Highly Capable Education

Programmatic and Procedural Information

Program Goals and Experiences

Mead School District (MSD) is committed to identifying and providing for the intellectual, social, and emotional needs of our highly capable students in preparing them academically for college and career readiness, as part of their access to a basic education. (RCW 28A.185.020, WAC 392-170-012)

As a district where inclusive practices are a key strategy, we believe that all students should be provided with the interventions, supports, and accommodations they need to learn at high levels. With this vision, we provide a continuum of services to identified students in grades K-12 to support social emotional development alongside intellectual growth. Our mission matches the state MTSS model of layered support. Students with highly capable learning plans access universal, targeted, and/or intensive and individualized learning experiences.

Mead School District offers highly capable students the following experiences, which include accelerated coursework, classroom grouping, independent study, enrichment, and college partnerships:

- Building-Based Support: Available for K-12 highly capable students who are identified as highly capable in one area, or those who qualify for but decide to not attend the Full-Time Gifted Magnet Program. Every school offers building-based support. These can include: in-class differentiation, targeted grouping, acceleration, enrichment, honors and AP courses.
- Full-Time Gifted Magnet Program: A full-time option for eligible highly capable students (identified in both the verbal and quantitative domains, and have a need for an alternate classroom experience), currently offered in intermediate grades. This program is housed at Farwell Elementary.

Definition

Highly capable students are students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present not only in the general populace, but also are present within all protected classes. (WAC 392.170.035)

Students who are highly capable may possess, but are not limited to, these learning characteristics (WAC 392-170-036):

1. Capacity to learn with unusual depth of understanding, to retain what has been learned, and to transfer learning to new situations;
2. Capacity and willingness to deal with increasing levels of abstraction and complexity earlier than their chronological peers;
3. Creative ability to make unusual connections among ideas and concepts;
4. Ability to learn quickly in their area(s) of intellectual strength; and
5. Capacity for intense concentration and focus.

Identification Process (RCW 28A.185.030)

The district identification process will apply equitably to all enrolled students and families present in Mead School District. (RCW 28A.185.020) Additionally, annual public notification of parents and students shall be made before any major identification activity in multiple ways including our district website, highly capable website, and district/school newsletters. (WAC 392-170-042)

Screening: MSD will conduct universal screening at second and fifth grades to find students who may be identified for highly capable services. The purpose of universal screening is to include students who traditionally are not referred for highly capable services. Students discovered during universal screening may need further assessment to determine whether the student is eligible for placement in a program for highly capable students. At least two student data points will be considered during universal screening, those being the individual domains (quantitative, verbal, and non-verbal) of the CogAT, as well as MAP scores.

Referrals (WAC 392-170-045): A referral process is available for all grade levels not being universally screened. Parental permission must be obtained in writing before assessments to determine eligibility are conducted for any referred students. Referrals are open for the month of February during each academic year. To refer a student for assessment, members may complete the online referral forms found on the district website and submit electronically. Referral forms will also be available at the district office for those who are unable to submit an electronic form. Referrals must be received by March 1 of each academic year to be assessed in spring of that year.

- Teachers, parents, or community members may refer any student through grade 12 for assessment.
- Secondary students may also self-refer.
- Assessment for all referred students takes place annually each year in late March-April.

Assessment: Written or electronic parental permission will be obtained prior to conducting additional assessments to determine eligibility for highly capable services. (WAC 392-170-047) Our district practices for identifying the most highly capable students will prioritize equitable identification of low-income students. (RCW 28A.185.020) Students identified for further consideration through the universal screening process will be assessed using multiple objective criteria. (WAC 392-170-055)

The assessment process will be based upon a review of each student's capability as shown by multiple criteria, from a wide variety of sources and data, intended to reveal each student's unique needs and capabilities. MSD uses a portfolio of evidence to determine a student's need for the continuum of highly capable services. Three forms of evidence are compiled into the portfolio (aptitude scores, achievement scores, and qualitative input from families and staff).

- **Aptitude (Natural ability)**
    - Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT): automatically qualify with a score at 95th percentile OR top 5% of same age, experience and environment (*local norms - see Item b on pg.3)
- **Achievement (Testing on what has been taught/learned)**
    - Standardized Achievement Tests
        - MAP

        - SBA
- **Qualitative (Characteristics/Descriptions/Samples)**
    - WIDA Access (evidence of rapid rate of language acquisition)
    - Renzulli Scales
    - Culturally, Linguistically, and Economically Diverse (CLED) Learner Scales
    - Family Survey
    - Additional Work Samples

MSD has identification procedures for our highly capable program that are clearly stated and implemented, using the following criteria (WAC 392-170-055):

> a) The district uses multiple objective criteria to identify students who are among the most highly capable. Multiple pathways for qualifications must be available and no single criterion may disqualify a student from identification;
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> b) The district must base highly capable selection decisions on consideration of criteria benchmarked on local norms, but the district will not use local norms as a more restrictive criterion than national norms at the same percentile;
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> c) The district will not use subjective measures, such as teacher recommendations or report card grades to screen out a student from assessment or to disqualify a student from identification. However, the district may use these data points alongside other criteria during selection to support identification; and
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> d) To the extent practicable, the district must give screening and assessments in the native language of the student. If native language screening and assessments are not available, the district must use a nonverbal screening and assessment.

The district will record test results in the student's cumulative file. Any screenings or additional assessments will be conducted within the school day and at the school the student attends. On a case-by-case basis and with the consent of the parent or guardian, the district may offer student screenings or additional assessment opportunities during the summer, outside of school hours, or at an alternative site.

Additional considerations:

- Multilingual Learners: In addition to ability and achievement assessments, the WIDA ACCESS assessment is used to evaluate students whose first language is not English to determine their ability for rapid language acquisition, which can be a characteristic of highly capable learners.
- Students with Special Education support: Students who qualify for highly capable services and also qualify for either special education services or a 504 plan are often referred to as twice-exceptional students. Additional data available for students with IEPs may be used in the identification process when relevant to determine a need for highly capable program services.

- Retesting: Students may retest given the following conditions:
    - It has been over 6 months since the student last tested, and
    - The student is enrolled in at least one grade level higher than when they last tested.

Selection (WAC 392-170-075): A multidisciplinary selection committee composed of a district administrator, an individual who can interpret cognitive and achievement test results, a teacher, and any additional professionals MSD deems desirable, will review data that has been collected for each of the referred students. (WAC 392-170-070) The multidisciplinary selection committee will evaluate the results of the universal screening, any further individual student assessment, and any available district data and make the selection decision based on:

- A preponderance of evidence from the profile data demonstrating that a student is among the most highly capable; and
- Evidence of clear need for highly capable services.

A single assessment score or indicator will not prevent a student's selection for highly capable services. However, individual pieces of evidence, if strong enough, can indicate that the student would benefit from these services. If properly validated tests are not available, the professional judgment of the qualified district personnel shall determine eligibility of the student based upon evidence of cognitive and/or academic achievement. (WAC 392-170-060)

Additionally, MSD will:

- Notify parents of the students selected. Parents will receive a full explanation of the procedures for identification, an explanation of the process to exit a student from the program, the information on the district's program, and the options that are available to identified students.
- Obtain parental permission to place identified students in the program before any special services and programs are provided to the student.

New/Transfer Students: Out-of-district transfer students that have qualified in that district's highly capable program are not automatically enrolled. Building administrative assistants are to notify the Highly Capable Program Director if a student is marked as highly capable on our registration documents. Test scores and placement letters from the other district may be used as long as they meet our placement criteria. Students may need to re-test in MSD, which utilizes the same assessment process as described above. New students or transfer students will be processed for identification within three months of enrollment.

Appeals (WAC 392-170-076)

Parents/legal guardians have the right to appeal the multidisciplinary selection committee's decision. Individuals appealing the multidisciplinary selection committee's decision must submit a completed appeal form within two weeks of being notified in order to request a review of the identification decision. In order to be considered, the appeal must contain a written explanation indicating why the appeal is being filed and, to support reconsideration, provide additional new evidence of significantly advanced cognitive or academic levels. Any additional assessments must be initiated by the

multidisciplinary selection committee. Assessments conducted by any agency other than MSD will not be considered in the appeals process.

The multidisciplinary selection committee will review the student's file, assessment profile data, and additional evidence provided in the request for appeal. The decision of the multidisciplinary selection committee may include:

- Upholding the original decision of the multidisciplinary selection committee;
- Reversing the decision of the multidisciplinary selection committee.

The multidisciplinary selection committee will make a decision within 30 school days after receipt of written request for reconsideration, and will notify the parent/legal guardian of the decision in writing. The decision of the multidisciplinary selection committee is the final decision.

Exit Process

A parent/guardian may request that a student be withdrawn from highly capable services. In such cases, the parent/guardian will make the request at the building level, and the building principal and/or designee will forward the request to the Highly Capable Program Director. After a conference with the Highly Capable Program Director, if a parent/legal guardian still wishes to decline further services for his/her student, the student will be exited and will no longer receive highly capable services.

Program Design

For Highly Capable students, access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education. (WAC 392-170-012) MSD will make a variety of appropriate program services to students who participate in the program. Once services are started, the district will provide a continuum of services to identified students in grades K- 12. The district will keep on file a description of the educational programs provided for identified students. Services are reviewed annually for each student to ensure that the services are appropriate. (WAC 392-170-078, WAC 392-170-080)

The district will offer highly capable students the following programs:

- Elementary: In grades K-5, service-delivery options include but are not limited to differentiation, enrichment, acceleration, and participation in a full-time gifted magnet program. Each year, teachers will establish an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for any student identified as highly capable, in collaboration with parent(s)/guardian(s). This plan will outline goals, identify services, and monitor student progress over the school year. The services determined could be delivered in a general education classroom, small-group instructional setting, or magnet program based on student numbers, student needs, staffing, and/or available resources. Additional enrichment opportunities may be provided as an extra-curricular opportunity.

- Secondary: In grades 6-12, service-delivery options include but are not limited to differentiation, enrichment, and/or acceleration. Secondary schools may provide the service-delivery options through one or more of the following means: general education classrooms, advanced programs, extra-curricular clubs and academic competitions, course acceleration, and/or partnerships with outside agencies.