Meridian Public School District

Gifted Education Program Handbook

MERIDIAN
PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

2025-2026

Program Description

The Meridian Public School District Gifted Education Program is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of second through sixth grade intellectually gifted students. Each Explore student receives a **minimum of five hours of instruction per week** with a certified Gifted education teacher.

Mission Statement

The mission of Meridian Public School District (MPSD) Gifted Education Program is to offer uniquely qualitatively different educational experiences to gifted students that are not available in the regular classroom. The specific needs of gifted students are met through collaborating and flexible grouping of like-minded peers. These uniquely different programs are required to enable gifted students to realize their abilities and potential contributions to self and society.

Philosophy

Meridian Public School District's Gifted Education Program (GEP) believes gifted learners are identifiable within all ethnic, geographic, and socio-economic groups. Our GEP provides differentiated learning outcomes for all gifted students, recognizes individual strengths and needs, and prepares them to compete in a global community.

Gifted Goals for Learning

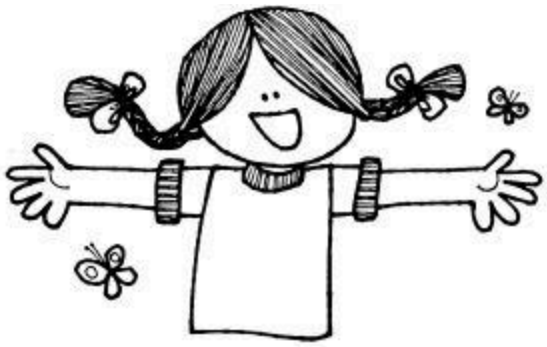
The basic goals for the Gifted Education Program are to:

- Develop thinking skills, problem solving skills, and creative thinking skills
  Enhance ability to apply process skills when engaged in educational opportunities in multiple settings
- Strengthen communication skills
- Utilize problem-based learning and research to expand areas of strength and interest
  Provide an environment and guidance which promotes self-perception, self-direction, leadership skills and group dynamics
- Develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, environments, values, thoughts and philosophies
- Increase knowledge and appreciation of great people, literature, and visual and performing arts
- Promote in-depth studies and guidance of career opportunities
- Initiate exploration of the worlds of science, futurism, and decision making
- Increase awareness of responsibility to one's self, school, community, nation, and the world
- Design exciting opportunities for independent study

Scope and Sequence

The intellectually gifted curriculum is based on a comprehensive range of specific thinking skills, techniques, and processes essential to gifted education. Age-appropriate skills are introduced, practiced, and extended through units of study and special learning activities in grades 2-6. The following competencies will be taught in the gifted classroom: **thinking skills, creativity, information literacy, success skills, affective skills, and communication skills.**

Defining Giftedness



Adapted from the Jackson Public Schools Teacher/ Administrator Gifted Handbook)

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."

It is wise to understand that giftedness often is characterized by "asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and a heightened capacity for intensity combine, thereby creating inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. Because this asynchrony (or uneven development) increases with higher intelligence, it renders the gifted particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally." (The Columbus Group, 1991, as cited in L. Silverman: *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*, Love Publishing Co., 1993)

Experts agree that effective instruction of gifted students takes place in an environment that

- permits and encourages gifted students to develop their potential through interaction with intellectual peers;
- encourages and nurtures inquiry, flexibility, decision making, thinking skills, and divergent thinking; and
- encourages the use of multiple intelligences.

The curriculum and its deliver system must address the characteristics and needs of the gifted learner, both cognitive (thinking) and affective (social and emotional), which include:

- dealing with perfectionism;
- understanding giftedness;
- developing relationship skills;
- encouraging self reflection;
- encouraging risk taking;
- nurturing inquisitiveness or curiosity;
- addressing an extraordinary learning capability or complexity;
- addressing a preference for intuitive, holistic, and diverse interests; and
- searching for meaning and connectedness through real life problem solving.

*Uneven development. For example, motor skills may lag behind cognitive and conceptual abilities, particularly in younger children. Thus, these children can visualize what they want to do, yet their motor skills may not allow them to achieve their goal. This can result in intense frustration and emotional outbursts. In addition, since the cognitive skills are more pronounced than other areas of development, students may use these to deal with the world, while social and emotional skills remain undeveloped.

The Bright Child vs. the Gifted Learner

The Bright Child	The Gifted Learner
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Is attentive	Is mentally and physically involved
Has good ideas	Has wild and silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail; elaborates
Is in the top group	Is beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
Needs 6-8 repetitions for mastery	Needs 1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys schools	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good at memorizing	Good guesser
Enjoys straightforward, sequential	Thrives on complexity
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with his/her own learning	Is highly self-critical

Janice Szabo, *Challenge*. Good Apple, Inc., 1989

Programming

The Meridian Public School District provides a program of enrichment for intellectually gifted students in grades two through six. This program complies with the Mississippi Department of Education gifted regulations and state mandate requiring that a group of all intellectually gifted students is provided services by a properly endorsed teacher in a self-contained room for a required minimum of 240 minutes per week. The recommended time for gifted instruction is 300 minutes (including planning time) per week.

The activities in the gifted class shall develop and enhance the process skills in the outcomes document, the teaching strategies notebook, and the required components of the gifted program standards document. Some of the activities shall be short-term exploratory activities that introduce students to ideas and concepts not normally covered in the regular education program. The activities shall enhance the integration of advanced content and individual student interests by utilizing higher-level thinking skills, creative problem-solving, critical thinking skills, research skills, personal growth, human relations exercises, leadership skills, and creative expression. Activities shall also create an appreciation for the multicultural composition of the school and community.

The Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989 requires teachers of the gifted to provide a gifted program that meets the individual needs of the gifted students being served. The recommended class size of each class in grades 2-6 is 8-12 students. While local districts have flexibility in the operation of programs, general education class size as mandated in the accreditation standards is inappropriate for gifted classes. The integrity of the program shall be maintained. Districts scheduling gifted classes with more than 15 students will be required to submit justification to the MDE. Districts shall electronically submit schedules of all gifted education program teachers to the MDE by February 1 and September 1 each year.

As stated in the Gifted Education policy for Meridian Public School District, students may be screened for the Explore (Intellectually Gifted Program) in the first and third grade and are limited to two additional opportunities to be tested for the Explore program in grades 2-6.

Referral to Placement

Referral for the gifted education program is based on consideration of performance in the general classroom, potential ability, test performance, maturity, creativity, and leadership potential. While grades and/or achievement test scores might be an indicator of giftedness, by the MDE regulations, neither classroom behavior, grades, or achievement test scores may not be used to eliminate a student from the identification process. A student may be referred by the parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self, or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. The person initiating the referral shall sign the referral form and date it. Once the referral has been initiated, signed and dated, only the Gifted Local Survey Committee or parent can stop the identification process.

Referral Procedure (Policy IDDEAA)

- **Stage 1 - Referral**

<u>Referral Type One</u> - Mass Screening Referral Process addresses those students who are mass screened for gifted eligibility. This process requires all Mississippi districts to screen all students in at least one grade level each year. The MPSD screens all students at the end of first grade and the beginning of third grade. Districts should use a normed group measure of intelligence in the Mass Screening Referral Process. This process should assist in identifying students in underrepresented populations. Students who obtain a full-scale score at or above the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall move forward in the referral process. Students who scored at or above the 85th percentile but lower than the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall be subjected to an *Special Considerations for Gifted Identification Checklist* (formerly *Emerging Potential Checklist)*. If these students meet the criteria on the checklist, they shall move forward in the referral process.

The next step in the process will consist of the collection of substantiated student data obtained through the use of other objective and subjective measures.

A student shall satisfy two of the following additional criteria before moving forward to the Local Survey Committee (LSC) Review of Referral Data Stage:

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.

<u>Referral Type Two</u> - Individual Referral Process addresses those students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility. The Individual Referral Process is used to identify students in grades 2-6.

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.

For the purposes of the assessment timeline, referrals shall begin on the day that a signed and dated student referral is submitted by anyone believing that the student may be intellectually gifted. The student should be assessed within 90 days of the receipt of the signed referral form.

Parents may choose to have their child independently assessed by a licensed psychometrist or examiner. The student shall satisfy the minimally acceptable criteria on the measures used. In addition, the child must satisfy at least three of the criteria noted above before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data Stage.

Special Considerations for Gifted Identification
The *Special Considerations for Gifted Identification Checklist* (Appendix B), formerly the *Emerging Potential Checklist*, makes provisions for certain factors that may require special considerations when inappropriate instruments are used during the assessment process. All students should be considered when using the Special Considerations for Gifted Identification Checklist. These students shall be given special consideration(s) during the gifted identification process.

The LSC shall make the decision as to the possibility that the student could be eligible for special consideration for gifted assessment.Students who have satisfied criteria on the *Special Considerations for Gifted Identification Checklist* (formerly *Emerging Potential 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

Identification criteria, as approved by the MDE on the local district's Gifted Education Program Proposal, must be satisfied for a student to be ruled eligible by the LSC for the intellectually gifted education program.

- **Stage 2 - School Site LSC Review**

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.

- **Stage 3 - Parental Permission for Testing**

At this time, district personnel shall obtain written parental permission for testing. District personnel shall also notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA.

- **Stage 4 - Individual Intelligence Assessment**

The assessment stage is the individual test of intelligence, which shall be administered by a licensed examiner. Parents may choose to have their child independently assessed by a licensed psychometrist or examiner. The student shall satisfy the minimally acceptable criteria on the measures used. In no case will the examiner be related to the student being tested. The examiner shall review all available data on the student, whether or not it satisfies minimal identification criteria, and use that information to select the most appropriate test of intelligence. Standard operating procedures should be followed during the selection and administration of all assessments as reflected in the examiner's manuals. The examiner shall provide a signed and dated report of the test administration to include testing conditions, scores on all subtests or sub scales, and the strengths and weaknesses of the student. A student must score **at or above the 91st percentile composite/full scale or the 91st percentile on approved sub tests (as per publisher) in order to satisfy eligibility criteria**.

- **Stage 5 - Assessment Report Completed**

District personnel shall write an Assessment Report, which must contain the following 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 - District Level 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. For gifted funding purposes, students shall be marked eligible and assigned to a gifted education program in MSIS by December 1.

Parental Notification

District personnel shall notify in writing the parents of each student tested for the intellectually gifted program about the assessment results. District personnel shall offer to explain any of the results about which the parents have questions. District personnel shall also notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA. After a student has been ruled eligible for one of the gifted programs, written parental permission for placement shall be obtained before the student is placed in the program.

Potentially Twice-Exceptional Students

Students who already have an eligibility ruling under IDEA and are being assessed for an intellectually gifted eligibility, and who did not satisfy all of the required minimal acceptable intellectually gifted eligibility, and 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 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 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.

In-State Gifted Transfers

Students who have a valid Mississippi Gifted eligibility ruling do not have to be re-evalauted. A Mississippi eligibility determination in any of the four areas shall be accepted by all school districts within the state provided the district has a program in the area for which the student has eligibility. Before serving a transfer student in the local gifted education program, districts shall collect a copy of the student's Gifted Eligibility Form, assessment reports, and parental permission to serve.

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 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.

The exception to this policy concerns the Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission (MIC3) rules. MIC3 is an agreement between all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and all U.S. territories and has the force and effect of state statute. MIC3 addresses key educational transitional issues encountered by military families. Students enrolled in a Meridian Public School District from a military family that have been identified as Gifted in a previous district will be automatically enrolled into the Gifted Education Program at that school provisionally for one year after receiving assessment records from the previous district. At the end of the school year, the Local Survey Committee will meet to evaluate reassessment, which should include a plan for the student to satisfy Mississippi eligibility requirements for permanent placement.

Gifted Student Performance

Advanced Placement (AP) Program

The Advanced Placement curriculum at Meridian High offers students a chance to study beyond the traditional secondary classroom. Completing college-level coursework during the year enables AP students to take a national examination in May. Scoring a 3 or above on the 1-5 scale test administered by the College Board affords these AP students freshman-level credit at most colleges and universities.

Annual Reassessment for Continued Placement

A reassessment 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 the Gifted School Site Local Survey Committee. 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-week term. The parents will be notified and

given an opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the decision and develop an intensive plan of action. During this time, the student will continue to participate in the gifted program. The action plan will be reviewed by the reassessment committee and parents every 2 – 3 weeks. 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 and approved by the district level gifted coordinator prior to the student's removal from the program.

If the committee determines that the student should exit gifted education 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
If the parents are not satisfied with the action taken by the reassessment committee, the parents shall, within five (5) school days after the meeting with the LSC, put their concerns in writing and present them to the District Gifted Director. The District Gifted Director will meet with the parent and 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 the classroom teacher. 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 students. Written parental permission must be obtained before the student is placed back in the program..

Withdrawal from Program
If a student wants to withdraw from the gifted program or if a parent feels it is necessary for the student to withdraw, a Gifted Education Program Participation Withdrawal Form must be signed by the parent, the homeroom teacher, the GEP teacher, the principal, and the GEP director. A student who withdraws from a gifted education program may not return to that program for the remainder of the school year. The following year, a parent may submit a written request for their child to resume participation in the Gifted program.

Procedural Safeguards

FERPA
All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All information/data collected as part of the identification process shall be placed in an individual eligibility file for each student.

GEP Contact Person
Each local district superintendent shall appoint a GEP Contact Person. This person is the link between the district and Office of Gifted Education Programs at the Mississippi Department of Education. This is not intended to be an additional administrative position at the district level. It is their responsibility to keep the Superintendent and Director of Special Services informed about the local gifted education program and all communications from the Mississippi Department of Education regarding the gifted education program. For the Meridian Public School District, the GEP Contact Person shall be a licensed Gifted educator that will work in conjunction with the Gifted Director, a licensed administrator.

Gifted Student Files
All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents must be notified of their rights under FERPA. It is the obligation of the local district to ensure that parents understand these rights.

All information/data collected as part of the identification process shall be placed in an individual eligibility file for each student. These files and the information contained therein shall not be placed in the student's cumulative record folder. The files shall be maintained in a separate locked storage facility/file cabinet in a central location within the district, and access to the information shall be restricted to those personnel working directly with the identification process, working directly in the gifted education program, or who have a documented need to know.

Once the referral process begins, parents must be informed of the information/data that is collected. Parents shall have access to these records. Each district shall have a policy that establishes the process that parents shall adhere to when requesting access to these files. Parents shall be made aware of their rights to an explanation of the results of the Assessment Team Report.
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Gifted student files shall be required to contain the following information:
1. Gifted Eligibility Form (GEF) INCLUDE:
    a. Parent Signature
    b. Eligibility/ineligibility mark
    c. Signed by LSC (minimum 2 signatures)
    d. Eligibility date
2. Permission for Gifted Service Form INCLUDE:
    a. Parent Signature
3. Assessment Report
4. Referral Documentation
5. Original Protocols INCLUDE:
    a. Objective measure(s)
    b. Subjective measure(s)
    c. Individual assessment(s)

Intellectually gifted student files shall be held for five (5) years after high school graduation. Prior to shredding, notice will be posted that these records are available to parents or students eighteen (18) years of age or older with proper identification. These records may include

information on referral, assessment, placement, and participation in the gifted education program including authorizations and evidence of eligibility.

Other Considerations

1. State and District Assessments: Each district is responsible for ensuring that students are being serviced during the administration of state and district assessments. A modified or alternate schedule is permitted and made available to the MDE upon request.
2. Gifted Students in Alternative School Settings: Each district is responsible for ensuring that services continue for students who are placed in an alternative school setting. The amount of time and the way services are provided shall be determined by the school district.

LEGAL REF.: MS CODE 37-23-173 through 37-23-181; 07.96 MISS ADMIN CODE; MDE Rule 35.1

Gifted Gala

The "Gifted Gala" is hosted at the school sites each year to celebrate the accomplishments of the Gifted students in the district. This event allows parents to:

- See your child's work
- See what takes place in your child's gifted classroom
- Meet your child's gifted teacher
- Network with parents of other gifted students
- Participate in a survey which evaluates the Meridian Public School District's Gifted Education Program

Parental Involvement Opportunities

Through the Meridian Public School District Gifted Education Parent Advisory Council, parents from all district elementary and middle schools collaborate on various needs and goals of the gifted education program. To find out more about these meetings and how you can help, please contact the Gifted Director at 601-482-8246.

The Mississippi Association for Gifted Children (MAGC) is a state organization for teachers, family members, and other advocates of gifted education. The annual conference offers many valuable opportunities for family members, including keynote speakers on gifted education issues, a wide range of workshops about gifted behaviors and education, and information about learning opportunities for gifted students. Membership in MAGC, of all stakeholders advocating for gifted education, provides important evidence to our state legislators that gifted education is important. Without the support of all stakeholders, "our gifted students may never reach their full

potential, and our state's greatest natural resource will never be fully realized." (MAGC website) Please visit MAGC website, www.magcweb.org for membership, conference information, resources, websites, summer camps, and scholarships/awards available for gifted students.

The Meridian Public School District also offers informative books for family members of gifted students. Gifted Education issues of unique characteristics, social and emotional behaviors, parenting a gifted child, and understanding educational needs are addressed in these books. Each school and the district gifted office has a set of books that are available for you to check out.

Parent Resources

Mississippi Department of Education - Gifted Programs
https://www.mdek12.org/OAE/OEER/ALGP

Mississippi Association for Gifted Children
https://www.magcgifted.org/parent-affilliates

National Association for Gifted Children
http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page
www.hoagiesgifted.org

48 Essential Links for the Parents of Gifted Children
https://www.oedb.org/ilibrarian/50-essential-links-for-the-parents-of-gifted-children/

Parenting and the Gifted Child
https://86f7ea72-412e-4c2a-9e95-e284f5200afe.filesusr.com/ugd/e4c70e_2560fea67494415aa6d3cba532caaee4.pdf

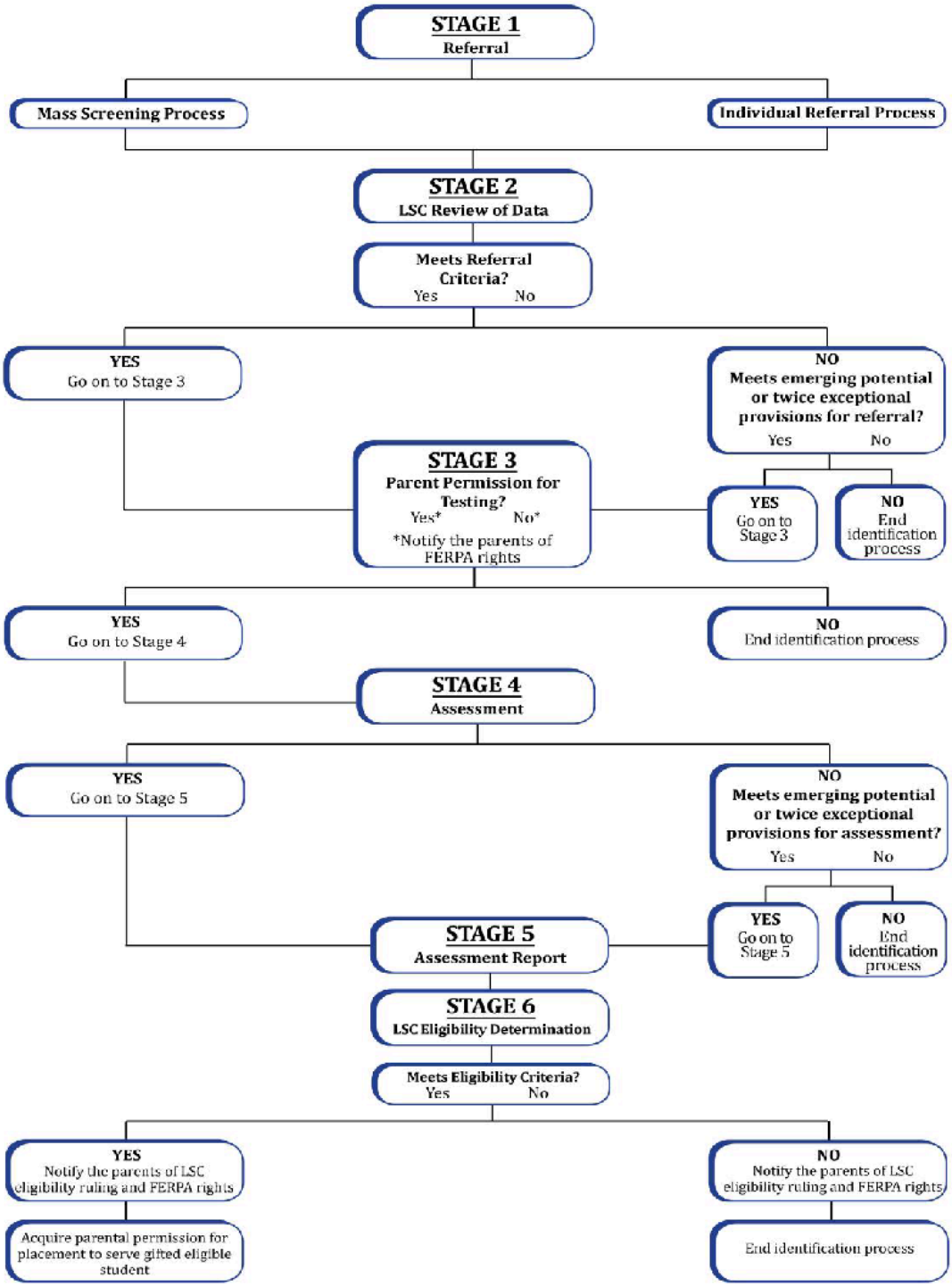
Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted
https://www.sengifted.org/

Davidson Institute
https://www.davidsongifted.org/

Mississippi School of the Arts, Brookhaven, MS
https://msabrookhaven.org/

Mississippi School for Math and Science, Columbus MS
https://themsms.org/

Schematic of Identification Process for Intellectually Gifted Students



For more information, contact:

MPSD Gifted Education Program

Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment - Harris Complex
3951 12th Street, Building K
Meridian, MS 39307

Dr. Steven D. Shadwick, *Director of Assessment and Gifted Education*

Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment - Harris Complex, Building K
601-482-8246
sshadwick@mpsdconnect.org

Alexis Kelly, *Administrative Assistant*

Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment - Harris Complex, Building K
601-483-5854
avkelly@mpsdconnect.org

Cindy Burt, *Psychometrist*

cburt@mpsdconnect.org

MPSD Gifted Educators

Nancy Walton, *Gifted Contact Person/Educator*	**Catherine Dempsey, *Gifted Educator***
Poplar Springs Elementary	Crestwood Elementary and Magnolia Middle
nwalton@mpsdconnect.org	cdempsey@mpsdconnect.org
Morgan Bailey, *Gifted Educator*	**Felix Hall, *Gifted Educator***
Poplar Springs Elementary	Parkview Elementary and Northwest Middle
mbailey@mpsdconnect.org	fahall@mpsdconnect.org
Cristi Clark, *Gifted Educator*	**Katherine Waldrop, *Gifted Educator***
Carver Elementary and Northwest Middle	West Hills Elementary
cclark@mpsdconnect.org	kwaldrop@mpsdconnect.org