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## Chapter 1 — Child Identification (Child Find)

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In accordance with federal regulations, Hamden Public Schools (HPS) assumes responsibility for the location, identification, and evaluation of all children from birth through age 21 who require special education and related services. All children who are suspected of having a disability and who are in need of special education are part of the child find process in our District.

This includes students who are:

- advancing from grade to grade;
- enrolled by their parents in private elementary or private secondary schools, including religious schools located in our District (regardless of the severity of their disability)
- wards of the state and children who are highly mobile, such as migrant and homeless children.

In addition, HPS identifies students (Kindergarten through Grade 12) who may be gifted or talented.

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### ❖ Role of the Planning and Placement Team

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The Planning and Placement Teams (PPT) in each of our schools ensure that the student meets the eligibility requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as amended in 2004 ("IDEA") and state regulations.

In all cases, the Planning and Placement Team will **not** determine that a student has a disability if the suspected disability is because of a lack of instruction in reading or math. If the student is not proficient in English, our Planning and Placement team will **not** identify the student as disabled if the limited English proficiency is the cause for the suspected disability.

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### ❖ Child Identification Process

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HPS has a child identification process that includes the location, identification, and evaluation of a child suspected of having a disability or suspected of being gifted and talented. Our Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) department coordinates the child identification process. The department and its staff use a variety of community resources and conduct many systematic activities in our efforts to identify children requiring special services. Our PPS staff members consult with appropriate representatives of students attending private schools located in our District such as the student's parents, teachers, and administrators of those schools in carrying out this process. The District assures that this process for students attending private or religious schools located in our District is comparable to activities undertaken for students with disabilities in our public schools.

## **Identification of Children between the Ages of Birth to Age Three**

The State's early intervention system, the Connecticut Birth to Three System under the IDEA, Part C, (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the federal special education law) is responsible for identifying and providing services to children between the ages of birth and age three who are eligible to receive such services due to developmental delays or documented physical or mental conditions that have a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. Because of their overlapping responsibilities, the State Department of Education and the Connecticut Birth to Three System have an interagency agreement intended to ensure that children with disabilities are provided needed services in a timely manner. The State Department of Education asks Districts to ensure that children between the ages of birth to three are referred to the Connecticut Birth to Three System for an evaluation. Therefore, when our District becomes informed of a child between the ages of birth to three who has or may have a disability, we will either (a) make a child referral directly to the Connecticut Birth to Three System via the statewide toll-free number and/or (b) provide the parent with the information so that they can make the referral themselves.

Parents may opt out of and/or opt not to be referred to the Connecticut Birth to Three System. They may request an evaluation from the District to determine if their child has a disability that may require special education. These parents are entitled to an evaluation from our District, even if the child is between the ages of birth to age 3. Our District is responsible for providing an evaluation but is not responsible for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for eligible children until the child is age 3. In such circumstances, no child or family should be instructed to wait for an evaluation until their child turns age 3.

## **Transition to Special Education from the Connecticut Birth to Three System**

The purpose of transition planning for children in the Connecticut Birth to Three System is to ensure that eligible children and their families experience a smooth and effective transition from the Connecticut Birth to Three System to our District.

- The District receives child specific information from the Connecticut Birth to Three System on those children who have been determined eligible and are receiving early intervention services. The District has a system of collecting and maintaining this data and other child specific information in order to track children receiving early intervention services over time to ensure that they are timely evaluated and provided a FAPE by age 3.
- The District has an assigned transition contact that is the primary person responsible for working with the Connecticut Birth to Three System and their programs on transition as well as one or more individuals who will attend all 90-day transition conferences convened by the Connecticut Birth to Three System. The District has the capacity to ensure the availability of school personnel to attend 90-day transition conferences throughout the calendar year – including during the summer months.
- The District will schedule a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting to discuss the referral of a child to the District. The District will schedule the PPT meeting sufficiently early (preferably soon after the 90-day transition conference) to ensure that an eligible child will receive a FAPE no later than their third birthday. Identification of PPT meeting dates can be a part of the discussion at the 90-day transition planning conference and a component of the child's written transition plan

- developed at the transition planning conference with the birth to three program, the family and the District.
- The District ensures that the child's birth to three providers are part of the PPT decision-making process and that the child's birth to three information, including the child's Individualized Family Service Plan ("IFSP") is used in the decision-making process.
  - If the child is scheduled to transition from the Birth to Three program to the District, and that child turns three years of age during the summer months, the District will determine if the child is eligible for a FAPE and whether the child requires extended school year services (ESY). If the child is eligible for the provision of FAPE and requires ESY services, the District will ensure the implementation of the IEP no later than the child's third birthday, regardless of the fact that this occurs during the summer months. If it is determined that the child is eligible for FAPE and does not require ESY services, then the IEP will be implemented on the first day of school.
  - The Department of Education and the Connecticut Birth to Three System agree that late referrals to the Birth to Three System (33 months and older) should be made simultaneously to our District and the Connecticut Birth to Three System with the ultimate goal of ensuring that these children, if eligible, are provided with FAPE by their third birthday.
  - In cases of children who are referred to the District at 34 or 35 months of age, the ultimate goal is to ensure that all eligible children are provided with a FAPE no later than their third birthday. In situations where that may not be possible, a "reasonable standard" would be the 45 school day rule – so that no more than 45 school days should pass from the date of referral to the implementation of the child's IEP, if that child is eligible for FAPE. Thus, a referral for a child who is close to age three may result in IEP services initiated after the child's third birthday.

## **Identification of Children below School-Age**

For children who are not involved in the Connecticut Birth to Three System even under the age of 3, our District conducts on-going child find activities which include community screenings as well as individual child specific screenings to determine if a child requires further evaluation (and, to determine the eligibility of children age 3 and above for special education and related services.)

Through this process, children who may require special education services are referred to the Planning and Placement Team for consideration for further evaluation. Parents and other referring parties may also contact the special education department to refer a child to a PPT.

## **Identification of School Age Students (5-21 Years of Age)**

- **Transfer Students**

The principal or designee in each of our schools reviews the records of any new student transferring from another school system whether transferring from a District within Connecticut or from out of state. If the records indicate that the student has been identified as a student with disabilities and that the student requires special education and related services, the student is immediately enrolled in school and, in consultation with parents, given an appropriate program including services comparable to those described in the student's IEP. If the Individualized Education Program from the sending school requires revision, a Planning and Placement Team meeting is held at the earliest possible opportunity to develop, revise, or adopt and implement a new IEP. For students

transferring from another state, our District may also conduct an evaluation if determined to be necessary and develop a new IEP, if appropriate.

- **Currently Enrolled Students**

Students attending Hamden Public Schools receive the ongoing attention of professional personnel to help support their successful learning. Students whose behavior, attendance, or progress in school is considered unsatisfactory, at a marginal level of acceptance (i.e., potential drop-outs), or are suspended repeatedly, are promptly referred to a PPT by completing the District's standard referral form and notifying the parents within 5 school days of the referral by completing the Notice of Referral to PPT. A PPT is scheduled to discuss the referral concerns and to decide how the PPT will proceed. Such students are identified through anecdotal records, conversations with parents, individual performance records and standardized test results (including, but not limited to, the Connecticut Mastery Tests or Connecticut Academic Performance Tests).

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## ❖ **Alternative Procedures and Programs Prior to PPT Referral**

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Before our District personnel refer a student to a Planning and Placement Team, alternative procedures and programs in regular education are explored and implemented where appropriate. Each school in our District has a team that provides a variety of alternative strategies to the teacher. Currently, this team is called the SAM team (SAM refers to the Student Assistant Model). Parents are encouraged to collaborate with the teacher and other involved staff during this time.

Parents or school personnel may request assistance from the school's SAM team. The team works collaboratively with the classroom teacher and parents to develop and document strategies to assist the student within the regular education program. If the student's problems or difficulties persist, a prompt referral to a PPT is made.

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## ❖ **Referral Form**

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A standard referral form is used to document all referrals to the Planning and Placement Team. This form is available at the Pupil Personnel Services Department or in each of our District's schools. Concerned parents and/or staff may complete the form. Once the form is completed, it is given to the school administrator or his/her designee. The completion of this referral form initiates the Planning and Placement Team process.

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## ❖ **Gifted and Talented Students**

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Students attending a public school in Hamden in grades Kindergarten-12 who may be gifted and talented are identified, referred, and evaluated using a process described in the Chapter 1 Appendix. While identification is mandated under state law, programming is permissive. Hamden provides services, as described in this appendix, to those students identified as gifted and talented in grades 5 through 8.

The definition of students requiring special education includes students identified as academically gifted and or talented in the arts. In Hamden, this includes any exceptional child who has extraordinary learning ability or outstanding talent in the creative arts, the development of which requires programs or services beyond those ordinarily provided in the regular school programs but which may be provided through specially designed instruction as part of the public school program.

The academically gifted portion of the "Talented and/or Academically Gifted" (TAG) falls within the PPS department of HPS. The "talented" portion falls under the Fine Arts department and will not be addressed in this manual. Academically gifted means a child identified by the TAG team as (1) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (2) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the regular school program in order to realize their intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. The term includes children with extraordinary learning ability.

"Extraordinary learning ability" means a child identified by the TAG team as academically gifted on the basis of either performance on relevant standardized measuring instruments, or demonstrated or potential achievement or intellectual creativity or both. The term refers to the top five per cent of children so identified

### **State mandated to identify gifted students grades 1-12, no mandate to program.**

All school districts in Connecticut are required by law to develop and implement a process for determining which students attending district public schools in grades K-12 are eligible for identification as academically gifted. These plans have been submitted and approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Hamden Public Schools has a tiered plan of identification depending on the grade of the referred student. While the main identification for TAG occurs each spring, there is also a screening for students in grades 5-8 new to Hamden Public Schools each fall. The process begins when a student's teacher recommends him or her for consideration for TAG.

While identification is required on an annual basis, programming is permissive and is left to the discretion of each district.

### **Identification process overview**

- Students are referred for consideration in grades K-2 by their teacher. Eligibility is determined by the following: teacher interview, work samples, rating scales, and the administration of an individual intelligence test. Prior to the administration of the intelligence test, a meeting is scheduled with the parents of the students who have progressed to this step. The purpose of this meeting is to gain written consent for said test administration. Depending upon the student's age, either the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) or the Wechsler Individual Scale of Intelligence (WISC) is administered by the school psychologist assigned to the student's school.
- Students in grades 3-8 are also referred for consideration by their teacher. Eligibility is determined by the following: teacher interview, work samples, rating scales and the student's performance on the District-wide assessment (i.e., Blue Ribbon computer-based assessment).

- Formal identification does not take place in grades 9-12, students participate in leveled and advanced courses

**In the fall, each building's school psychologist screens new students recommended for review by staff, (this may result in requesting parental permission to conduct the language-based subtests of the WISC IV on students who may be gifted).**

**TAG Program structure:**

Elementary School

- Grades K-4: no direct service
- Grades 5-6:
  - Students are pulled out of their home school one day a week to attend a TAG class. They report to their home school in the morning and are shuttled to Bear Path. Students return to schools at end of day to confer with their teachers.
  - The TAG teachers also do push-in service at each building one half day per week.

Middle School

- Grades 7-8: Students identified as academically gifted are grouped together in English, Social Studies and Science (level 5)

High School

- Grades 9-12: Students participate in level 9 courses, AP courses and independent study programs (no additional identification conducted)

**TAG Teachers:**

- Conduct TAG classes at Bear Path School.
- Travel to each elementary school to conduct push-in classes.
- Facilitate all scheduling (pullouts and push-ins) and transportation.
- Conduct a yearly open house and parent conferences and complete TAG "report cards."
- Monitor their budget and order supplies.
- Plan field trips.
- Communicate with administrators and teachers.
- Participate in Teacher Evaluation process.
- Conduct identification process in conjunction with the Director of Pupil Personnel Services or his or her designee.
- Monitor district-wide administered assessments and CMT results of TAG students.
- Plan curriculum and instruction.
- Consult with K-4 teachers who have identified TAG students in their classes.
- Participate in university-approved studies.

**TAG Activities (partial listing):**

- Group activities
- Group investigation
- Individual investigations
- Literature connections
- CMT alignment
- Recommended divergent activities for all classes
- Theme activities for enrichment classes
- Integrated use of technology