

## Identifying Gifted Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

April 10, 2020

Per the announcement on April 9, 2020, Missouri school buildings shall remain closed through the current school year (2019-20); however, school services should continue to the extent possible. Many gifted education specialists are concerned about identifying students for gifted programs. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Advisory Council on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children are providing guidance for school systems to address those concerns. It is advisable for all gifted identification to be on pause until schools return for the 2020-21 school year, in order to ensure a reliable and valid identification process.

Topic	Guidance	Considerations
Student Counts	Identified gifted students (both served and not served) are counted in the October, April, and June MOSIS cycles. The October and April data are used by DESE for compliance monitoring as required by state statute, Section 163.031.6 RSMo.	As much as possible, strive to complete identification/selection by the last Wednesday in September and, at the very latest, the last Wednesday in March 2021.
Scheduling Screening and Evaluations	It is advisable for all identification to be on pause until schools return for the 2020-21 school year, in order to ensure a reliable and valid identification process.	<p>If students were tested and data was collected before school buildings closed, that data can be used to determine selection for the gifted program. Gifted identification committee members could use secure virtual meetings to make gifted program selection decisions.</p> <p>If the school system is offering summer school, it is possible to complete testing during summer school. If testing is completed throughout the summer, school systems are advised to plan carefully for equitable identification.</p>

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Identification or Selection Process	School systems report their gifted identification (or selection) process in the August Core Data on Screen 25. Now is a good time to review the school system’s process.	<p>School systems develop a body of evidence by collecting data in four areas for each student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General mental ability</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Creativity, problem solving, reasoning</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p>Often the data is collected in a one-on-one setting. School systems can consider using instruments that can be conducted in small groups. For example, the NNAT, CogAT, OLSAT and SAGES-3 can be conducted in small groups. DESE <a href="#">Gifted Education Program Guidelines</a> state: If group intelligence tests are used, students must meet the criterion on two different instruments.</p>
Universal Screening	Universal screenings are essential to equitably identify gifted learners.	<p>Information on universal screening is available in two documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Gifted Education Program Guidelines</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Identifying and Serving Traditionally Underrepresented Gifted Students</a></li> </ul> <p>Contact <a href="#">Christine Nobbe</a> for further information on universal screenings.</p>
Local Norms	Most school systems are using national norms for the general mental ability and achievement scores. However, all school systems can work with the Director of Gifted Education on an Alternate Identification Plan in which local norms are used. This would be a good time to consider using local norms.	<p>Nationally normed tests were normed during a typical school year. The past few weeks have not been typical and are impacting gifted learners in many ways. Using local norms will help mitigate this concern. Additional guidance on using local norms is forthcoming. Contact <a href="#">Christine Nobbe</a> for further information on using local norms and developing an Alternate Identification Plan.</p>
Parent and Teacher Rating Scales	Parent and Teacher rating scales, if used by the school system as a piece of evidence, could be completed now or over the summer.	Some parents and teachers might not have time to complete the rating scales now because of extra responsibilities. However, parents may now have a better understanding of their children’s learning strengths.

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Telepractice or Tele-assessment	We are just beginning to explore telepractice. Further guidance will be forthcoming as it becomes available.	<p>School systems must ensure that instruments and procedures, including telepractice, are equitable, reliable and valid when identifying gifted children.</p> <p>The American Psychological Association is providing guidance on tele-assessment on their <a href="#">website</a>.</p>

For all COVID 19 information from DESE, visit [dese.mo.gov/COVID19](https://dese.mo.gov/COVID19).

For further guidance on this document, contact:  
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