselves with the tools and skills to develop in unfamiliar areas. Mentors and teachers guide students, where necessary, in transitioning from a fixed to a growth mindset, enabling them to reach the point where true learning can begin.

*'Starting the lesson with personal goals, at their own cognitive level'*

## Process

A significant aspect of our education is the integration of guidance and teaching. At Talent<sup>HZM</sup>, mentoring and subject lessons are partly intertwined. Some students have almost daily mentoring sessions where mentors and students reflect upon and look ahead to their lessons. Through this process, mentors, with input from subject teachers, generate thinking and learning questions for their lessons. This approach ensures that students begin each lesson with personal goals at their own cognitive level. When it becomes evident during a lesson that a student has mastered the core content for a subject at pre-university level and has already met the vwo standard, they can delve into their own questions and research. Teachers and mentors support this inquiry-based learning.

*'Short lines of communication between teachers and mentors are key for the development of (study) skills'*

## Need to know

Due to the close relationship between teachers and mentors, Talent<sup>HZM</sup> can effectively guide students in developing their (study) skills. It is observed that highly gifted students may have gone through primary education without fully utilizing various skills, thus not having developed them adequately due to lack of necessity or experience. Additionally, some students may possess these skills but are not accustomed to using them for schoolwork. Within the meaningful and challenging learning environment

of Talent<sup>HZM</sup>, at the edge of their cognitive knowledge and abilities, a 'need to know' or 'need to be able' is created for the students, providing them with an opportunity to learn how to learn. The mentorship program devotes significant attention to this aspect.

Our education allows students to explore their cognitive boundaries and places their personal norms at the center of further development.







PILLAR 2

# IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the focus on cognitive challenges, the identity development of our gifted students is a significant priority within Talent<sup>HZM</sup> particularly concerning the student's school identity. Experience has shown that many gifted children feel 'different' from a very young age. They are interested in things other than their peers, and find humor in different jokes. The awareness of their uniqueness can lead these students to doubt themselves, constantly try to fit in, or feel isolated. Consequently, it is not uncommon for children facing numerous uncertainties at such a young age to have difficulty developing a positive and realistic self-image.

During the early adolescence (puberty) phase in lower secondary education, students detach themselves from their parents and increasingly model their behavior after their environment, their peers. This process is crucial for forming their own identity and discovering who they truly are. Peers, therefore, play a vital

role, but they are not always easy for gifted students to find or recognize. Creating homogeneous gifted classes increases the chance of having peers in close proximity and thus provides a nurturing environment for students' development.

## Three Factors

Research indicates that three factors must be present for adolescents' identity development: a trigger, a safe environment, and proper guidance throughout the developmental process. A trigger is a moment of realization for the student, where they become aware that the strategies they have been using are not working effectively. This can be related to interactions with others, cognitive challenges, etc. Such a trigger creates a need for the student to learn how to handle difficult situations better or differently and to consider whether they need to make changes within themselves. To address these questions, a safe environment is necessary, where students are encouraged to explore such issues. Identity development is a complex process in which students can benefit from support. Mentors can offer individual coaching sessions to assist students in progressing to the next stage of their development.



trigger



safe environment



proper guidance



## Peer group

At Talent<sup>HZM</sup>, we have decided to create homogeneous groups of gifted students in the lower secondary education, for the first three years. In this environment with like-minded classmates, each individual student has the best chance of feeling secure, being themselves, or seeking who they are. Such an environment, in our opinion, provides the best opportunities for students to develop a realistic self-image, recognize and enhance their talents and strengths, and work on them. This way, students can grow into self-assured adolescents. Equipped with this knowledge, they proceed to the upper secondary education at Talent, where they continue and shape their own learning path in heterogeneous classes.



### Mentorship

During mentoring hours, students reflect on their development and engage in regular discussions with their mentors, who provide feedback and pose new questions. Learning strategies and study skills often serve as the starting point for these conversations. The students record important findings in a portfolio; they have considerable freedom to determine the form of this portfolio. The conditional focal points of the portfolio include questions related to identity development alongside the presentation of acquired competencies and products.

*'During the mentoring hours, the students reflect on their development'*

### Personal Development

Working with the portfolio is a continuous thread throughout each school year. This offers various opportunities for reflection, enabling students to discover their growth in cognitive aspects and/or other areas. Consequently, they can focus on personal development in the areas they deem necessary. This process helps them develop a more realistic self-image and empowers them to map out their learning path more effectively.

### Scaffolding

The mentor's guidance of the students is referred to as 'scaffolding.' The mentor metaphorically constructs a scaffold around the student and offers support as needed. The goal of this approach is to help students cope with challenging situations (at school) and gain successful experiences while being as self-directed as possible. Naturally, communication and collaboration with teachers and parents/guardians play a crucial role in this guidance.



### PILLAR 3

## FEASIBILITY

**Naturally, our educational concept must align with the existing structures of secondary education. However, this does not mean that all teachers are immediately well-equipped to implement this educational concept.**

### Teachers

Teachers working within Talent<sup>HZM</sup> are guided and trained in specialized learning and development groups. This training aims to equip them with the necessary competencies to execute the educational concept. It also provides them with tools to apply effective teaching methods in their daily lessons, offering students the cognitive challenges they require and guiding them in their happy learning journey. As the number of classes increases each year, the number of teachers instructing at Talent<sup>HZM</sup> also grows. New teachers join the learning and development groups after completing an intensive crash course.

### Individualized Education

For schools that adopt the Talent concept, it is crucial that everyone in the school supports it. This alignment improves as the school culture allows ample room for addressing differences. In such a culture, it becomes natural for gifted students, just like any other student, to receive individualized education. The schools offering the Talent program are characterized by their commitment to personalized education and their emphasis on embracing individuality.





## UPPER SECONDARY

Talent<sup>HZM</sup> guides gifted students from the first year up to the final exam year. In the upper secondary (fourth grade and beyond), these students choose a profile within our heterogeneous pre-university program, which consists of students from different lower secondary streams. The intensive mentoring program continues for Talent<sup>HZM</sup> students in the upper secondary. Combined with the knowledge gained about their abilities and interests in the lower secondary, this allows them to shape their own learning process with the guidance of their mentor.

## IN-DEPTH RESEARCH

Shaping their own learning process may involve Talent<sup>HZM</sup> students, in consultation with their teachers and mentors, exchanging some of their regular classes for in-depth or extended research, either at school or outside. The mentor plays a coaching role to ensure that the goal of helping the student discover their own capabilities while successfully completing their school journey is achieved.

## SUBJECTS

Talent offers students, in addition to the standard pre-university education curriculum (vwo), the subjects of philosophy and design. Furthermore, the additional subjects offered depend on the school where Talent is implemented.

### Huizermaat

At Talent<sup>HZM</sup>, Latin and Greek are offered along with technology education (Technasium). Talent students can also choose from the elective options at Huizermaat, which are organized in modules. The combination of Technasium and Gymnasium is also a possibility.

### A.Roland Holst College

At Talent<sup>ARHC</sup>, students have access to science orientation, social sciences, philosophy, Big History, and robotics. In addition, there is a lot of individual flexibility. Through choice hours, students can pursue further in-depth studies in various subjects and topics such as debating, researching the school's history, or training as a team for the mathematics Olympiad.

*‘ Exchanging subject lessons for working on individual in-depth or broadening research ’*

# Enrollment and Admission

To determine whether Talent<sup>HZM</sup> is a good fit for the student, we use indicators that emerge during an intake procedure:

- Results of a recently taken WISC-V test (within two years before the academic year of enrollment)
- Additional information and the primary school's recommendation
- Results of previous assessments and tests
- Experiences during the intake interview and Talent orientation sessions (mandatory for enrolled students)

Enrollment is open throughout your child's entire primary school period. Students who have applied to Talent and their parents/guardians will be invited for a personal intake interview with one of the Talent coordinators and one of the mentors.

The intake procedure and subsequent placement in the first year Talent class are completed before the enrollment period for other schools in the region begins.\*

*\*The intake is a meticulous process that leads to the formation of the Talent class. If, after the intake, there is a larger group that is suitable for the Talent class, a lottery may be conducted for admission.*







*We'll see you at Huizermaat!*



**HUIZERMAAT**

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