

OUR STORIES

Jul'Bria Harrison



Jul'Bria Harrison is a fourth grader at World of Wonder PreK-8 School. She is assisted by her gifted intervention specialist, Amy Andrews. (DPS Photo/Jill Drury)

Jul'Bria Harrison is a fourth grader on a mission. She is planning a dream trip to Washington, D.C. While it may sound like a project for her parents, the planning is entirely up to her. Why? Jul'Bria is served by the Dayton Public Schools [Office of Gifted Services](#). She is one of approximately 1,000 children districtwide who are classified as gifted.

"It's fun. It's part of my education. I like it because I'm getting better and better," Jul'Bria Harrison said.

There are six hub schools (Eastmont, Horace Mann, River's Edge, Valerie, World of Wonder, and Wright Brothers) where gifted students attend. Jul'Bria spends her school day at World of Wonder PreK-8 School. Not only does she participate in the school's standard curriculum, but she thrives in an accelerated curriculum called Envision for students in grades four through six. It challenges Jul'Bria and her classmates to work independently on projects with real-world experiences and problem solving. A gifted intervention specialist is there to help only when necessary. The rest is up to Jul'Bria.

Her project is to plan a one week vacation to Washington, D.C. on a strict \$2,000 budget. Jul'Bria found the most economical place to stay and made a list of the sights she wanted to see, many that do not cost her a cent.

“I searched for locations to stay and found a rental at a great price. I only have \$2,000 to spend and can't go over the amount,” Jul'Bria said. “I would like to visit the White House, the National Children's Museum and the International Spy Museum.”

Amy Andrews is the gifted intervention specialist on hand to guide Jul'Bria and her classmates.

“The kids are very independent and it's cool to see how they figure out a problem on their own,” Andrews said.

Andrews is a 16-year veteran of the Dayton Public Schools. She must put in at least four hours of work with the gifted students each week under strict guidelines set forth by the [Ohio Department of Education](#). She says her early teaching experience showed her that children who demonstrate a higher level of skill sometimes do not get the attention they need.

“I found that I would sometimes be working more intensely with the students who were struggling and not spending enough time with the kids who were performing, but the truth is, those kids need just as much attention,” Andrews said. “They need a higher level of instruction. You have to identify advanced children sooner than later. A child, who is not completing an assignment and is acting out, might be a bored child who is not challenged by the content. It's my job to spot that child and get them the help they need.”

The ODE says that a gifted student is any child who performs or shows potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment compared to other children their age. Student assessments are conducted twice a year based on such factors as cognitive and creative thinking, math, science, reading, and social studies. The child can also be referred for testing. [Referral forms](#) are available at the [Dayton Public Schools website](#).

In addition to the six hub schools, DPS is currently working with five pilot schools (Belle Haven, Cleveland, Boys Prep Academy, Louise Troy, and Ruskin) and Stivers School for the Arts. High school students are served through accelerated honors courses, advanced placement courses and College Credit Plus. The younger children in grades one through three participate in a classroom two-tier curriculum system called Primary Education Thinking Skill (PETS).

The gifted intervention specialist administers the PETS program to all the children in a classroom to identify which students show advanced thinking skills. A child who shows a higher ability in such skills as deductive logic, analytical thinking, inventive thinking, creative thinking, evaluative thinking, and visual perception will be further instructed in small groups. Characters like Dudley the Detective and Sybil the Scientist guide the students along the way.

As for Jul'Bria, she has big plans well beyond her budgeted trip to our nation's capital. She wants to be a teacher, and her sisters are helping her get a head start. “We play school and they call me to bring paper and pencils home to play school. They always say that I am the teacher.”

Jul'Bria was chosen to present a status report on her project to the school board. Andrews says Jul'Bria didn't hesitate when faced with the challenge of addressing all those in attendance. Her confidence was evident as she was rewarded with a standing ovation.

The students who take part in the Envision program will present their final projects at the Gifted Showcase in May 2016. Jul'Bria is sure to be among them as confident as ever.

