MSDE General Guidance: Areas of Giftedness

GENERAL INTELLECTUAL ABILITY (GIA)

Exceptional reasoning, intellectual, and/or advanced performance across a broad range of disciplines beyond their age-level peers.

Recommended GIA Identification Criteria

Testing: Abilities and/or multiple achievement tests should be utilized as one piece of evidence to include in the student profile. Local norming is recommended for abilities tests, and a combination of local norming and growth tracking is recommended for achievement tests. Please refer to the Maryland Model of Gifted and Talented Education for accepted abilities and achievement tests.

Portfolio: A non-content specific portfolio or multiple subject student work sample with verbal/nonverbal and inductive/deductive reasoning skills should also be utilized as possible evidence in the student profile. Example portfolio items are included here.

Observational Scales/Ratings: Generalized educator rating scales and/or guardian information may be collected and analyzed for possible use towards gifted identification. When using such scales, it is suggested that they are research-based and created from original national norms. Please refer to the *Maryland Model of Gifted and Talented Education* for accepted observational scales.

Additional Data: Other forms of data may be collected and utilized to gain a holistic view of the child which could help determine eligibility for gifted programming. An example of additional evidence could be a student interview that showcases or elicits information pertaining to a student's passions/interests.

CORE AREA ABILITY (CAA)

Exceptional performance in a core academic area (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) beyond age-level peers.

CAA Identification Criteria

Testing: An achievement test in the specific discipline in which a child could be identified is the preferred testing measure. Additionally, an abilities test with localized assessment data may also be considered an accepted testing measure. Please refer to the *Maryland Model of Gifted and Talented Education* for accepted achievement and abilities tests.

Portfolio: A content specific portfolio or student work sample displaying advanced skills in the discipline should be included as possible evidence in the student profile. Evidence here may also include recognition/achievement at the state or national level for specific content areas (i.e. science fair, national history day). Example portfolio items are included here.

Observational Scales/Ratings: Content specific educator rating scales and/or guardian information may be collected and analyzed for possible use towards gifted identification. When using such scales, it is suggested that they are research-based and created from original national norms. Please refer to the *Maryland Model of Gifted and Talented Education* for accepted observational scales.

Additional Data: Other forms of data may be collected and utilized to gain a holistic view of the child which could help determine eligibility for gifted programming. An example of additional evidence could be a student interview that showcases or elicits information pertaining to a student's passions/interests.

ELECTIVE AREA ABILITY (EAA)

Exceptional performance in an elective area (Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Career and Technical Education, World Languages, Physical Education, etc.) beyond age-level peers.

EAA Identification Criteria

1. **Portfolio/Performance**: Student work rated from a specific rubric and committee within a discipline may be utilized to identify giftedness in the elective areas. Examples include Elective Area Portfolios
2. **State/National Achievement Recognition:** Student recognition through established statewide or national competitions within a discipline may be utilized as one element of criteria within a student profile to identify giftedness in the elective areas.
3. **Observational Scales/Ratings**
4. **Additional Data:** Other forms of data may be collected and utilized to gain a holistic view of the child which could help determine eligibility for gifted programming. An example of additional evidence could be a student interview that showcases or elicits information pertaining to a student's passions/interests.

PROMISING POTENTIAL ABILITY (PPA)

Demonstrates clear potential to exceptionally perform in core academics, elective areas, creativity, or leadership beyond age-level peers.

Recommended PPA Identification Criteria

1. Structured performance, protocols, and/or lessons: These activities highlight potential talent within groups of students. The structured process ensures the educational playing field is leveled and all students have opportunities or exposure to showcase talents in ways that might not otherwise be observed. Examples of structured protocols include USTARS and Primary Talent Development (PTD).
2. Documented achievement/ability growth: One of the best ways to capture giftedness from talent development programming is to develop growth trajectories. Students who are experiencing unusually high growth have demonstrated their readiness for inclusion in gifted and talented programs. Growth in talent development programming should be tracked over the course of at least two years.
3. Additional Data: When available testing can be utilized as a measure to determine potential in gifted programming. Testing instruments should be criterion-referenced and local norming should be developed. Student interviews and other ways to capture student passions can be a strong indicator of potential for giftedness. Other data from educational practitioners and guardians may help showcase potential talent as well.

QUICK TIPS FOR SUCCESS WITH IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

1. Multiple measures in multiple areas: Criteria should be included that attempts to capture and understand the holistic view of students. Multiple measures should include multiple areas or data points in different categories. The data set indicated in Example A below has multiple data

points but does not meet the multiple measures criteria because it only includes testing data. **No one measure should be rated more highly over another, and no single measure should be used to include or exclude students from participating in programming.** Decisions should always be made with an equitable approach, reviewing students as individuals with specifics that may show a need for inclusion in gifted/talented programs. The data set included in Example B below meets the multiple measures criteria and weighs all data points equally.

Example A

CogAT	**86%**
NNAT3	**70%**
MAP - Reading	**90%**
MAP - Math	**72%**

Example B

CogAT	**79%**
MAP - Math	**85%**
Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS)	**91%**
Portfolio Rating	**Above Average**

2. Nonverbal and first language testing: Where possible, identification instruments should be nonverbal or in the student's first/preferred language. Through most processes, educational professionals are measuring potential or abilities and not English language-specific knowledge.

3. Universal screening: Attempts should be made to find and review talent of all students as frequently as possible. The minimum recommendation for universal screenings is twice in elementary school and once in middle school. These assessments should test new students and retest students who previously took assessments if the assessment type is new or more than 2 years old. Universal screenings are a major first step to ensure equity in gifted programming, however, universal screenings alone will not ensure equitable access. This process must be paired with other best practice recommendations such as localized norming to create more representative programs. Front-loading preparation for universal screenings is another recommendation to make programs more equitable. If interested further in learning more

about how to front-load for greater equity, please check out Baltimore City's implementation of logical reasoning lessons in the early grades which is detailed below.

Baltimore City Logical Reasoning Story

City schools have recently seen some success with increasing equitable representation in programming. While many factors can contribute to this positive change, leaders point to inclusion of logical reasoning lessons at the primary grade levels before universal screening. The type of thinking students are exposed to through these lessons is the same thinking they must demonstrate on the cognitive abilities assessments used in universal screening. Based in research, these lessons help provide opportunities and level the playing field for underserved students which aligns with further inclusion in GT programs. Without interventions or support, underserved student groups will continue to be excluded from programs.

4. Research-based normed tools: All tools and methods used in the identification process should be research-based with localized norms which will lead to more equitable programs. Maryland recognizes that giftedness is in all schools, systems, and specific student groups across the state. It is imperative that our tools to identify are aligned with this definition.

5. Ongoing professional learning: Most educators have little or no formalized training in working with gifted/advanced students. Because of the lack of professionals with formalized training, it is imperative that professional development is a top priority. Learning experiences for educators should be ongoing, collaborative, comprehensive, sustained and job embedded. Professional learning should be available to all educators. Differentiated learning experiences for different educational professionals at varying levels of experiences will ensure professional development is appropriate and applicable. The Maryland State Department of Education is happy to partner with schools and systems to provide professional learning experiences tailored to specific needs.

6. Identification matching services: Instruments used to identify students must match the services provided. This ensures potential and abilities are properly supported throughout the educational process. The first scenario below shows a program that doesn't match identification and services. This program is not benefiting and supporting students appropriately. The second scenario demonstrates identification matching services which will ultimately support growth of abilities.

Scenario 1

Identification Tools	Services
MCAP Reading	William and Mary Science Units taught by Gifted Resource teacher
MCAP Math	
CogAT	
Teacher Survey	
Student portfolio in math and reading	

The identification tools above focus on more of a general intellectual ability, while the only gifted service provided is specific to science. If the other content area units were included or other research-based methods in the other content areas were utilized, then this would be a match.

Scenario 2

Identification Tools	Services
MCAP Math NNAT3 Math Teacher Survey Student portfolio in math	Compacted math curriculum

Both the identification and services are focused on core area abilities in mathematics.

7. Talent development is gifted programming: Maryland's definition of a gifted student is broad and captures student potential to show or demonstrate gifted abilities in the future. Because of this, students who show potential qualify for talent development programming under the gifted education umbrella. Talent development programming helps cultivate individual student skills, preparing them for inclusion in the traditional gifted program later on. Students who qualify for talent development gifted programs demonstrate some abilities in limited areas but do not fully demonstrate readiness for success in the traditional gifted program. Special attention and support should be placed on the most underserved students in each community, as they may not have been given opportunities to show or grow their talents previously. This programming ultimately levels the playing field and affords all students an equitable opportunity to participate. Specific companion family/community programming should be developed alongside student programming, as research continuously proves the importance and value of family support in talent development programs.

8. Early identification: Talent development programming should start in the earliest grade level served, while traditional programming may start in later grades. Informal identification of talents and differentiation based on needs should happen as early as possible and be continuous. Educators should understand that students enter school with varying levels of abilities and opportunities to explore talents. Specific programming to provide equitable support should remain a focus of early identification and services.

9. Continuous review: Although there may be formalized universal screening check points, identification should be fluid and flexible to ensure students aren't missed through processes. Schools are transient communities, so students benefit from identification procedures each school year. If possible, proactive LEA efforts should be made to find potential and abilities in all grade levels.

10. Elevate student voice: Student voice should be included in both identification and service practices. Ultimately, a major goal of gifted programming in Maryland is to cultivate talents. Understanding and developing talents involves working closely with students to build on goals and passion areas. Student voice can be demonstrated through the identification process with interviews, student chosen work samples, narratives, and general choice in presentation of tasks and ideas. Student voice can be demonstrated through services provided by progress portfolios, student led conferences, and classroom project/lesson choice.

11. GT local advisory group: These councils should be created and maintained at the local level to ensure stakeholder engagement throughout GT processes. Advisory actions should include but are not limited to review and recommendation based on effectiveness criteria established by the LEA, parent/community outreach and engagement, and other advocacy activities at the local level to strengthen programming. Below is example guidance for parent groups wanting to organize for the best interests of gifted students.

[Starting and Sustaining a Parent Group to Support Gifted Children](#)

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Exceptional Performance: Demonstrated abilities beyond what is typical. Performing two years above grade level in any particular subject is an example of exceptional performance.

Talent Development: Programming that attempts to find and grow potential or talents of students. Talent development is considered gifted programming. With focus on growth, talent development requires progress monitoring with supports over a defined period of time.

Growth Trajectory: A specific progress monitored path or defined period of time where growth is measured to help make identification and service decisions.

Abilities Tests: Cognitive aptitude assessments which measure certain reasoning skills.

Achievement Tests: Tests of developed skill or knowledge.

Portfolio: A collection of student work.

Structured Protocols: Performance and observation protocols that elicit specific behaviors of students.