



# Gifted and Talented Education

## **Parent and Educator Handbook**

RE-1 Valley School District  
301 Hagen Street  
Sterling, Colorado 80751

# Introduction

RE-1 Valley School District recognizes that the student population includes students with exceptional academic abilities. These students have a need for educational services that are consistent with their ability levels and learning characteristics such as thinking abstractly, having the ability to study a topic in depth, and learning rapidly. Students shall be provided appropriately challenging curricula and instruction that are congruent with their learning abilities and styles through the shared responsibility of teachers, gifted and talented specialists, administrators, counselors, parents and learners themselves.

RE-1 Valley School District is committed to providing educational programming that recognizes the unique abilities and needs of all students, while promoting adequate yearly progress from their points of entry.

## Defining Giftedness

### Colorado Definition

**The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) defines "gifted" children as:**

*Those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five 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, ethnic, and 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 12.01(16)*

## Common Characteristics

During preschool years, giftedness can be demonstrated by early physical development, early language development, and/or exceptional powers of observation and curiosity.

While it is rare for a gifted child to exhibit all characteristics listed below, it is common for a gifted child to manifest many of them:

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Good problem-solving abilities	Rapid learning
Longer attention span	Compassion for others
Sees relationships/makes connections with	High degree of energy ideas
Preference for older companions	Unusual sense of humor
Wide range of interests (or narrow ones)	Intense concentration
Interest in experimenting and doing things differently	May question authority
Exhibits creativity	Perseveres in areas of interest
Early or avid reader with greater	May seem mature for age comprehension
Ability with puzzles, mazes or numbers	Advanced sense of conscience
Insatiable curiosity and persistence	Extensive vocabulary
Perceives abstract ideas, understands	Good memory complex concepts
May demonstrate intense emotional and/or physical sensitivity	Perfectionism

## Possible Issues Facing Gifted Children

- Strong-willed
- Worries about humanitarian concerns
- Sensitive to criticism or peer rejection, excessive self-criticism
- Boredom, frustrated with inactivity; may be seen as hyperactive, disruptive and at risk
- Resistant to traditions and expectations
- Asynchronous development
- Intensity of thought, purpose, emotion, spirit, and soul

## Referral and Identification Practices

Efforts to refer and identify students for gifted programming will be made at each grade level. Multiple criteria shall be used for identification purposes. Once identified, students shall receive gifted programming congruent with their identified needs.

Students as young as preschool through the second grade are observed for exceptional abilities by the classroom teacher and the district's MTSS Problem Solving Team. As with all students, programming at the primary level is differentiated to meet the learning needs of high ability students.

At the end of second grade, district- wide administration of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) occurs. The CogAT is an aptitude test and will often reveal abilities of students who are not achieving in the classroom or on standardized achievement tests. It's important for parents to understand that the CogAT is a test of how a student reasons and not what the student knows.

### Referral Process

A student may be referred by parent/guardian, staff member, counselor, school psychologist, or self-nomination. **Referral forms are available by request through the school gifted coordinator.** Once a student has been referred, the school district has 30 days to collect information that will assist in making gifted determination. Appropriate data is gathered in categories of Aptitude, Achievement, Behavior, and Performance.

A student may be referred for consideration based on any of the following:

1. Standardized group achievement test scores in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above
2. Standardized aptitude test scores in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above
3. Student products of high quality
4. Evidence of outstanding performance
5. Behavior/characteristics (established through the use of the GES and/or SIGS)
6. Parent or guardian referral form

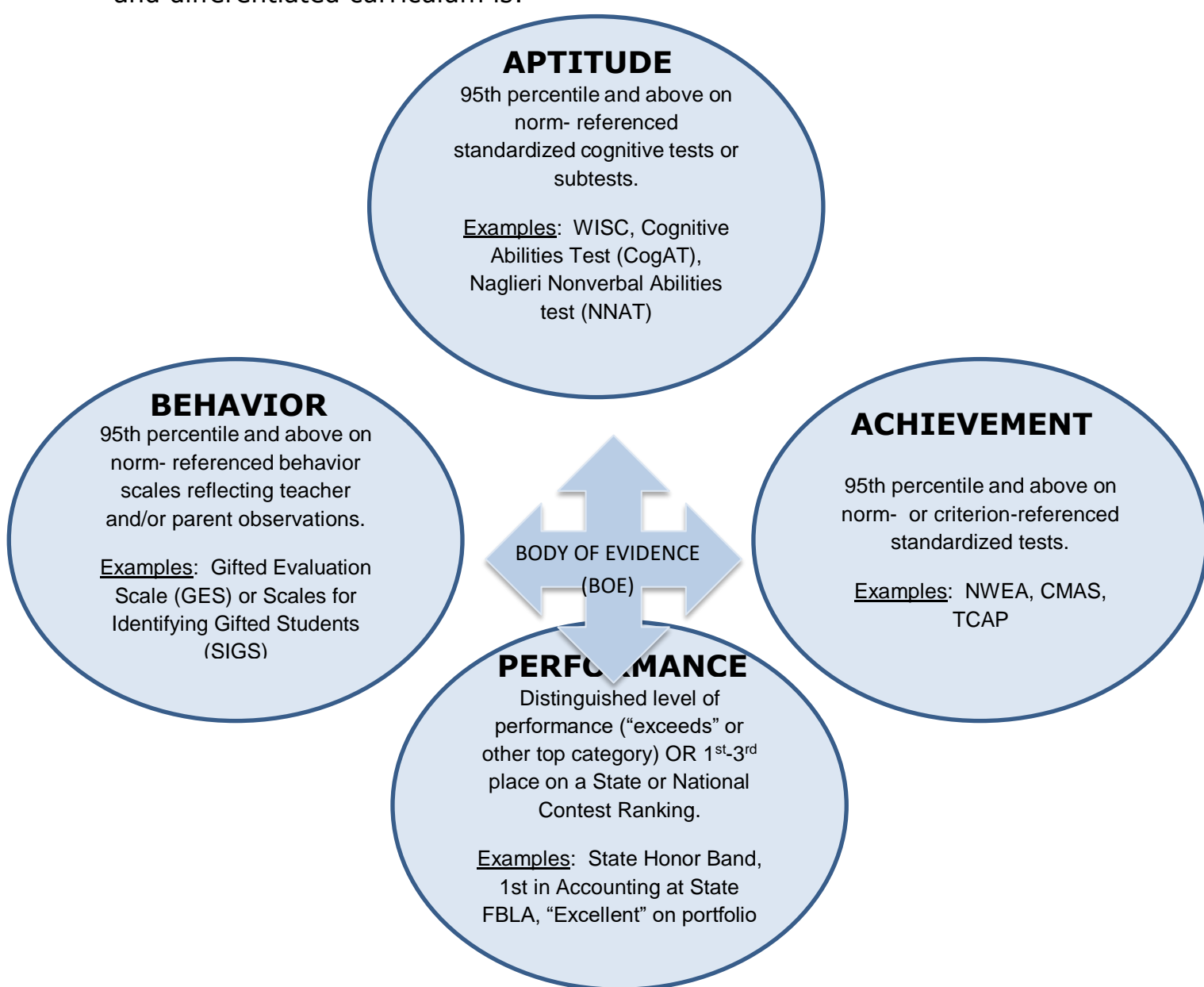
### Identification and Placement Criteria for Gifted Programming Services

A student's body of evidence reviewed by the MTSS team with at least one member trained in GT identification (usually the GT Coordinator for that building). Some students do not perform well on standardized tests but may show evidence of exceptional ability in other ways. This is often true for those who are Twice- Exceptional (both gifted and learning disabled), second language learners, and children from low income backgrounds. In these cases, team

judgment is necessary and further evidence may need to be gathered. Students are not denied services or identified on the basis of performance on any single score or instrument. Rather, those evaluating the data are looking for sufficient evidence of exceptional talent or ability to warrant special programming or services. This review is an ongoing process, and a student is not formally identified until a sufficient body of evidence is collected. Students must have at least three pieces of evidence as described in the graphic below for gifted identification.

### Body of Evidence

The Body of Evidence used to collect data by the school gathering team for identification and placement of students for gifted programming services and differentiated curriculum is:



## Portability

Portability means that a student's identification in one or more categories of giftedness transfers to any district in the state. Gifted programming must continue according to the receiving district's programming options. Portability of identification is a part of the student's permanent record and Advanced Learning Plan.

When a student transfers from one district to another, it is important that the sending district include gifted education records with all other student records sent to the receiving district. Although rules require portability, districts have the autonomy to select the specific instruments and procedures that will be utilized for gifted identification. These assessment tools may vary across districts but the criteria do not vary. If the receiving district's gifted review team determines the previous district identified the student using criteria not aligned to state guidelines, the rule for portability does not apply. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the receiving district to consult with the former district, parents and students to re-evaluate the identification determination. The rule for portability does not apply to students moving into Colorado from another state. However, the receiving school should review the student's records for evidence of giftedness, and then determine whether additional assessment is necessary to confirm if the student meets Colorado criteria for gifted identification.

If a student has transferred into a Sterling Re-1 Valley School and had a prior gifted identification, files must be requested from the incoming school to the previous school district. The receiving school district has 45 days to review the body of evidence and prior ALP. Parents can expect notification of new ALP or decision within 60 days.

## Advanced Learning Plans and Programming

**Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs)** A record of gifted and talented education programming services, options, and strategies used with individual students shall be made part of the student's record and shall be considered in educational planning and decision-making concerning programming for that student. This Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) will be developed based on the student's identification needs. It will be used as a planning guide for making instructional decisions about materials, programming



options, and assessments for gifted and talented students based upon strengths, interests, learning characteristics, and social-emotional needs.

The ALP will be used as a tool for monitoring students with outstanding potential in their area of strength.

Data for the ALP is collected from regular classroom, district, and state assessments, and/or identified gifted programming options. Data and ALPs are stored on the school's secure Alpine Achievement program; in addition, records are kept in accordance with the District's policy and in alignment with the state regulations for student data privacy.

The ALP will be reviewed with parents and the gifted student at least once a year.

### **Programming for Gifted Students**

Individual student services are driven by student data. Programming and instruction for gifted students falls within the Colorado MTSS with services at the universal, targeted or intensive levels based on student needs. Curriculum and instruction options might include:

#### **Elementary**

- Differentiated instruction in the regular classroom
- Flexible learning grouping
- Acceleration
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions (Spelling Bee)
  - The Ultimate Celebration (Semester Regional Saturday program for gifted)

#### **Middle School**

- Differentiated instruction in the regular classroom
- Flexible learning grouping
- Acceleration
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions (Spelling Bee, Geography Bee)
- The Ultimate Celebration (Semester Regional Saturday program for gifted)

## **High School**

- Honors/AP Classes
- Dual enrollment college classes
- Independent Study
- Educational Competitions (Knowledge Bowl)
- Clubs

## **Parent and Family Engagement and Communication**

The school district GT coordinator will send out information about upcoming events for gifted and talented students offered at the regional level. Sterling Re-1 Valley Schools maintains a website specifically related to gifted information and activities that assists parents and families and provides an avenue for answering questions and providing suggested parent resources.

Additionally, a parent speaker is brought in annually to regional events (most commonly at Ultimate Celebration in late winter) that is free and accessible. Some schools may offer additional family night opportunities as well.

### **What are some things parents can do to help their gifted child?**

- Become informed of the special needs of the gifted through reading, attending conferences or enrolling in classes.
- Be involved at home in your child's learning.
- Volunteer to help in the classroom (share your time!). For example, volunteer to share your career, interests, or travel experiences in your child's classroom or school, or act as a resource on children's individual projects. Help locate resource persons to meet with small special interest groups.
- Share what you know about your child with his/her teacher.
- Consider joining state organizations such as the Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented (CAGT).
- Form partnerships with teachers for support and assistance.
- Remember to communicate your appreciation to the teacher who makes extra efforts on behalf of gifted children and let the principal know that the teacher's work is valued.
- Take on a leadership role at your school by serving on the Building Accountability Committee (BAC).



## **Dispute Resolution**

If a parent or guardian disagrees with a gifted determination, he/she is encouraged to appeal the decision by approaching (in the order listed):

- Child's teachers
- Child's principal
- District Gifted and Talented Coordinator
- Assistant Superintendent
- Superintendent
- RE-1 Valley School Board

A formal process for appeal is described below should the parent/guardian wish to continue.

- The parent/guardian may appeal decisions of identification (within 10 school days of receiving the letter of recommendation for identification), programming, and ALP issues in writing to the Director of Gifted and Talented.
- The Director of Gifted and Talented will conference with the parents, teacher(s), principal, and school Gifted Coordinator.
- The parent/guardian will be notified within five school days of the meeting. If the parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the recommendation from the Director of Gifted and Talented, he/she may appeal in writing to the Assistant Superintendent within 10 school days of receiving the letter of recommendation. The Assistant Superintendent will review the process and evidence and will respond in writing to the parent/guardian within 10 school days of receiving the letter of appeal. The decision of the Assistant Superintendent shall be final.