

**Fairfield Public Schools
Gifted Education Program**



**A Guide to Understanding the
Identification Process and the
Instruction of the Gifted Learner**

Gifted Defined

The gifted student is a child who shows high performance capability in intellectual areas and needs differentiated instruction or services not ordinarily provided by the regular education program.

Bright vs. Gifted

The Bright Child:

1. Knows the answer
2. Has good ideas
3. Is in the top group
4. Learns with ease
5. Understands ideas
6. Grasps the meaning
7. Enjoys school
8. Pleased with own learning
9. Good memorizer
10. Absorbs information
11. Completes assignments
12. Copies accurately
13. Works hard
14. Is interested
15. Is alert
16. Is a technician

The Gifted Learner:

1. Asks the questions
2. Has wild, silly ideas
3. Is beyond the group
4. Already knows
5. Constructs abstractions
6. Draws inferences
7. Enjoys learning
8. Highly self-critical
9. Good guesser
10. Manipulates information
11. Initiates projects
12. Creates a new design
13. Plays around yet tests well
14. Is highly curious
15. Is keenly observant
16. Is an inventor

Adapted from Szabo, J.: Challenge Magazine, 1989.

Renzulli, J. S. & Reis, S. M. (2009). *Light up your child's mind: Finding a unique pathway to happiness and success*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Webb, J. T., Gore, J. L., Amend, E. R., & DeVries, A. R. (2007). *A parent's guide to gifted children*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

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Whitmore, J. R. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict and underachievement*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Silverman, L. (Ed.). (1993). *Counseling the gifted and talented*. Denver: Love Publishing.

Guiding Principles

Gifted and talented students are a very diverse group of students. They sit in every classroom, PreK-12 and come from all ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures.

Gifted and talented students have a unique set of learning characteristics including prior knowledge, readiness to learn, interests, learning-style preference and a propensity for a particular expressive style. As a result, learning opportunities for gifted learners must be designed with the child's specific needs in mind and consist of a continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches and resource materials.

Gifted and talented students demonstrate the potential of working at advanced levels, therefore educators must develop the skills necessary to address their learning needs.

Goals of the Gifted Program

Provide comprehensive identification criteria for inclusion in the Fairfield Gifted & Talented Program. Written procedures for identification and screening of students for inclusion in the gifted and talented program will be established and shared with all stakeholders. Identification and screening processes will be applied consistently across the district.

Ensure an identification and screening process that recognizes gifts and talents in diverse populations (cultural, socio-economic, dual language, and twice exceptional).

Implement a curriculum to meet the needs of gifted learners that is focused on conceptual thinking, higher level processes, real-world interdisciplinary inquiry and problem solving.

Provide differentiated experiences for gifted learners along a continuum of service options including, but not limited to, differentiated instruction, push-in/pull-out learning opportunities and targeted enrichment activities.

Provide a program to support the social and emotional needs of gifted students in order to help students develop healthy self-concepts and increase commitment to personal responsibility and responsibility towards others.

Provide professional development focused on effective instructional practices to meet the needs of the gifted learner.

Continuum of Services

Program planning for the gifted learner requires consideration of a continuum of services that reflects their individual learning needs. This continuum offers a variety of educational options for students within the context of available resources. These options include:

- Differentiated instruction within the regular curriculum
- Targeted enrichment opportunities
- Pull-out classes
- Push-in services
- Flexible grouping

Future development of the continuum of services will include what educational research supports as other options that also help meet the needs of gifted learners:

- Cluster grouping
- Curriculum compacting

Teachers are required to understand the nature of each of their students, in addition to the nature of the content they teach.

A flexible approach to teaching “makes room” for student variance. Teachers should continually ask, “What does *this* student need at *this* moment in order to be able to progress with *this* key content, and what do I need to do to make that happen?”

Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiation can be accurately described as classroom practice with a balanced emphasis on individual students and course content. In other words, in an effectively differentiated classroom, it is understood that:

Students differ as learners in terms of background experience, culture, language, gender, interests, readiness to learn, modes of learning, speed of learning, support systems for learning, self-awareness as a learner, confidence as a learner, independence as a learner, and a host of other ways.

Differences profoundly impact how students learn and the nature of scaffolding they will need at various points in the learning process.

Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that all of their students master important content.

Teachers have to make specific and continually evolving plans to connect each learner with key content.

(From [Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom](#), written by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Marcia B. Imbeau, ASCD, 2010.)

Gifted and Special Populations

Identification of gifted children among special populations has been a challenge for educators. It is important to select multiple measures and multiple sources for identifying and serving the gifted when assessing underserved gifted populations such as culturally diverse, linguistically diverse, economically disadvantaged and students with special needs. (Ford and Harris III, 1999)

Twice Exceptional Students

Twice exceptional students are students who are identified as gifted and also identified with a disability defined by federal/state eligibility criteria and qualifies the student for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. Twice-exceptional students are difficult to identify because they possess the characteristics of gifted students and the characteristics of students with disabilities. Gifted characteristics may mask disabilities or disabilities may mask gifted potential. Either the strengths, the disabilities, or both may not be identified. One of the steps of the Fairfield Public Schools gifted identification process includes a 'Request for Review'. This step in the identification process will allow educators to better identify those students who may be gifted and have a disability.

Students of Diverse Backgrounds

The Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test-Second Edition (NNAT2) is a non-verbal ability assessment that has been widely used to identify students for gifted and talented programming. The NNAT2 can be used for fair assessment of socially or economically disadvantaged students and those who may have disabilities that interfere with accurate measurement of ability. For the purpose of identifying gifted abilities in students with limited English proficiency and culturally diverse backgrounds, Fairfield Public Schools has chosen to administer the Naglieri. The use of the Naglieri, coupled with the request for review process will allow educators to better serve underrepresented populations in our gifted programs.

Identification Methods

Kindergarten—2nd Grade

- Teacher or parent request for review form completed (after October 15)
- Teacher and parent checklists and surveys will be completed
- Student profile folder developed to include request for review forms, checklists and other assessment data
- Gifted Resource Teacher will conduct observations
- K-2 Identification Committee will review data and determine if the student qualifies for further testing (SAGES Reasoning K-3—score of 135+)
- K-2 Identification Committee will review all data and determine eligibility

Third—Fifth Grade

A child qualifies for gifted education through one of the following:

- Scored at or above 135 on the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test—Second Edition (NNAT2)
- Scored at or above 135 on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Request for Review Process opens April 1

Sixth—Eighth Grade

Elementary gifted identification follows students into the Middle School. Students can also qualify at the middle school as follows:

- Request for Review Process

Identification Timeline

October

All 4th grade students are given the Naglieri (NNAT2) and CogAT by their classroom teacher. CogAT (Composite) scores of 135 or higher or a Naglieri Ability Index of 135 or higher indicates automatic inclusion in the gifted program.

January

Teachers and parents may request a review for students with CogAT or Naglieri scores of 125-134 (for elementary students). An application for request for review must be made by April 15. Student profile folders are opened for students under review and will include student work samples, standardized test results, grades, teacher and parent checklists and other academic achievement data. Observations and other assessment tasks may be administered as appropriate.

A district team convenes to review all student folders to determine eligibility for inclusion in the Gifted Program.

Parents are notified in writing of the committee's decision.

Program Components—Elementary

For students in grades Kindergarten through second grades, a plan will be developed based on the student's identified needs which will include differentiate instruction in the regular elementary program or other possible enrichment options.

For students in grades three through five, a two-hour pull out multidisciplinary program is available which focuses primarily on conceptual thinking, higher level processes, real-world inquiry and problem solving.

Program Components—Middle School

- (0.4 FTE) Teacher of the Gifted assigned to each middle school
- Each identified student will have a minimum of 1 opportunity to work collaboratively with the G+T teacher on an enriched, scaffolded unit of study.
- Opportunities for identified students to participate in independent, interest driven research studies facilitated by the teacher of the gifted.
- In the 8th grade, identified students will have the opportunity to come together with their identified peers to participate in a Spring Seminar shared research project.
- In addition, the Teacher of the Gifted will:
 - Serve as a resource to classroom teachers to meet the needs of G+T students within their classroom.
 - Assist in the identification of students through the screening process
 - Facilitate curriculum enrichment and grouping students for instruction
 - Provide appropriate professional development as appropriate
 - Work closely with curriculum leadership to develop middle school curricular enhancements
 - Assist in coordinating on-line programs for identified students
 - Work with building administrators to schedule special events and speakers

Philosophy Statement

The Fairfield Public Schools are committed to providing an education of excellence that challenges students to reach their highest potential by meeting their individual interests, abilities and needs under a common curriculum framework. A key component of this philosophy is that high quality differentiated learning experiences are at the heart of good classroom instruction across all grade levels and departments. It is also understood that some students may perform at significantly higher levels than their peers and require instructional services beyond those found in the general educational program. To that end, a program has been developed which supports their academic and socio-emotional needs and includes the following components:

- High quality differentiated instruction within the regular classroom setting
- A rigorous curriculum with extension activities for in-depth study of unit topics
- Opportunities for identified students to collaborate with their intellectual peers
- Opportunities for independent study in areas of interest

Resources for Parent

Rimm, S. (1996). *How to parent so children will learn: Clear strategies for raising happy, achieving*

Adderholdt, M. & Goldberg, J. (1999). *Perfectionism: What's bad about being too good*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Clark, B. (2002). *Growing up gifted*. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Delisle, J. & Galbraith, J. (2002). *When gifted kids don't have all the answers: How to meet their social and emotional needs*. Pamela Espeland, (Ed.). Minneapolis: Free Spirit.

Jolly, J.L., Treffinger, D.J., Inman, T.F., Smutny, J.F. (2010). *Parenting gifted children*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Kerr, B. (1994). *Smart girls two: A new psychology of girls, women and giftedness*. Dayton, Ohio: Ohio Psychology Press.

Kerr, B. & Cohn, S. (2001). *Smart boys: Talent, manhood, and the search for meaning*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Online Resources for Parents

- Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG)
www.ctgifted.org
- CT State Department of Education Gifted and Talented page
www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320852
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
www.nagc.org
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)
www.sengifted.org
- World Council for Gifted and Talented Children
www.worldgifted.org
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG)
www.cectag.org
- Hoagies' Gifted Education Page
www.hoagiesgifted.org
- National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
www.gifted.uconn.edu/NRCGT/html
- Center for Gifted Education at the College of William & Mary
www.cfge.wm.edu
- Purdue University's Gifted Education Resource Institute (GERI)
www.geri.soe.purdue.edu
- University of Iowa Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development
www.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/
- Gifted Education Press
www.giftedpress.com
- Critical Thinking Press
www.criticalthinking.com



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