

Gifted and Talented Frequently Asked Questions

What are the advanced learning opportunities at my child's elementary school?

Each school is staffed by a half-time GT teacher. Regular classroom teachers differentiate for their advanced learners within each classroom in a variety of ways and with the support of the GT Teacher. Individual student needs and interests are used to provide appropriate programming.

At what age are students identified for Gifted and Talented (GT)? Students between the ages of five and twenty-one can be identified (four year olds may be identified through the Early Access process). D51 begins screening for exceptional potential at the beginning of 3rd grade, but a student that demonstrates gifted abilities prior to this time may be identified.

Who can refer a student for possible gifted identification? When does this occur?

Students can be referred by anyone that sees exceptional abilities or characteristics. This can occur at anytime during the school year by contacting the GT Teacher. A referral does not necessarily lead to the administration of specific cognitive or achievement assessments. However, each referral is considered using current data and observations to determine next steps.

Once a referral is made, how soon will a decision be made about identification?

Colorado law specifies an identification team has a timeline of no more than 30 school days after a referral is received to determine whether a student will be formally identified or, if more time is needed, to gather other assessments for identification. This does not mean an identification determination must be made within 30 days, rather all stakeholders will receive information on intended steps of the identification process within this time frame.

How are gifted students identified? Identification in District 51 follows the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Guidelines for gifted education. A body of evidence must be used to indicate that a student meets state criteria and has a need for gifted education. One piece of evidence will never qualify or disqualify a student for GT services. The body of evidence may include tests and tools such as: tests of cognitive ability (i.e. CogAT), standardized achievement tests (TCAP, PARCC, iReady, etc.), behavior rating scales (i.e. SIGS), performance observation data, and anecdotal data (from teachers, students, parents, etc.).

Does a child have to have a certain score on these tests to qualify as gifted? D51 uses CDE's criteria for qualifying scores. This includes demonstration in the body of evidence of an advanced level on performance assessments and/or 95%ile and above on standardized, norm-referenced assessment. Not meeting criteria on a single assessment tool shall not prevent further data collection or consideration for gifted identification, if other indicators suggest exceptional potential as observed in a body of evidence.

In what areas might a child be identified? State law defines the areas of identification to include: Specific Academic Aptitude (reading, writing, math, science, social studies, world language), Specific Talent Aptitude (visual arts, performing arts, music, dance, psychomotor, creative/productive thinking, leadership), and General Intellectual Ability.

Will the gifted programming services mean more work for my child? No. Gifted students will be provided with challenging content from state standards, taught with curriculum designed for gifted learners. Students receive appropriately differentiated curriculum not just additional work.

How are services decided and implemented? Gifted programming is designed to meet each child's unique strengths. Teachers, parents, and the student are involved in the decisions regarding programming.

How will my child benefit from gifted programming? Gifted children have exceptional abilities that can be facilitated within this program. They require appropriate instructional accommodations and curricular pacing, social emotional guidance, and opportunities to work with intellectual peers. When a student is formally identified GT, an individual Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is developed. This is an important document that outlines academic and affective goals and continuation of instructional accommodations.

My child was identified for gifted services elsewhere, is he/she automatically included in the school's gifted program? Unlike special education, gifted education is not mandated by federal law. Therefore, identification varies from state to state. In Colorado, identification transfers with the child if he/she is moving to another district in the state. If the receiving district does not find the body of evidence to align with state criteria, the receiving district may conduct further assessment to confirm identification. If a student moves to another state, the new state may or may not honor the identification based on their state laws and regulations.

In what ways can we work/communicate together? Every child identified receives an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP). The ALP is reviewed with goal input from parents, teachers and the student. You may call or email the GT teacher with any questions and they will work to keep you informed. However, it is also important to involve your student in their education, goals, and progress.

What are ways that I can participate in school activities/committees? There are many volunteer opportunities at schools and parents are encouraged to be involved. The Western Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented (W-CAGT) is a parent organization that provides support, information and educational opportunities for parents of gifted and high potential students. Their website, gifted51.org has a wealth of information and ways for parents to become involved in their child's gifted education. Also, check with your students school for other opportunities to volunteer and participate.

Where does gifted programming occur? After evaluating a student's strengths, needs, and classroom performance, programming may occur within or outside the general education classroom. A formally identified student's ALP outlines where programming will occur, student goals (academic and social emotional), who will monitor progress, and aligned goals chosen by the student and family.

What resources or support systems are available to parents of gifted children?

Parents of gifted children need resources to understand the nature and needs of their gifted child. There are many local, state and national organizations to assist parents and to help them become more informed. Locally the Western Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented parent support group, statewide Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented, and nationally the National Association of Gifted and Talented all provide wonderful web sites, brochures and supportive personnel to assist any parent. The D51 GT office also has a parent library available for check-out, and your school GT teacher is an incredible resource.

What are some ways I can support my child's strengths outside the school environment?

The W-CAGT parent group coordinates parent and student events along with advertising other events available in our community. Parents are encouraged to attend "Parent Day" at the state conference for gifted education (usually located in Denver or Loveland in October). Opportunities such as cultural events, music lessons, travel, the public library, foreign language classes, and talking with older relatives all provide wonderful learning opportunities for gifted children.