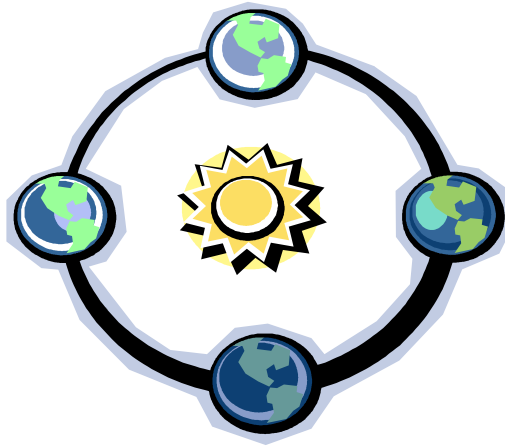


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District 50J
Delta County Colorado
Challenging, Caring, and Learning
Every Student, Every Day

Gifted and Talented Parent Handbook



Delta County School District
7655 2075 Road
Delta, CO 81416
(970) 874-4438

Welcome!

There is no better advocate for a gifted child than a knowledgeable and active parent.

Additional information can be obtained from your school's gifted and talented site coordinator or call Special Services at 970-874-7607.

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This site is designed to provide you with the information you need to support your child and work effectively with your child’s school.

Click on any topic listed on the site map above.

Characteristics of Gifted Children

"Our kids are normal. They just aren't typical!"
- Jim Delisle

What does "gifted" mean?

The state of Colorado provides the following definition of gifted students:

"Gifted and talented children" means those persons between the ages of four* and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Children under the age of four who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:

- General or specific intellectual ability.
- Specific academic aptitude.
- Creative or productive thinking.
- Leadership abilities.
- Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities.

*See 2008 change in state law to allow selective Early Access [Exceptional Children's Education Act, C.R.S 22-20-104](#).

Is my child gifted?

Often bright students – those who are motivated, high achievers – are thought to be gifted by their parents and teachers. However, a truly gifted student will demonstrate certain unique characteristics. Listed below are behaviors exhibited by both bright and gifted students. The majority of a bright child's behaviors will be found in the left column while the truly gifted child will exhibit behaviors from both columns depending on the task at hand.

Bright Child	Gifted Learner
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Is attentive	Is mentally and physically involved
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail; elaborates
In the top groups	Functions beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draw inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive to instruction	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good at memorization	Good guesser
Enjoys straightforward instruction	Thrives on complexity
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical

By: Janice Szabo

Where can I learn more about the characteristics of gifted children?

Take a look at the following links:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/G/T/download/pdf/G/T12TraitsGiftedness.pdf>

<http://www.austega.com/gifted/characteristics.htm>

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=956>

“Myths and Realities” (Colorado Department of Education *Gifted Education Guidelines and Resources, Vol. I*, pp. 61-63)

“Distinguishing Characteristics of Gifted Learners” (same as above, pp. 69-72)

[CDE Gifted Guidelines, Vol. I](#)

I think my child is gifted – now what?

If you think your child’s behaviors match characteristics of gifted children, continue to explore this Parent Handbook and then contact the gifted and talented site coordinator at your child’s school or your child’s high school counselor.

CES	Larry Thompson	856-3885
CMS	Marylouise Dannels	856-3118
CHS	Allen Golden	856-6882
HK8	Angela Flores	872-3144
HHS	Glen Suppes	872-3882
PES	Paul Beller	527-3639
PJHS	Lindsay Molitor	527-4882
CRES	Sam Cox	921-4935
GMES	Robin Russell and Jackie Trueblood	874-8003
LES	Kristie Donathan	874-3700
DMS	Jennifer Magner and Kirby Holmes	874-8046
DHS	Shawna Magtutu and Holly Teyler-Crowder	874-8031
Montessori	Jennie Chavez	872-5910
Vision	Melinda Merriam	527-8766
Delta Opportunity	Delaine Hudson	874-2753
GT Director	Sandie Jungers	874-7607
GT Coordinator	Judy Fairchild	856-3502

Identification

“Until every gifted child can attend a school where the brightest are appropriately challenged in an environment with their intellectual peers, America can’t claim that it’s leaving no child behind.”

-Jan & Bob Davidson with Laura Vanderkam, in Genius Denied

How are gifted students in District 50J identified?

The District 50J identification process is aligned with state guidelines for identifying students eligible for gifted education and advanced learning services. These guidelines support the approach of looking at a variety of information for each student based on a “Body of Evidence.” This evidence will determine if a student needs programming beyond that offered in the regular classroom or curriculum.

Gifted students usually fall within the top 3-7% of the general student population in terms of potential abilities.

The Body of Evidence

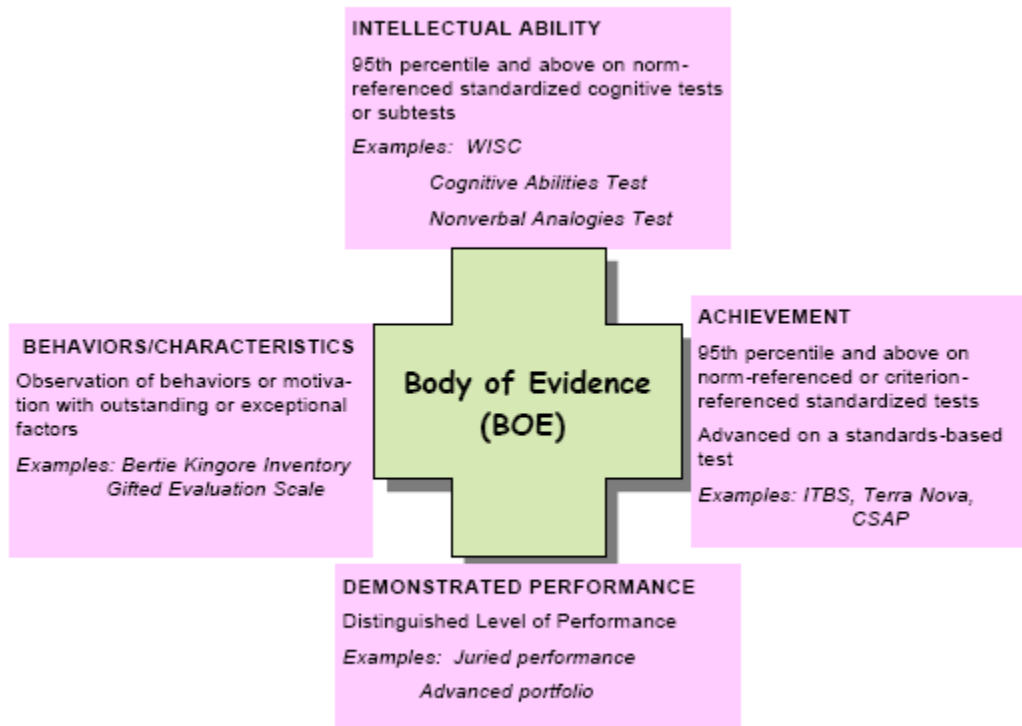
In building the Body of Evidence, evidence of exceptional ability is collected in four areas: aptitude, achievement, performance, and behavior. Evidence is examined against qualifying criteria. To be formally identified in District 50J, a student must qualify in at least two of the four areas. The four areas are listed below, along with possible data that may be collected in each. Tests listed by name are the ones most commonly used in the District.

- Aptitude: Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Achievement: Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP), at the 95th percentile and higher
- Demonstrated Performance or Portfolio: portfolios, student products, contests and competitions, and/or performance tasks judged by experts in that field
- Behaviors and Characteristics: as demonstrated and supported by GT guidelines
See Guidelines for further details: [CDE Gifted Guidelines, Vol. I](#)

For short descriptions of the tests and instruments mentioned above, find the website for the publisher of the test by typing the name of the test into your search engine.

State of Colorado Body of Evidence Chart

In the state [Gifted Education Guidelines and Resources, Vol. I](#), the following visual shows sample evidence collected in the four areas. Please note that District 50J data collection instruments may differ from these listed as examples by the Colorado Department of Education on their website.



Can I be involved in the identification process?

Yes, parent input is very important. In the initial stages of identification, parents may be asked to fill out an inventory of gifted behaviors they observe at home. Parents are also asked to give permission for specific tests to be given. After testing is completed, parents review the results with the gifted and talented teacher.

When does the identification process begin?

Teachers and staff are trained to recognize gifted behaviors and student strengths and to refer students of all grade levels, K-12. This referral is one way to begin the process, although parents may also initiate a referral by contacting their child's school. In addition, all students are given an intellectual screening test (CogAT Test) in 3rd grade. Those who score above a threshold are referred for further evaluation and a strong Body of Evidence is collected to support a GT coding.

If my child isn't identified in 3rd grade, can he/she be identified in another grade?

Yes, there is no “window” for identifying gifted behaviors. Identification for gifted and talented services is an ongoing process using multiple criteria. **No single factor can eliminate a student from consideration.** Teachers review assessment results and other data throughout the year to get a complete picture of students' strengths, needs, and abilities. There are several types of evidence that may be used to identify a student.

My child has a disability. Can he/she be identified as gifted?

Yes, a student can be twice-exceptional – that is, identified as eligible for special services in more than one area.

See [Twice-Exceptional Students](#) in this Handbook.

Does District 50J consider areas of giftedness other than academic (e.g., creativity, leadership)?

Yes, all learners are considered regardless of academic achievement. Parents are invited to provide evidence of student strengths and talents in areas like art, music, creativity, and leadership. Teachers also may recognize these strengths and talents and may refer students based on their observations.

My child participated in gifted education in another school district. Will he/she continue to be served in District 50J?

If you are coming to our area from out of state, your former district should be able to provide official documentation of eligibility and the criteria/testing that was used in the identification process. Information should also include the student's areas of strength and the nature of the programming services provided to the child in the former district. If this documentation and criteria align with Colorado and District 50J guidelines, it will be included in the child's Body of Evidence. Keep in mind, additional testing or other assessments to complete a Body of Evidence may be required to meet state guidelines.

If your child comes from another Colorado public school district with complete identification, he/she is identified according to state rules and regulations; therefore, your child's Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) from the former district will be recognized and followed in District 50J, although ALPs often look different from district to district.

Programming

“What is necessary and sufficient for the nongifted is necessary but insufficient for the gifted, who need more and different learning experiences to match their potentials.”
- A.J. Tannenbaum

Why Highly Capable Students Need Something Different

<http://www.nagc.org/commonmyths.aspx>

What is an ALP?

ALP is an acronym for Advanced Learning Plan, which is required in Colorado for every identified gifted child. The ALP is a planning guide for making instructional decisions, an accountability record, and a tool for monitoring students with outstanding potential. The ALP is part of your child’s cumulative folder and will follow him/her from grade to grade, school to school.

According to state guidelines, [CDE Gifted Guidelines, Vol. I](#), ALPs must include information on the student’s strengths, how he/she was identified, goals related to the strengths, recommended differentiation strategies teachers may use to help the student meet his/her goals, and a place for parent, teacher, and, when appropriate, student signatures. In addition to these required elements, District 50J ALPs include recent achievement data.

Do all students have ALPs?

No. Only students formally identified as gifted have ALPs. As of December 2009, all identified students K-12 had ALPs.

My child has been identified as gifted. When will I see his/her ALP?

An ALP is usually put in place by the end of the school year in which the child was identified. You should see the ALP at least once a year.

How can I obtain a copy of my child’s ALP?

The gifted and talented site coordinator at your child’s elementary or middle school is responsible for communicating with you about ALPs. At the high school level, the school counselor will be the person responsible for your child’s ALP.

Can I contribute to the development of my child’s ALP?

Yes. Your child’s gifted and talented site coordinator (or, at the high school, the counselor) will confer with both you and your child and take your thoughts into consideration in the creation of the ALP. You, and usually your child, when appropriate, will sign the completed document.

Does an ALP change every year?

It may. Because it is based on student strengths as observed and documented, academic and talent goals usually remain essentially the same – academic goals are directed toward growth in the area of strength or growth of the talent area each year.

At the elementary and middle levels, you, your child, and your child’s gifted and talented site coordinator review it annually and make changes as needed. In high school, your student reviews his/her own ALP annually with a counselor. Your student may set new goals as his/her interests and strengths change and mature. You will usually be invited to see and sign your student’s ALP, annually. When your student transitions from one school to another i.e., elementary to middle and middle to high, a meeting with parents is set up to discuss your child’s ALP and make a determination about services.

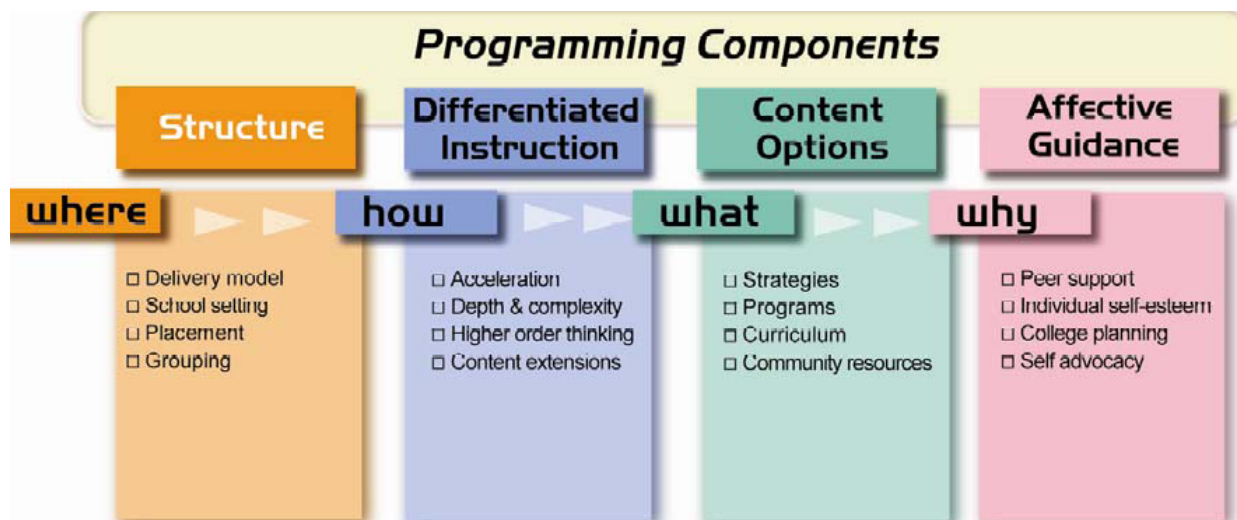
Is there a difference between “being in a gifted program” and “receiving gifted programming?”

Yes. Although the wording may seem similar, the change from program to programming represents a major shift in how schools deal with student differences. The concept of being “in” a certain program implies that some students are also “out”. The logical extension of that thinking is that we can easily tell who should be “in” and who must stay “out”, when this is not the case. No one measurement can tell us who is “really” gifted. It is best to respond to the needs of children and youth.

As students demonstrate strengths that need nurturing, the school should respond by providing special services. Students identified as gifted have demonstrated that they need “something different” than what most other students need. A “gifted program” is often something that is fixed and pre-planned, while gifted programming is something that is built around the students and can respond to their individual needs and interests.

OK, we have an ALP. How is programming designed?

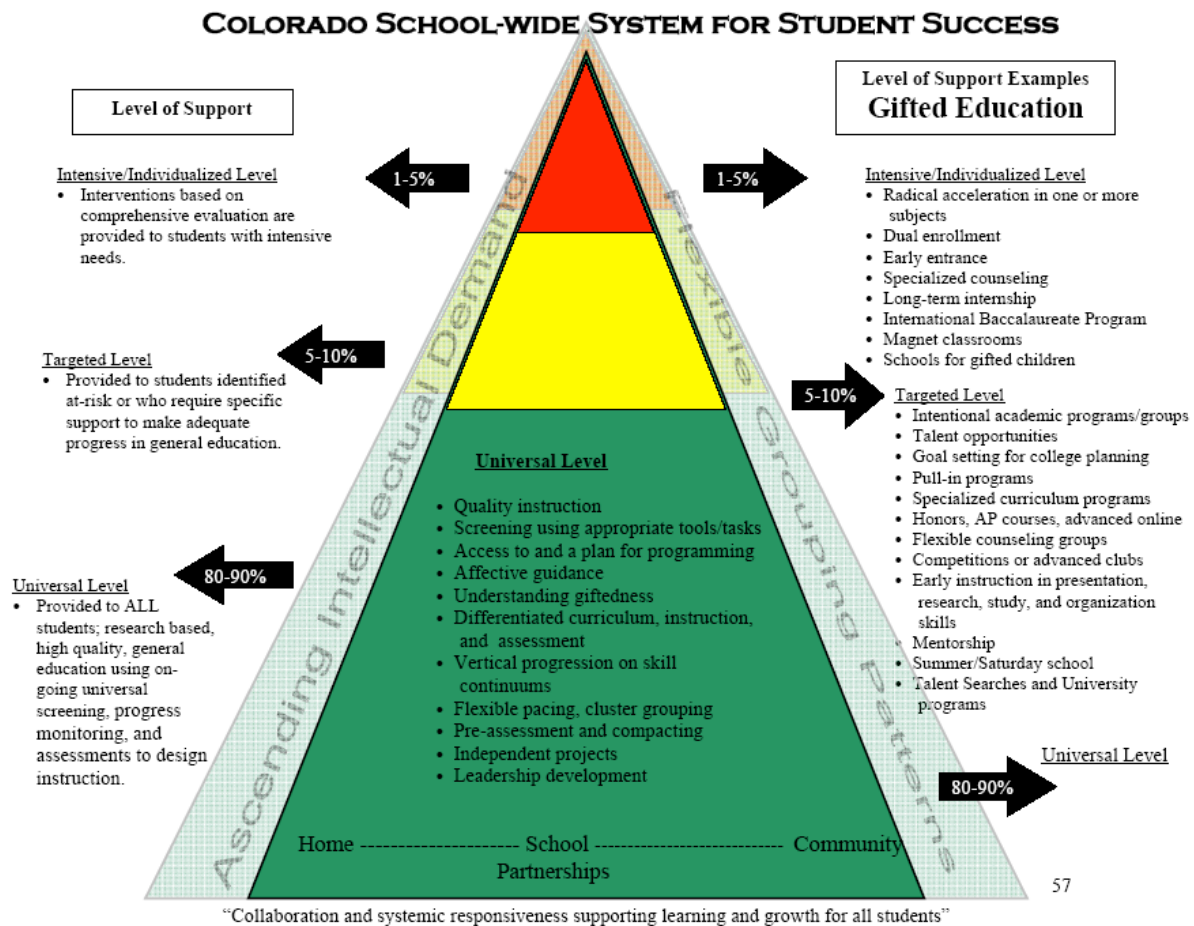
Programming components, as described by the state, include:



Programming is adaptable to the resources within different schools in District 50J. Each school works to determine how the programming components will be implemented to ensure measurable growth in gifted student achievement or performance.

Do all gifted and talented students receive the same type of programming? (Rtl)

District 50J uses the Colorado School-wide Model for Student Success. The Model is built around the idea that students, by virtue of their differing characteristics, have different levels of need for particular interventions, including gifted and talented services. The process of determining the intensity of student needs for services, rather than first labeling a student before providing appropriate services, is called Response to Intervention (Rtl). Rtl is a nation-wide approach to serving students that differs from the old approach of reacting to labels. This diagram may help you visualize “tiered programming.”



Colorado’s 3-tier Model is based upon the following concepts:

- High quality research-based general education instruction for all students
- General education teachers who are active in students’ assessment
- Universal screening of academics and behavior (All students examined for evidence of gifted behaviors.)
- Research-based interventions to address a student’s needs (Attempts to meet needs in regular classrooms.)
- Systematic assessment of the fidelity of intervention implementation (Are teachers instructing according to the ALP?)
- Progress monitoring of intervention effectiveness (Is the student achieving?)
- Partnerships among home, school, and community that positively affect students

The goals of the 3-tiered Model are:

- Students are screened early for at-risk and strength traits.
- Strengths and difficulties direct instruction decisions.
- Alignment exists for assessment, instruction, and progress monitoring.

What do the three tiers mean?

Colorado's use of the Rtl process means that programming for the strengths of students, rather than an "in" or "out" traditional gifted program, is the expectation in the state. A gifted student whose academic needs put him far beyond the level of his/her classmates, for example, requires different amounts and types of services and programming than does a student who is one or two years ahead of age-mates in one content area.

Green

All gifted students receive this level of support, including differentiated instruction in the regular classroom and content extensions as needed. For most gifted students (up to 80-90%), no further support is needed for them to achieve according to their potential.

Yellow

For some gifted students (perhaps 5-10%), other support is needed in addition to that described at the green level. This might include more time with a certain teacher, moving to another classroom for certain instruction, more independent study, more social-emotional programming, or specific extra-curricular activities.

Red

For a very few, perhaps 1-5% of the gifted population, intensive, individualized services are needed.

What programming options can District 50J provide for my child?

All of our schools provide programming aligned with the State of Colorado guidelines, but programming options and delivery differ from school to school. Read on to get a general idea of what District 50J has to offer at our elementary, middle and high schools.

Elementary and Middle School Academic Programming

In general, elementary and middle schools use a combination of three techniques to meet the needs of gifted students: (1) differentiated instruction in the classroom by the regular classroom teacher, (2) pull-out instruction in strength-based small groups, and (3) small-group instruction within the regular classroom.

Pull-out extensions

Instruction in pull-out groups can consist of extended and enriched regular curriculum that challenges gifted students. This type of instruction can also occur with the regular classroom teacher teaching different groups of students in the same classroom.

Alternative topics in pull-out

Pull-out programming may also address high-interest topics not included in regular curriculum, although it still is connected to similar processes, concepts, and high-level thinking skills. Whatever curriculum is offered in pull-out classes, it supports the Colorado content standards, whether it is similar in content to what is being taught in the regular classroom or not.

Independent study

Pull-out also may include independent research and study, especially for highly gifted students. Independent study builds on student's strengths and interests, to keep motivation high, while encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.

High School Academic Programming

Gifted and talented students at the high school level have a range of options open to them, but they must be mentally and emotionally prepared to take full advantage of all the available choices. Self-advocacy is important for the gifted student wishing to navigate through the range of courses, programs, and credit options open to him or her. A knowledgeable parent can help his or her student immensely by being as informed as possible about what high schools have to offer.

ALPs in high school

The student is largely responsible for his or her own ALP during high school. A counselor generally acts as the person who advises students about their ALPs. This counselor helps students keep on-track with their ALPs. Students must meet at least once a year with their ALP counselor to review and revise goals. Parents should expect to see the ALP once a year, often at conference time. Parent input is valuable to adolescents managing their own learning plans.

Electives and interest areas

Students with strong interests and talents in visual art, vocal or instrumental music, theater, speech and debate, computers, or other areas have many more choices of classes in their areas of strength. In some cases, they can fulfill their requirements with alternatives in their interest areas, such as by using a journalism class for an English credit or a science elective as another science credit.

Advanced Placement (AP) classes

Advanced Placement, or AP, classes follow the same curriculum nationwide. They are offered in a variety of content areas. High schools may offer AP classes for which they have trained teachers and for which there are enough students qualified for and interested in enrolling. *Any student who receives a recommendation from a teacher may enroll in an AP class. AP classes are not limited to identified gifted students.*

Students who complete an AP course must take a standardized end-of-course exam. (A student need not have taken an AP course to take an AP exam. If a student feels he/she knows the material to the degree necessary to take the AP exam, he or she may ask to do so.) If exam scores are at or beyond a certain level, many colleges will extend the student credit for that class. The score at which credit is granted varies from college to college. AP exams are given for a fee, but the state of Colorado has a fee assistance program for anyone who needs and applies for it. (See your child's high school for information about AP exam fee assistance.)

Some gifted students want to take AP classes at earlier grade levels than their peers. This can usually be negotiated with the student's counselor, depending on the student's grades in that content area, motivation, and recommendation from a previous teacher.

Post-secondary options, dual enrollment, Fast Track, and early graduation

Students who advance rapidly through their coursework by being accelerated in one or more content areas may "run out" of classes to take at the high school, before they have amassed enough credits to graduate. When this happens, as it does most frequently in math, the school district must pay for that student to take the appropriate class at a local college or university or online, according to state law on post-secondary options.

Post-secondary options may be used to take a class not usually offered at high schools or a world language class not offered at the high school, such as Russian or Japanese. The Colorado state law on "Post-secondary options" also allows a student to take a class such as Welding or Drafting. DCSD contracts with Western State College, Colorado Mesa University, and Delta Montrose Technical College to provide post-secondary classes for high school students. Any student that has earned enough credits and has taken all the requirements to graduate before he or she would normally, may graduate early. Most colleges accept students younger than 17 or 18 years of age, but parents and students should be sure to check on this before assuming that the college of choice will be available to them earlier than usual.

To learn more about changes to state law on post-secondary options, go to [CDE info on post-secondary education law](#).

Online courses

Some gifted students would rather complete the requirements for a class online than by spending the entire semester in the actual classroom. This option is becoming more and more available. Gifted students and their parents should be very careful to check into the nature of online classes before enrolling, because some are intended only for credit recovery (i.e., as "make-up" for students who have previously failed that class) and may not be accepted by colleges.

Any online class taken by a college-bound gifted student should be as rigorous as a regular high school or college class. As more and more online programs are developed, there will be more opportunities for students to earn credits without doing "seat time".

Social & Emotional

“The natural trajectory of giftedness in childhood is not a six-figure salary, perfect happiness, and a guaranteed place in Who’s Who. It is the deepening of the personality, the strengthening of one’s value system, the creation of greater and greater challenges for oneself, and the development of broader avenues for expressing compassion.

-Dr. Linda Silverman, Counseling the Gifted and Talented

Since a great deal of information is widely available online about the social and emotional needs and development of gifted children and adolescents, you are directed to some of the sites here and in the Supporting Your Child section of this Handbook. These sites may, in turn, have additional links for you.

Do gifted children exhibit characteristics other than academic that parents should be aware of?

Yes. The following link discusses the behaviors associated with Divergent Thinking, Excitability, Sensitivity, Perceptiveness, Asynchronous Development, Stress and Depression, Gender Issues and Perfectionism.

<http://www.sengifted.org/>

How can I support the emotional needs of my child?

All children need to be loved, nurtured, kept safe, given attention and affection and taught how to interact with other people. Gifted and talented children are no exception. As parents, it is our privilege and responsibility to do our best to provide these things for our children. It is particularly important to remember to always see your child as a child first and gifted and talented second.

The following link directs you to several sites and blogs that provide thoughtful suggestions and guidelines for parenting the gifted and talented child:

http://www.prufrock.com/client/client_pages/parent_introduction.cfm

Twice-Exceptional Students

"I loved feeling special. I hated feeling special."

-Garrison Keillor

"I am the one who is 'many times gifted,' because I have a beautiful sensitive child whose gifts lead him to see the world in creative, unexpected ways, and whose intelligence and learning disabilities help make him a sensitive and loving child, who brings me great joy and blessings."

- a parent of a twice-exceptional child

My child has a disability. Can he/she still qualify for gifted and talented services?

Yes. A child who is identified as gifted and talented and also has a disability* is termed twice-exceptional. Usually, the resource teacher works to provide appropriate programming to help these students reach their full potential.

*See below for a more complete description

The state of Colorado provides the following definition of twice-exceptional:

Twice-exceptional students are:

1. Students who are identified as gifted and talented in one or more areas of exceptionality (specific academics, general intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, visual, spatial, or performing arts); and also identified with
2. A disability defined by federal/state eligibility criteria: perceptual communicative disability (learning disability), significant identifiable emotional disability, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, autism, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The disability qualifies the student for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a plan under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (504 Plan).

How are twice-exceptional children recognized?

G/T Identified First

- Achievement noticed first
- Strengths or "gifts" often fostered through G/T services
- Often passed over for special education support because they may be achieving at grade level

Disability Identified First

- Often failing in school
- First noticed for what they cannot do
- Most "at risk" because the special education label tends to create a focus on deficits
- Often difficult for them to give themselves credit for their abilities
- Acquisition of basic skills emphasized over creative productive behavior

Neither G/T nor Disability Identified

- Disability masks "gifts"
- "Gifts" mask disability

- Intellectual ability masks disability
- Often gifts emerge in specific content areas or particular learning environments where nontraditional methods are used.

Where can I learn more about twice exceptional children?

www.G/T-cybersource.org/Record.aspx?NavID=2_0&rid=11330

www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e479.html

Additional Resources

www.hoagiesgifted.org/twice_exceptional.htm

www.2enewsletter.com/welcome%20page.htm

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/G/T/publications.htm>

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=973>

Supporting Your Child

“He never pays attention, he always knows the answer, and he can never tell you how he knows. We can’t keep thrashing him. He is a bad example to the other pupils. There’s no educating a smart boy.”
-Terry Pratchett, Thief of Time

How can I support my child at home?

- Nurture your child's strengths and interests.
- Share the adventure of learning something new with your child.
- Recognize and model making mistakes as an opportunity to learn, not as a mark of failure.
- Encourage safe risk-taking.
- Help set priorities.
- Seek positive peer connections.
- Avoid over-scheduling.
- Allow time for reflection.
- Pursue unfamiliar learning opportunities.
- Keep your child challenged and engaged in learning.
- Keep your sense of humor!

The Western Colorado Math and Science Center offers you an opportunity to discover your child’s strengths and interests as you share an adventure in learning.

www.sithok.org/

Links for parent support:

http://www.dukegiftedletter.com/articles/vol3no4_feature.html Parenting Principles that Work

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.com/index.htm> Hoagies Gifted, a website for all things gifted

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/javits/index.html> Jacob Javits Gifted Education Program

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=48> National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) parents’ page – many links and information on becoming a parent member, which includes a subscription to *Parenting for High Potential*

[http://www.nagc.org/uploadedFiles/PHP/PHP_Articles/Perils%20of%20Parenting%20\(June%2008\).pdf](http://www.nagc.org/uploadedFiles/PHP/PHP_Articles/Perils%20of%20Parenting%20(June%2008).pdf) *Perils of Parenting*, Nancy N. Heilbronner

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcG/T.html> The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

<http://www.sengifted.org/> Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted

http://www.prufrock.com/client/client_pages/parent_introduction.cfm Prufrock Press (publisher of materials for gifted students) page for parents, including links to other resources and Prufrock gifted education blog

<http://resources.prufrock.com/GiftedChildInformationBlog/tabid/57/Default.aspx> blog by former gifted educator Carol Fertig, author of *Raising a Gifted Child: A Parent Success Handbook*

Parents as Partners

“Most teachers waste their time by asking questions which are intended to discover what a pupil does not know, whereas the true art of questioning has for its purpose to discover what the pupil knows or is capable of knowing.”

-Albert Einstein

How can I become involved with my child’s education?

Communication with your child’s classroom and gifted and talented site coordinator is the key. See the tips below.

Common Ground for Parents and Teachers

- Student needs
- Programming services
- Student achievement (academic growth)
- Optimal performance
- Learning goals

Communicating with School: A Positive Approach

- Request a convenient time to speak with your child’s teacher.
- Provide your questions and concerns to the teacher in writing before meeting the teacher.
- Be willing to compromise and collaborate on behalf of the student’s needs.
- Keep a file of communications, learning plans and testing data on your child throughout his/her K-12 years.
- Provide both positive and negative feedback for changes in your child’s learning plan, school assignments and learning activities.
- Determine reasonable timelines and methods for communicating with your child’s teacher.
- Do not expect your child to provide complete or accurate descriptions of school-day experiences. Communicate directly with your child’s teachers, if you have questions about what is happening in the classroom.
- Celebrate excellence both for your child and for those who teach your child.
- Keep up-to-date with your school’s website.

What Parents Want to Know from Educators (questions to ask)

- What can you tell me about my child’s academic abilities?
- When can I tell you about my child’s interests and abilities outside of school?
- In school how will you...
 - challenge and encourage his/her learning?
 - recognize and address his/her unique learning needs?
 - support his/her continued academic success?
 - assure appropriate placement?
- What can I do at home/school to help my child learn?
- If I am not satisfied, what should I do?

What Parents Need to Share with Educators (clues for understanding my child)

- Home activities that demonstrate ability and interest
- Attitudes about school
- Behavior at home vs. behavior at school (both positive and negative)
- Examples of how the child learns best outside of school
- Test data over time (on different testing instruments)
- Response to particular assignments
- Response to trying new things
- Response to making mistakes
- Independent work vs. group work
- Comfort level working with “peers”
- Other useful information

Strategies for Success

- Seek a good match rather than a particular teacher.
- Avoid ambiguity, vague demands, and assumptions.
- Watch your words at home.
- Remain open to possibilities vs. being right.
- Maintain a balanced perspective...seeking academic growth rather than perfect grades.
- Allow your child to take responsibility for his/her work...and the grade.
- Value a strong work ethic with high expectations.
- Model resiliency and seek solutions through collaboration.

How to be a Critical Resource at Your Child’s School

- Be a “personal resource bank” for your child’s teacher.
- Offer work/play samples of your child’s interests/strengths.
- Provide continual feedback from the home perspective.
- Discover resources/connections to enhance program options and classroom activities.
- Donate your time and talent.
- Join school and district committees that focus on academic excellence and accountability.
- Network on behalf of advanced learners.
- Celebrate excellence!
- Be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem.

Potential Outcomes

- Improved student achievement
- Credibility as an advocate
- Mutual respect between parents and teachers
- Increased communication between home and school
- Trust
- Balance
- Increased awareness of educational issues
- Support through expanded network of resources
- Effective advocacy through positive political influence
- Constructive contributions to the school community
- Sense of purpose and accomplishment
- Becoming a mentor to other parents

Advocacy

"If our children do not get the opportunity to learn all they are able to learn, it is because not enough people insist on appropriate education for them. As parents we must organize to become a respected and sizable force which can make a difference."

*-Gina Ginsberg Riggs, "A Call for Parent Advocacy,"
Understanding Our Gifted, March/April 1996*

How can I become involved?

Parents can be the most effective advocates for their children's education. Participate in your local, state, and national gifted advocacy groups. Such groups can influence local, state, and federal legislation that directly impacts your child. They also provide valuable information about gifted education, scholarships for students, and networking opportunities for children and adults. Visit their web sites, and join them to strengthen the voices speaking on behalf of gifted children.

Although the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and your own state organization (Colorado Association for the Gifted and Talented) provide information to both members and legislators, you should become a part of the process. Advocacy can be as simple as using the legislative alerts issued by the state or national group as the basis of a personal appeal to your representative. Good legislators appreciate the opinions and the supporting stories of their constituents. Stay connected through your parent groups, because legislation can change quickly as compromises lead to revisions. Become known as a reliable source of information to your representative.

Effective advocacy is more than being passionate about gifted education. The effective advocate knows how to convey the message that needs to be heard and how to frame information in a manner that drives the point without alienating those who influence the decision-making process.

Where do I begin?

Begin at your child's school or even in his/her classroom. Attend the annual fall parent meeting and presentation given by your child's gifted and talented site coordinator. This is an opportunity to learn about gifted issues and to connect with other parents with similar interests.

Next, become involved with our GT parent council. You'll learn what is new in District 50J and how you can influence positive change.

Local, State, and National Organizations

<http://coloradogifted.org> Colorado Association for the Gifted and Talented

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1052> How to Start a Parent Support Group

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=36> NAGC Advocacy Toolkit

<http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1445> NAGC Parent & Community Network

Advocacy Tips

http://www.nagc.org/uploadedFiles/PHP/PHP_Article_Archive/2003/March/mar03advocateyouth.pdf *Advocating for Talented Youth: Lessons Learned from the National Study of Local and State Advocacy in Gifted Education*

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/advocacy.htm> Hoagies Gifted Advocacy page

Glossary

A Guide to Commonly-Used Words, Phrases and Acronyms in Gifted Education

Can't find the term you're looking for? Want more information on one of these terms? Try the NAGC glossary of Frequently Used Terms in Gifted Education at <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=565>

504 – A provision of the civil rights measure the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensuring equal educational access for those with disabilities; under section 504 of the ADA, the disability must have a significant impact on the student's life; a 504 plan is often used to guarantee accommodations in the classroom for students with ADD/ADHD

ADD/ADHD – Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, neurological conditions that are characterized by difficulty in concentrating, poor impulse control, and difficulty in organizing thoughts and tasks; ADHD has the additional characteristic of hyperactivity – near-constant, unconscious, non-directed physical movement that usually is only absent in sleep

Ability grouping – also called readiness grouping; placing students into instructional groups by academic need or readiness for the content; groups can be formed and reformed to meet varied instructional purposes (flexible grouping)

Accelerated learning – also called accelerated pacing; students progress through the curriculum at a faster rate, as the teacher speeds up the presentation rate to match the faster learning rate of intellectually and academically advanced students

Acceleration – the process of **either** shortening the number of years a student spends learning the K-12 curriculum (also called grade-skipping), **or** allowing a student to work ahead in curriculum that is above his/her current grade level (subject-skipping); both forms of acceleration are well supported by research (see *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*, downloadable at nationdeceived.org)

Achievement test – a test that measures both prior knowledge and current levels of performance in a specific subject or course

Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) – an individualized educational plan required in Colorado that documents student strengths and interests and that serves as a guide to instruction. The ALP is based on student needs and interests and may include such programming options as acceleration, differentiated instruction, enrichment activities, and affective counseling and guidance.

Affective – the domain of learning that addresses attitudes, feelings, values, appreciation and perception of self and others; motivation is a part of the affective domain that greatly influences achievement and success

Aptitude – undeveloped natural or innate potential or ability

Articulation – the communication about the transition of students between grades and learning levels

At-risk – descriptive term for students who may underachieve, drop out of school, or come to harm; Unmet economic, physical, emotional, linguistic, and/or academic needs may inhibit a student's ability to learn or to attend school.

Assessment – formal or informal methods of determining learning progress, including mastery or prior knowledge of skills, knowledge, or concepts; assessment may occur **prior to instruction** (pre-testing or pre-assessment) to determine student needs and to set goals, **during instruction** (formative assessment) to guide teachers in planning

and to help students track their learning, and **after instruction** (post-testing or summative assessment) to give feedback to teachers, students, and parents on learning that occurred

Asynchronous development – differing rates for physical, cognitive, and emotional development, also known as asynchrony, that occur in all children, but more extremely in the gifted; for example, a gifted child may be chronologically 13 years old, but may appear intellectually like an 18-year-old, emotionally like an 8-year-old, and physically like an 11-year-old. The discrepancies are greatest for the general population at the chronological age of about 13, but the extremes displayed by gifted children have led some experts to define giftedness itself as asynchronous development.

Bell curve – describes a statistically normal distribution of naturally-occurring scores within a population. The pattern of all scores follows a curve shape that shows the greatest number of scores falling within the middle range and fewer scores in the ranges on the outer ends on either side.

Cluster grouping – the intentional placement of a group of students with similar ability or readiness in an otherwise heterogeneous classroom for a particular learning activity or for a particular unit or course

Cognitive – the domain of learning that addresses knowledge and understanding of concepts and facts and their relationships; the cognitive domain also deals with thinking, reasoning, and creativity

Cognitive needs – the intellectual needs of an individual

Cognitive test – a test not linked to a specific curriculum that is used to predict a student's future performance and general level of intellectual functioning; cognitive abilities are present at birth, are influenced by experiences both in and out of school, and continue to develop throughout the lifespan

Cooperative learning – an instructional strategy in which small, usually heterogeneous, groups of students work collaboratively to accomplish a particular task; the purpose of such learning is to prepare students to work with others, to help them understand group membership and group dynamics, and to allow them to practice the skills of leadership and group membership

Creative thinking – a type of thinking that includes skills for generating, focusing, and evaluating ideas, for the purposes of synthesis, the creation of a new product, or problem solving. Creative thinking includes attitudes and dispositions such as openness to new ideas, a love of novelty, intellectual risk-taking, and tolerance for ambiguity, and perseverance.

Critical thinking – a type of thinking that emphasizes the development of analytical thinking for the purposes of decision making and making judgments. Critical thinking includes attitudes such as sustained attention to details and facts, a focus on accuracy and depth, and a willingness to allow one's mind to be changed. Skills such as analyzing, evaluating strengths and weaknesses of an argument, seeing others' points of view, and reaching sound conclusions are part of good thinking.

Cross-grade/Multi-age grouping – a grouping strategy that mixes children of different ages for instruction

Curriculum compacting – a process used to give students credit for what they already know by documenting their mastery of material and replacing planned activities with activities that will promote new learning. Curriculum is mastered in less time by eliminating repetition, minimizing drill, and accelerating instruction, enabling gifted students to engage with more challenging material.

Differentiation – meeting the diverse needs of learners through adapting curriculum and instruction using modifications in complexity, depth, and pacing, through the use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies; differentiation depends upon ongoing assessment of student progress and readiness, so that grouping can remain flexible. The teacher makes adjustments based on students' interests, preferred ways of learning, and their academic readiness. Teachers may adjust the learning environment, the content of lessons, learning activities, and/or assessments.

Elitism – a frequent criticism of gifted education; gifted education designed to serve the legitimate needs of those who differ from the general population is not inherently elitist. However, if students receiving gifted programming, or their parents, act as if they are socially or morally superior, or if the process supports the social order rather than identifying and serving all gifted students, then charges of elitism have merit. Ideally, gifted programming serves gifted students from all social classes and ethnic groups, without regard to their area of giftedness, whether they are achievers, underachievers, or students with disabilities.

Gifted – having a comparatively rare high level of mental ability, intelligence, or potential in one or more domains of value to society. “Giftedness” identified during the school years is really potential for later manifestation of giftedness in an area of intense interest. Gifted students can grasp concepts and skills at an exceptionally fast rate earlier than do their age peers and also exhibit unique affective traits.

Grouping – dividing students into groups by academic readiness/ability, interest, or learning style for instruction. Groups can be formed and reformed flexibly to meet varied instructional purposes. Grouping usually refers to within-class grouping, although it may also refer to cross-class grouping. (See also *Ability grouping* *Cross-grade/Multi-age grouping* and *Cluster grouping*.)

Highly gifted – highly gifted students are those whose intelligence level is several years above their age level; as a result of the magnitude of difference between them and children of more average abilities, their sense of isolation may be great. Their affective qualities are often very different from the usual. They also may exhibit talent far beyond their years, in which cases they are often referred to as *prodigies*.

Heterogeneous grouping – placing children of various abilities, interests and/or learning styles together in a classroom or instructional group

Homogeneous grouping – placing children of like abilities, interests and/or learning styles in the same classroom or instructional group

Inclusion – integrating students with unique needs into regular classrooms

Independent study – self-directed learning, often using self-selected resources and driven by student interest; includes more or less teacher or mentor monitoring or supervision at regular intervals, depending on the age of the learner; generally culminates in a product or service related to the topic or issue; independent study may also refer to self-directed progress through a prescribed course

Individualized instruction – customized education that includes progressing through or bypassing the curriculum using learning activities that align with each student’s learning style, social-emotional concerns, interests, abilities, creativity, and task commitment; usually used in tutoring settings rather than in classrooms

IQ (intelligence quotient) – a numerical calculation which represents the ratio of the mental age of an individual to his or her chronological age multiplied by 100. Only a few cognitive tests yield IQ scores. Standard IQ scores compare the mental ages considered normal for all those of the same chronological age; the mean IQ for any age group is 100, which represents a perfect correlation between mental and chronological age, according to that particular test. Cognizant of the body of research that shows little correlation between IQ scores and adult achievement, modern gifted educators often agree with this tongue-in-cheek saying about IQ tests, “Intelligence is whatever IQ tests measure.”

Learning styles – the different ways in which an individual attends to, processes, internalizes, and remembers new and difficult academic knowledge (e.g., auditory/visual/spatial/kinesthetic; linear/global; sequential/random; analytical thinker/creative thinker; left-brained/right-brained; group-oriented/individual learner; practical/analytical/creative)

Mentorship - a cooperative arrangement between a student and a professional adult with common interests in a particular skill, domain-specific knowledge, or career orientation, for the purpose of educating the student (protégé) in the area of the adult’s expertise

Multiple Intelligences – Howard Gardner’s theory that intelligence exists and can be expressed in a variety of ways situated within a society. Gardner states that intelligence is expressed through problem solving, combining traditional views of intelligence, such as rapidly processed knowledge and skills, with creativity. The theory identifies at least eight intelligences: linguistic, musical, spatial, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, spiritual/naturalist, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

Overexcitabilities – intense sensitivities experienced by people in various domains: psychomotor, sensual/aesthetic, imaginal, emotional, and/or intellectual; the term “overexcitabilities” was first coined by Kazimierz Dabrowski, a Polish psychiatrist and psychologist who lived at the time of both World Wars. Dabrowski developed a complex, hierarchical theory of human development focused on moral and creative potential. One aspect of his theory is categorization of certain perceptual traits that appear to play a role in the upward movement of a person’s development on the hierarchy. Dabrowski and his colleague and pupil, Michael Piechowski, found that the overexcitabilities appear linked in frequency and intensity to intelligence levels. Gifted children will often exhibit behaviors of one or more of the overexcitabilities to a greater degree than do their non-gifted age peers.

Perfectionism – the desire to execute tasks flawlessly; gifted children may develop perfectionism upon entering school when they perform better than their classmates and believe that they must continue to outshine their peers. Later, such perfectionism may lead to avoiding challenges so as not to appear imperfect.

Pretest – a test given before instruction to determine current level of performance in a specific skill or current level of knowledge and understanding; results are used for planning instruction and setting goals (see Assessment)

Pull-out – classes and activities held for certain groups of students during the school day but outside the regular classroom

Rubric – a scoring guide used as an assessment scale to determine performance levels according to pre-determined criteria in categories of importance

Tracking – full-time, often permanent, assignment to achievement groups across all academic areas

Twice Exceptional – a gifted student with other diagnosed learning/physical needs, such as ADD/ADHD, Asperger’s Syndrome, behavioral disorder, hearing or visual impairment, or a Specific Learning Disability – properly abbreviated as 2e, although you will sometimes see 2X

Underachievement – a significant discrepancy between recognized potential or ability and actual academic performance

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