

# General Administrative Procedures For Gifted Programs

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## INTRODUCTION

### State Law

By law and tradition, Missouri school districts are expected to provide programs of instruction suitable for the full range of student ability, from handicapped and disadvantaged learners through those who are academically advanced. In 1973, the General Assembly recognized that there is a limited number of academically advanced students whose mental capacity and learning potential are so advanced that they need services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided. As a result, in 1973, the General Assembly authorized the state program for gifted students. In so doing, the General Assembly did not intend to diminish in any way the regular program of instruction or to supplant existing programs for the academically advanced (superior) students. The intent was clearly to support special efforts to increase the educational opportunities available for students who are identified as gifted.

The state special education law (H.B. 474) enacted in 1973, authorized the State Board of Education to establish standards for special programs for gifted students. The following sections of state law pertain to gifted education programs:

Section 162.675, RSMo, defines gifted children as "those children who exhibit precocious development of mental capacity and learning potential as determined by competent professional evaluation to the extent that continued educational growth and stimulation could best be served by an academic environment beyond that offered through a standard grade level curriculum."

Section 162.720, RSMo, states that school districts may establish programs for gifted children "where a sufficient number of children are determined to be gifted and their development requires programs or services beyond the level of those ordinarily provided in regular public school programs . . ." and states that the State Board of Education "shall determine standards for such programs. Approval of such programs shall be made by the State Department of Education based upon project applications submitted each year."

Further information on the Administrative Rule for State approved Gifted Programs can be found in [Appendix D](#) of this Manual.

### Scope of Program

In accordance with the definition of giftedness which is set forth in the law, the programs for the gifted will be in the general academic areas and/or in the fine arts. It is recognized that gifted students are capable of outstanding performance in one or more academic areas and may also display outstanding ability in one or more of the fine arts. It is further recognized that outstanding intellectual, creative thinking and reasoning abilities contribute singly and in various combinations to such performance. Consequently, school districts will need to assess a variety of student abilities and to design appropriate

program services that will challenge and develop these abilities. This responsibility is addressed within the standards of the Missouri School Improvement Program, which state, "each district identifies gifted and talented students at all levels and provides them differentiated instruction suitable for their levels of intellectual, physical, and social maturity."

It is important to note that differentiated educational programs for gifted students are not designed for the typical superior student who is frequently an excellent scholar, can earn "A" grades, and achieve academic honors. The educational needs of these students should be met by existing school programs.

Gifted programs are reserved for the students who are as far from the superior student in potential as the superior is from the average student. The task is to identify these students and to provide educational opportunities that will challenge and develop their abilities.

### **GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMS**

Districts should provide gifted students with an educational environment beyond that offered in the regular classroom setting for superior students and which is designed to meet the identified needs of gifted students. The educational needs of gifted students which are not met by the regular grade level program for superior students will require (1) a differentiated instructional program which accommodates higher cognitive processes and concepts, (2) teaching methods appropriate for their advanced abilities and individual styles of learning, and (3) flexible administrative arrangements needed to implement the program.

Teachers implementing the gifted program curriculum must hold appropriate certification for the gifted services they are providing.

All teacher positions in gifted education are designed to serve those students identified through the approved selection process as needing an academic environment beyond that offered by the standard grade level curriculum available to superior students. The following guidelines apply:

Instructional personnel must:

1. Serve in an instructional position described in [Appendix C](#) and provide instructional services to gifted students selected for the program according to criteria approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE); and
2. Hold a valid Missouri teaching certificate for the area of gifted services they are providing.

## Types of services provided to Identified Gifted Students

Services provided to gifted students will vary depending upon the age and grade level of the students, the size of the school district, school schedules, and community preferences. Gifted programs must provide a minimum of one hundred and fifty (150) minutes per week of contact time in which the teacher of gifted works exclusively with the identified gifted students.

Class or group sizes within the gifted program should not exceed fifteen (15) nor be less than five (5), with an average of ten (10) students per class.

Suggested maximum caseloads for full-time teachers of the gifted are as follows:

Resource Room Teacher (RRT) -- 75 students

Educational Resource Teacher (ERT) -- 75 students

Special Class Teacher (SCT) -- 90 students

Gifted Resource Teacher (GRT) -- 90 students

Programs for Exceptionally Gifted Students (PGS) – To be established in agreement with [the Department] DESE.

Caseloads this high are not recommended; they represent the extreme upper limit.

At the elementary level, the most common service model is a pull-out program in which students leave the regular classroom and spend time in a resource room. The pull-out program may either be one in which the teacher of gifted spends 100% of his/her time in the resource classroom ([RRT](#) model,) or may be an [ERT](#) model in which the teacher spends most of his/her time (at least 80%) in the resource room and some time (a maximum of 20%) as a resource teacher in the regular classrooms.

NOTE: For Kindergarten students ONLY, districts are allowed to use the first semester for identification with placement in direct instructional program starting second semester.

Middle school/junior high and high school programs may be pull-out programs (either [RRT](#) or [ERT](#),) but often consist of a special class that is part of a student's daily schedule ([SCT](#) model.) Special classes are often interdisciplinary in nature, but may focus on a specific subject area.

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes are considered a gifted service.

At grades nine (9) through twelve (12), gifted students may participate in a special class or pull-out, but these options often create conflicts with other classes that students want

to take. The Gifted Resource Teacher ([GRT](#)) model avoids many of these conflicts. In the [GRT](#) model, the teacher of gifted works with students and teachers in a resource capacity on a highly flexible schedule.

In some instances, a district may identify a few exceptionally gifted students who need full-time specialized instruction to meet their needs. The [PEGS](#) (Program for Exceptionally Gifted Students) model is an option for those students. Further explanation of service models and teacher position descriptions can be found in [Appendix C](#) of this manual.

A school district may serve different groups of students in various ways, with varying amounts of contact time. (See [Appendix C](#) in this Manual for descriptions of teacher positions and delivery systems, and [Appendix G](#) for instructions on completing Core Data.)

### **Guidelines for Student Selection (Screening and Evaluation Instruments and Procedures)**

The student selection process must consist of at least the following two (2) stages:

- (A) screening and
- (B) individual evaluation and placement.

See [Appendix B](#) for a flow chart on the student selection process. Evaluation and placement of students should be completed prior to the beginning date of instructional services.

Schools must develop a system to identify children in need of the gifted education services that the district provides. Screening criteria should be as inclusive as possible. Identification criteria and test instruments should be chosen that will maximize the students' strength and limit the effects of any possible biases (limited English proficiency, culturally diverse background, poverty, etc.). Districts should consider their demographics when creating a menu of comparable test instruments that will be acceptable for screening and placement.

#### **A. [Screening](#)**

All available data on the total school population should be considered during the screening stage. Any information contained in permanent records should be used, including nationally-normed achievement test scores, group intelligence test scores, Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores, and previous grades, anecdotal records demonstrating creative problem-solving and general creativity, and recommendations from teachers, parents, peers, and other personnel. Districts should also consider what methods will be effective in selecting hard-to-identify and traditionally underrepresented students. Districts should establish their own criteria so as to allow

for approximately ten (10) to twenty (20)% of the population to be considered for further evaluation.

## B. Individual Evaluation and Placement

Following screening and referral, the school may determine criteria which would be appropriate for the academic or fine arts service(s) provided, the grade levels to be served, and the background and needs of students in the district. It is expected that the use of tests and scales may differ within districts as well as between districts. For example, different procedures or instruments may be used with students of different ages or for parts of the program with specific curriculum focus, such as a Fine Arts, Math or Science focus. Alternate selection criteria and methods may also be used for special populations or students with special needs (ie. LEP, LD.)

### 1. General Mental Ability

**Full-scale scores on an individual intelligence test at or above the 95th percentile:** Although they are more time-consuming, individually administered intelligence tests provide more accurate indicators for final placement purposes than do group tests. The district may use various IQ tests, administered according to their appropriateness in reference to program areas and student needs, this includes using the General Ability Index (GAI) of the WISC IV. On the core data screen, list all I.Q. tests used by the district, and the minimum required test score. [Click here for a list of frequently-used I.Q. tests.](#)

### 2. Academic Ability

**If achievement test scores are used for formal evaluation and placement, they must be derived from a norm-referenced test and the cut-off score must be set at the 95th percentile or higher.** MAP content area test scores may be used for placement in subject specific classes. For interdisciplinary programs, tests must be used that sample a majority of the core subject areas of Math, Science, Social Studies and Communication Arts.

On the core data screen, list all achievement tests used by the district and the minimum required test score. While composite scores will be used for most multi-disciplinary academic programs, it may be appropriate to use subtest scores **if an academic program is focused on a specific subject area.** The scores must be in the subject area(s) or in the subtest area(s) most related to the design of the gifted program. [Click here](#) for a list of frequently-used achievement tests.

### 3. Creativity, Reasoning, and Problem-solving Ability

Results of valid tests or other assessments indicating outstanding ability in one of the following areas: (1) creative and productive thinking, (2) advanced insight, (3) outstanding imagination, (4) innovative or creative reasoning ability, (5) advanced perception of cause and effect relationships, (6) problem solving, or (7)

abstract concepts. These areas of ability must be related to the design of the gifted program. A minimum criteria for identification must be established by the district and listed on the core data screen. [Click here](#) for a list of frequently-used creativity/problem-solving assessments.

#### 4. [Other](#)

Documented evidence of exceptional performance in a general academic area, a fine arts area, or another area related to the design of the gifted program: Such evidence may take the form of portfolios of student work, formal classroom observations by persons knowledgeable about characteristics of gifted students, auditions, product demonstrations, etc. Districts must establish minimum criteria for placement and list it on the core data screen. [Click here for a list of frequently-used items.](#)

Limitations of a single test of cognitive ability should be recognized. "If the identification criteria for a program for the gifted is based primarily on a single test, the population of gifted students identified will vary greatly depending upon which test is used." (Wood and Carri, 1991) No single test or method of identification will identify all children's abilities.

Identification procedures typically include individual intelligence test scores, norm-referenced achievement test scores, previously demonstrated accomplishments, teacher observation and nomination, and scores on tests of creativity.

#### **Alternate Identification Plans**

The task of identifying gifted children is a complex one, especially the task of finding children who are gifted and also have other exceptionalities. Passow and Frazier identified the following groups as being under-identified and under-served, and in need of alternate assessment strategies.

1. Children who are characterized by racial/ethnic cultural group membership (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans);
2. Children with language differences or limitations (e.g., mother tongue other than English or limited English speaking);
3. Children from families of low socioeconomic status (e.g., qualifying for poverty-level subsistence or free or reduced price meals);
4. Children of varied geographic locations (rural or inner city areas, barrios, or reservations)

Passow and Frasier indicate the need for "new models or paradigms" that "respond to these [issues] by focusing on gifted behaviors in a cultural context, designing dynamic approaches to assessing gifted behaviors within the students' socio-cultural context, and integrating identification processes with learning opportunities." (Passow and Frasier, 1996)

Other children who may need to be identified by alternate means include children with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, physical challenges, or behavioral difficulties. The various, and possibly negative, manifestations of giftedness can make it difficult to recognize a child's high abilities in a regular academic setting, causing some gifted children to remain unidentified and unserved.

A school district may propose an alternative student selection plan when the proposed alternative will provide **improved** individual evaluation and selection of students in need of the services provided. The proposal must clearly set forth in writing the process of screening and individual evaluation of students. The plan must include: **(a) established criteria for selection, (b) objective measures, and (c) competent professional evaluation.** The plan must clearly state the criteria that a student must meet in order to be eligible for the state approved gifted program. Examples of alternate selection include:

Using alternate tests, (such as non-verbal IQ or achievement tests for children with language differences or alternate types of tests for fine arts programs or subject-specific classes;)

Other adaptations may also be appropriate. This includes using the General Ability Index (GAI) of the WISC IV. The examples listed above do not include all possibilities. We strongly encourage districts to consult with DESE [Department] personnel regarding appropriate alternative identification procedures.

### **Transfer Student Policy**

Students who transfer to a school with a gifted program shall be placed in the receiving district's program if **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. The student must previously have been placed in a gifted program in a Missouri school.
2. The areas addressed by the two programs must be similar: i.e., both are general academic programs; both are fine arts programs; or both are specific academic programs.
3. The student meets or exceeds the selection criteria established by the receiving school for placement in its gifted program.

4. The student and parents agree to such placement

## **GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR STATE-ASSISTED GIFTED PROGRAMS**

### **District Procedures**

1. Gifted program information is **to be submitted electronically** to [the Department's] Core Data Section in October cycle.
2. District must employ instructional personnel who have a valid Missouri teaching certificate for the area of gifted service they are providing. For specific questions regarding certification, call the Educator Certification Section at (573) 751-4369.
3. Instructional staff positions and assignments must be documented by names of staff members and course assignments reported to the Department on the Core Data Collection System. Program code "08" is to be used in reporting gifted positions and assignments. Further instructions for entering Core Data can be found in the Core Data Manual ([Appendix G](#) in this Manual.)
4. The results of an annual **evaluation report shall be completed on or before June 30** of the program year and shall be in the **district office**. The evaluation procedures should be designed to determine the extent to which students have met the program objectives. The report should include a description of the evaluation procedures, a list of the people involved in the evaluation process, and an explanation of how their input is used to revise the program.

### **Department Procedures**

The Department will make the *Administrative Manual and Guidelines: Program for Gifted Students* available to all local school districts. **The manual is available on the DESE web site at [www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/gifted](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/gifted).**

Individuals can subscribe to an electronic mailing list. Subscribers to the [listserv](#) receive updates on State Gifted Programs by e-mail, and we urge all school districts to subscribe.

1. The director of Gifted Education Programs is available for consultation with district personnel by telephone, (573) 751-2453, [e-mail](#), or by appointment.
2. The Department shall review and will approve or disapprove selection criteria submitted.
3. Core data will be used to verify proper certification of all teachers coded 08.

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