

New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Gifted and Talented

Frequently Asked Questions

Identification of Students who are Gifted and Talented

- **How does New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C.) define a student who is gifted and talented?**

New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:8-3.1 defines students who are gifted and talented as those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

- **How should districts identify students who are gifted and talented?**

The N.J.A.C. requires that students be compared to their chronological peers in the local school district. The New Jersey Department of Education has not established state-level criteria for identifying students who are gifted, such as mandated tests or assessments, grade point averages, or IQ scores. Local school districts must use *multiple measures* to identify students.

- **What does N.J.A.C. mean by “multiple measures?”**

According to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3., districts boards of education must make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes “*multiple measures*”. Some examples might include, but are not limited to, the following: achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, and parent, student, and/or teacher recommendation. Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology is developmentally appropriate, nondiscriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered (e.g., using math achievement to identify students for a math program).

- **When should districts identify students for giftedness?**

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1 (a)5ii requires district boards of education “*to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students.*” Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten or upon entrance to the school or district. Local school districts are not obligated to identify students prior to their enrollment in the public school (e.g., three-year-olds, students enrolled in community early childhood programs or private kindergartens) or students attending nonpublic schools.

- **Since standardized assessments are not administered until grade three, how can we identify students in grades K-2?**

District boards of education are required to identify students in grades K-12. The state does not require the use of standardized tests as part of the identification process. Local districts should use multiple measures to identify students who are gifted and talented (refer to question 3).

- **Must pre-K students be identified? Must a district identify students who are not age-eligible for school entrance?**

The regulations are applicable to students in grades k-12 who are enrolled in a public school.

- **How can we learn more about the identification of English language learners who are gifted and talented?**

The identification of English language learners as students who are gifted and talented may present some challenges. Districts should use multiple measures to identify all students who may be gifted and talented (refer to question 3). The National Association for Gifted Children has published a position statement regarding the identification of culturally and linguistically diverse students that might provide useful guidance for districts.

- **How can we learn more about the identification of students with unique learning needs who are also gifted and talented?**

Students who are identified as “twice-exceptional” may have learning disabilities that mask their giftedness. These students may require different identification methods and program modifications to reach their full potential. It should not be assumed that students with disabilities cannot participate in gifted and talented programs. The National Association for Gifted Children has published a position statement regarding the twice-exceptional student.

- **Can parents/guardians refer their child for gifted and talented services?**

All public school districts must have a board-approved gifted and talented identification process and provide services for identifies students enrolled in the grades of that school district. Parents/guardians should contact their local school district to find out more information about the referral process.

Services/Programs

- **What services must a district provide?**

According to N.J.A.C.6A:8-3.1, all public school districts must have a board approved gifted and talented identification process and provide services for identified students enrolled in the grades of that school district. The regulations require that identification and services be made available to students in grades K-12.

- **What types of instructional accommodations must be made for students identified as gifted and talented?**

N.J.A.C. requires that district boards of education provide appropriate K-12 services for students identified as gifted and talented. This includes appropriate curricular and instructional modifications indicating content, process, products, and/or learning environments. District boards of education must also consider the PreK-Grade 12 National Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students. The standards are available at www.nagc.org.

- **Does the state require districts to use a specific program or model for elementary or middle-level students?**

The state does not require a particular program or model. Program models might include, but are not limited to, pull out programs, classroom-based differentiated instruction, acceleration, flexible pacing, compacted curriculum, distance learning, advanced classes or individualized programs.

- **As part of an accelerated approach, can middle school students take high school courses and receive credit toward high school graduation?**

This is a local district decision. Every school district in New Jersey is required to have an Option 2 policy. According to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 a (2)ii district boards of education must establish a process for granting of credits through successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement in meeting or exceeding the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs) at the high school level. Such programs or assessments may occur all or in part prior to a student's high school enrollment.

- **Can honors, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses be used to satisfy the requirements at the high school level?**

Honors, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes typically move at a faster rate than other classes, and they tend to have more advanced content. Enrollment in an IB, AP or honors class does not automatically show that a student's level of learning is being addressed. Whether a specific honors, AP or IB course meets the needs of a student identified as gifted in a district should be based on the student's unique needs and interests. The NJDOE does not define what constitutes an "honors" course.

- **Must gifted services be offered during the school day?**

N.J.A.C. requires that district boards of education provide appropriate K-12 services for students identified as gifted and talented. This includes appropriate curricular and instructional modifications indicating content, process, products, and/or learning environments. After School programs or clubs may provide exciting opportunities for students who are identified as gifted and talented but do not fulfill the expectations put forth in N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1.

- **Does the state or federal government provide funding for gifted programs?**

The state does not provide specific, dedicated funds for gifted programs. However, district boards of education are required to provide identification and services using state aid and local revenues.

- **Are local school districts obligated to accept the evaluation of a student's giftedness from another state, school district, or independent service?**

N.J.A.C. does not set requirements regarding the identification of gifted and talented students. The measures that are used for the identification process are determined by the local school district. Therefore, a school district is not obligated to accept the evaluation from another state, school district, or independent service.

- **If I am moving to New Jersey from another state, how can I find out what programs are offered in a specific school or district?**

All public school districts in New Jersey are required to identify gifted and talented students and provide services. The types of services may differ from district to district. For information regarding services available in a particular district, please contact the district or check its website. Contact information on schools and districts is available in the school directory. You may also find out more about gifted education in New Jersey on the NJ Association for Gifted Children's website.

- **How should gifted services be documented on a student's transcript or report card?**

Student performance should be documented as in any other course using grades, narratives, or other means.

- **What should a parent/guardian do if he/she is not satisfied with the services that his/her child is receiving?**

A parent/guardian may want to begin by reviewing the information that the district has provided regarding the gifted and talented services that it offers. This information may be found in the student handbook or district website. To ask questions or discuss the services currently being provided, a parent/guardian may want to reach out to his/her child's teachers or school counselor. If there are further concerns, he/she can contact a school or district administrator. If the issues are still not resolved, a parent/guardian can put the concerns in writing to the district administration with a copy to the County Superintendent.

- **Does *Every Student Succeed Act* (ESSA) provide specific funding for students who are identified as gifted and talented?**

ESSA funding goes directly to districts. The NJDOE will provide guidance support to help districts use ESSA funds to better meet student and educator needs, which may include supporting or expanding gifted and talented programs or providing professional learning opportunities to teachers of students identified as gifted and talented.