
CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gifted Education Program Policies and Procedures

CHOCTAW COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Choctaw County School District provides a program of enrichment for intellectually gifted students in second through sixth grade. The classes are called "PACE" and serve second through sixth grade students at each elementary school. Students at each school spend one day per week in the gifted "pull-out" enrichment program and the rest of the week in their general education classrooms.

Mississippi Department of Education gifted regulations and state mandate require that intellectually gifted students in grades two through six be provided services by a teacher with gifted endorsement for a minimum of five hours per week.

MISSION

The mission of the Choctaw County School District gifted program is to insure that intellectually gifted children, as defined by the Mississippi Department of Education, are offered appropriate educational experiences that are qualitatively different from those available in the regular classroom in order to provide opportunities for them to realize their abilities and potential.

MDE DIFINITION

The State of Mississippi defines "Intellectually Gifted Children" and "Gifted Education Programs" as follows:

"Intellectually Gifted Children" shall mean those children and youth who are found to have an exceptionally high degree of intelligence as documented through the identification process.

"Gifted Education Programs" (GEP) shall mean special programs of instruction for intellectually gifted children in grades 2-12, ... in the public elementary and secondary schools of this state. Such programs shall be designed to meet the individual needs of gifted children and shall be in addition to and different from the regular program of instruction provided by the district."

Although the State of Mississippi recognizes permissive programming for academically gifted students in grades 9-12; artistically gifted children in grades 2-12; and creatively gifted children in grades 2-12, only intellectually gifted programs in grades 2-6 are mandated by law. At this time, the Choctaw County School District offers the program for intellectually gifted children in the mandated grades, 2-6.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The student identification process is separated into six stages which include referral, LSC review of referral data, parental permission for testing, assessment, assessment report, and the LSC eligibility determination stage.

The identification process consists of a combination of subjective and objective measures to determine eligibility for the gifted program and includes an equitable opportunity for the inclusion of students who are culturally diverse, underachieving, disabled under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) guidelines, physically handicapped, or ADD/ADHD, as well as students who exhibit classroom behavior such as extreme shyness, short attention spans, disruptiveness, continual questioning, and anxiety.

Throughout the identification process, district personnel are careful to select measures that target the student's strengths.

All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Access to this information is restricted to those personnel working directly with the identification process, working directly in the gifted education program, or that have a documented need to access. Parents will be informed of the information/data collected and may gain access to their children's records by written request to the school's gifted education personnel at any time. Upon completion of the identification process, results of the Assessment Team Report will be explained to the parents, and a copy of the assessment report provided.

STAGE 1: REFERRAL

Referral for the gifted education program is based on consideration of performance in the regular classroom, potential ability, test performance, intellectual characteristics, creativity, and/or leadership potential. While grades and/or achievement test scores might be an indicator of giftedness, by MDE Regulations, neither classroom behavior, grades, or achievement test scores may be used to eliminate a student from the identification process.

As mandated in MDE Gifted Regulations, the Choctaw County School District follows the state minimal scale/percentile score criteria on all referral measures

There are two types of gifted referral processes:

- Type One – The Mass Screening Referral Process addresses those students who are mass screened for gifted eligibility.
- Type Two – The Individual Referral Process addresses those students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility.

A student may be referred by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. All students comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients for gifted education services.

- If the process stops at Phase I or II, students must wait a full school calendar year prior to being referred again.
- Students may be assessed only twice, either at the Phase I Level and/or Phase II Level, at district expense.
- Phase I Assessment will be conducted during the spring semester of each school calendar year.
- Phase II testing will take place during late spring semester and summer break.
- Students who enroll in the district with an out-of-state Intellectually Gifted eligibility (based on review of previous assessment data/criteria), as well as students who are new to the school district who display unusually high potential, may be assessed within the school year.

Type One: Mass Screening Referral Process

A normed group measure of intelligence will be administered to all first grade students in the mass screening referral process to assist in identifying students in underrepresented populations. All students who obtain a full scale/composite score at or above the 90th percentile shall move forward in the referral process.

In addition to the normed group measure of intelligence obtained in mass screening, a student shall satisfy two of the following criteria before moving forward to Stage 2 of the identification process, LSC Review of Referral Data:

1. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
4. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
7. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

Type Two: Individual Referral Process

This process involves students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility. Any student who does not meet the minimum acceptable criteria (score in the 90th percentile) on the normed group measure of intelligence during the Mass Screening Referral Process and does not qualify for the Emerging Potential for Gifted criteria, can be referred by anyone for the Individual Referral for Screening Process. The individually referred student shall not be excluded from the referral process by his or her performance on the normed group measure of intelligence administered during the Mass Screening Referral Process.

All students in grades served by the program comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients for gifted education services. A student may be referred for consideration, pending documentation of the above criteria, by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self, or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. A referral must be initiated by written request to the teacher of the gifted. The person initiating the referral shall sign the referral form and date it. Once the student is referred, the district personnel shall collect the data required to satisfy the referral criteria. Once a referral form has been initiated, signed, and dated, only the LSC or parents can stop the identification process.

Students participating in the Individual Referral Process shall satisfy three of the following criteria before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data Stage:

1. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a group measure of intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
4. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,
7. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
8. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

STAGE 2: LSC REVIEW OF REFERRAL DATA

Once the referral data have been collected, the LSC shall review all data and make one of the following recommendations:

1. the student has satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and should move forward to the assessment stage, or
2. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures, however, the LSC feels strongly that additional data should be collected and the student reconsidered at that time, or
3. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and the identification process should stop.

Provisions for Emerging Potential for Gifted Populations

At this point the LSC shall make the decision as to the possibility that the student could be eligible for consideration as a candidate for an emerging potential for gifted assessment. If it is believed that the student might have emerging gifted potential, then the Emerging Potential for Intellectually Gifted Assessment Checklist will be completed for possible use during the assessment process. The Emerging Potential for Gifted category makes provisions for factors that exist and may put the student at a disadvantage when inappropriate instruments are used during the assessment process.

STAGE 3: PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR TESTING

If a student meets the criteria for referral, the Gifted Local Survey Committee will recommend individual assessment to determine eligibility for an "Intellectually Gifted" ruling. Written parental permission for testing must be obtained before any individual testing is initiated and parents will be notified in writing of their rights under PERPA.

STAGE 4: ASSESSMENT

District personnel shall review and compile all data available on the student. This data shall be made available to a licensed examiner who will administer an individual test of intelligence.

In no case will the examiner be related to the student being tested. The examiner shall review all available data on the student to select the most appropriate test of intelligence. Standard operating procedures will be followed during the selection and administration of all assessments as reflected in the examiner's manuals.

A student must score at or above the 91st percentile composite/full scale or the 91st percentile on approved subtests (as per publisher) in order to satisfy eligibility criteria.

Identification criteria, as approved by the MDE on the Choctaw County School District Gifted Education Program Proposal, must be satisfied for a student to be ruled eligible by the LSC for the intellectually gifted education program.

You may require a higher score for eligibility, but you must submit a Gifted Education Program Proposal specifying the score along with a justification

Emerging Potential for Gifted

Students who have satisfied criteria on the Emerging Potential for Gifted Checklist who did not satisfy minimal acceptable criteria on an individual test of intelligence, but, did score at least at the 84th percentile or have a scale score that falls within the range of the 90th percentile confidence interval of the state minimum scale/percentile score, may be administered one of the following additional measures to determine eligibility:

1. A test of cognitive abilities with a minimal score at the 90th percentile,
2. A group intelligence measure with a minimal score at the 90th percentile, or
3. A district-developed matrix approved by the MDE.

Potentially Twice-Exceptional Students

In compliance with MDE gifted regulations, students who already have an eligibility ruling under IDEA and are being assessed for an intellectually gifted eligibility, will be considered potentially Twice-Exceptional. Students who did not satisfy all of the required minimal acceptable referral criteria, but did meet at least one referral criterion, shall have their results reviewed by the LSC and a licensed examiner. If the student scores at or above the 91st percentile on the individual test of intelligence composite score or approved subtest score or, in the opinion of the reviewing committee, would benefit from participation in the intellectually gifted program, the student may be granted a provisional eligibility for the intellectually gifted program for a period of one year. At the end of that year, the student's teacher of the gifted shall meet with the review committee to discuss the student's performance in the program. If the student has demonstrated success in the program, the LSC shall change the eligibility status from provisional to regular eligibility. If the student has not been successful in the program, the provisional eligibility shall be revoked.

STAGE 5: ASSESSMENT REPORT

District personnel shall compile an Assessment Report, which contains all the MDE required components:

1. Student's name,
2. Name of at least three measures from Stage 1: Referral that were used to determine the need to administer an individual test of intelligence,
3. Results of each measure,
4. Name of individual who administered or completed each measure and the date administered or completed,
5. Test behaviors for any individually administered test(s),
6. Interpretation of the results of each individually administered test(s),
7. Name of the person who administered the individual test of intelligence and date test was administered,
8. Qualifications of the individual who administered the individual test of intelligence,
9. Results of the individual test of intelligence to include scores on all subtests and, identified strengths and weaknesses,
10. Name of the person responsible for writing the Assessment Report, his/her signature, and position, and
11. Date of the Assessment Report.

STAGE 6: LSC ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Once the Assessment Report is finalized, the LSC shall meet to review all data and determine if eligibility criteria have or have not been satisfied. The LSC shall rule that the student is or is not eligible for the intellectually gifted program.

Parental Notification

Parents of each student tested will be notified in writing about the results of their child's assessment for the intellectually gifted program and their rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). District personnel shall offer to explain any of the results about which the parents have questions.

OUT-OF-STATE GIFTED ELIGIBILITIES

As each state has a unique set of eligibility criteria for placement in a gifted program, a student moving to Mississippi with a gifted eligibility from another state must satisfy Mississippi eligibility criteria before being considered for placement in the gifted program. The eligibility ruling from another state may be used to initiate the referral process in Mississippi.

There is no temporary placement in the gifted program while the student goes through the eligibility process within the district.

PLACEMENT IN THE GIFTED PROGRAM

Once a student is ruled eligible for placement in the gifted program, the parent has the right to agree to placement or withhold placement of the child in the program. Written parental permission must be obtained before the child can be placed in the program.

A student who has been deemed eligible for the gifted program may only enter the school's gifted program at the beginning of first semester or the beginning of second semester. Exceptions may be made for students who transfer in with an existing gifted eligibility.

Participation in the Gifted Education Program is NOT a reward. It is an Entitlement under State Law (Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989, Mississippi Code Sections 37-23-171 through 37-23-181).

Once a student is determined eligible for a gifted program in Mississippi, no reevaluation testing is required to remain in the program. Although criteria may vary from district to district, an eligible determination is accepted by all school districts within the State of Mississippi.

INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

As PACE students work under specific Instructional Management Plan objectives and time frames, withholding permission to attend gifted classes shall not be used as a disciplinary measure.

The activities in the gifted class develop and enhance the process skills as established in the MDE required outcomes document, the teaching strategies notebook, and required components of the gifted program standards document. A differentiated curriculum that includes short-term exploratory activities and long-term activities that enhance the integration of advanced content and individual student's interests utilizing higher-level thinking skills, creative problem solving, critical thinking skills, research skills, personal growth and human relations exercises, leadership skills, and creative expression are provided in the gifted enrichment program. Activities also create an appreciation for the multicultural composition of the school and community. Failure to complete enrichment class assignments can be used as grounds for dismissal from the program.

HOMEWORK/CLASSWORK

As outlined in MDE Gifted Regulations, gifted students may not be required to make up class work missed when they are scheduled to be in the gifted classroom. Gifted students shall be held accountable for demonstrating mastery of concepts and information on regularly scheduled tests. Homework assigned to the regular classroom students for the evening of the PACE day must be completed.

ANNUAL REASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUED PLACEMENT

A committee shall meet at least annually to reassess each gifted student's continuation in the gifted program. The committee must include at least the student's teacher of the gifted and a designated administrative representative.

As stated in the MDE Gifted Education Regulations, "since participation in the gifted program is an entitlement under the law, the students should remain in the gifted program as long as they are being successful in the program. Grades and/or success in the regular education program are the responsibility of the regular classroom teachers and should not be considered as a reason for removal from the gifted program."

In the event a student fails to make progress or exhibits unsatisfactory participation in the gifted program, a meeting of the reassessment committee will be held to consider the student's performance. If the committee determines that the student is failing to make progress in the program, the student will be placed on probation in the gifted program for the next 9-weeks term. The parents will be notified and given an opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the decision and develop a plan of action. During this time, the student will continue to participate in the gifted program. If at the end of the period of probation, the student's performance improves to a satisfactory level, the student will be removed from probation and recommended for continued placement. If at the end of the 9-weeks term the student has failed to improve his/her performance to a satisfactory level, the reassessment committee can recommend the student be removed from the program. Documentation of all reassessment committee meetings must be maintained.

If the committee determines that the student should exit PACE due to lack of progress and/or unsatisfactory participation in the program, the student's parents will be notified and given the opportunity to discuss the decision with the committee before the student is removed. Should the parents not agree to the removal of the student from the program, the district shall grant the parents a hearing.

HEARING PROCESS

Parents who are not in agreement with the school based committee decision to remove a student from the gifted program will present their concerns, orally or in writing to the principal of the school. The principal and parent will attempt to resolve the matter informally.

If the parents are not satisfied with the action taken by the principal, the parents shall, within five (5) school days after the meeting with the principal, put their concerns in writing and present them to the Choctaw County gifted contact person. The gifted contact person will schedule a meeting of the District Student Assistance Team (D-SAT) within five (5) school days or a timeframe agreed upon by the parents. Parents will be extended an invitation to attend the D-SAT meeting. The D-SAT will render a written decision based on information shared during the meeting.

REINSTATEMENT PROCEDURES

Students will be considered for reinstatement in the gifted program at the request of the parents and with the recommendation of classroom teachers. Consideration and arrangements for reinstatement in the program will be made through the Local Gifted Survey Committee and documented in the minutes. Written notification of the student's eligibility for reinstatement will be forwarded to the parents and teachers of the student. Written parental permission must be obtained before the student can be placed in the program.

PERFORMANCE IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

In the event a student has difficulty keeping up with regular classroom work, a conference will be held with the parent, classroom teacher, teacher of the gifted, and the student, if appropriate, to discuss the problem and to determine an appropriate course of action. The conference and plan of action will be documented and follow-up conferences will be held as needed.

As the academic progress and welfare of the students are of prime consideration, special situations will be handled on an individual basis.

VISITORS

Parents and interested parties are welcome to visit the PACE classes. Please contact the school office or teachers of the gifted to make arrangements.

For additional information or questions about the Choctaw County School District Gifted Education Program please contact Jessica Utley, Gifted Contact Person at 662-547-7102 or Maureen Power, Choctaw County School District Gifted Coordinator at 662-285-4022.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

- Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989, Mississippi Code Sections 37-23-171 through 37-23-181
- Regulations for Gifted Education Programs in Mississippi (2006)