



# Sycamore Community Schools Gifted Information

District Plan 2026 -2027



## Introduction

The mission and vision of Sycamore Community Schools is to cultivate a culture of academic excellence through inclusive learning opportunities for the whole child and empower all learners to reach their full potential in a globally competitive world. Our work is based on our core values: academic excellence, diversity and inclusion, community, character, and collaboration.

We believe that all students possess unique characteristics and deserve equitable access to high-level educational opportunities. Gifted learners, in particular, often exhibit advanced cognitive and psychosocial development that distinguishes them from their peers. To address these unique needs, Sycamore has developed a comprehensive continuum of services that provide the rigor and support needed to fully develop each student's strengths and talents.

### Purpose of this Guidebook

This document serves as a resource for families to navigate the gifted identification process and understand the service options available within the Sycamore Community School District. Our goal is to ensure transparency and partnership between the district and our families.

**Contact Information:** For additional information or specific questions regarding our programming, please contact:

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### Table of Contents

State Requirements for Gifted Identification

Approved Assessments

Gifted Testing and Assessment Dates

Screening and Assessment Procedures

Delivery and Continuum of Services

Gifted Resources



## State Requirements for Gifted Identification

The State of Ohio defines a gifted student as one who *performs or shows potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment.*

While Ohio law requires school districts to identify gifted students in grades K–12 and notify parents of such identification, it does not mandate that districts provide gifted services. Sycamore Community Schools exceeds these requirements by offering the continuum of services outlined in this document.

### Areas of Identification

Under the Ohio Revised Code, students may be identified as gifted in the following domains:

#### 1. Superior Cognitive Ability

Students are identified when they achieve any of the following:

- **Ability Test:** Score two standard deviations (SD) above the mean, minus the standard error of measurement (SEM), on an approved standardized individual or group intelligence test:
  - Perform at or above the **95th percentile** on a composite battery of a nationally normed achievement test; or
  - Attains an approved score on a standardized, nationally normed test administered above the student's current grade level.

#### 2. Specific Academic Ability

Students are identified in specific fields—including **Reading, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies**—when they:

- Perform at or above the **95th percentile** on a standardized achievement test in that specific academic field.
- Students may hold gifted identifications in multiple academic fields simultaneously.



### 3. Creative Thinking Ability

Identification in Creative Thinking requires a two-step qualifying process within 24 months:

- **Cognitive Component:** Score one standard deviation above the mean (minus the SEM) on an approved intelligence test.
- **Creativity Component:** Attain a qualifying score on an ODEW-approved test of creative ability or a checklist of creative behaviors.

### 4. Visual and Performing Arts

Identification is available for students demonstrating superior ability in dance, drama, music, or visual arts through a combination of approved behavioral checklists and evaluated performances or portfolios.

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## Reporting and Compliance

- **Annual Reporting:** Sycamore provides a comprehensive report on all identified students to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) each year.
- **Parental Notification:** The district provides formal written notification to families when a student meets the state's criteria for identification in any of the above areas.

## Approved Assessments for Identification

In accordance with Ohio law, Sycamore Community Schools utilizes assessment instruments approved by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) for gifted pre-screening and identification. Once a student is identified as gifted in a specific area, that identification remains a permanent part of their academic record.

### Commonly Used Assessments

#### 1. Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)

The CogAT is an ability assessment used to identify *Superior Cognitive Ability*. It measures reasoning skills across three domains closely linked to academic success



- **Verbal Battery:** Evaluates the ability to use search, retrieval, and comparison processes essential for verbal reasoning.
- **Quantitative Battery:** Measures the ability to reason about patterns and relationships using mathematical concepts.
- **Nonverbal Battery:** Assesses reasoning through novel questions involving spatial and figural content.

**Identification Criteria:** The minimum qualifying score is determined by the state and varies by grade level (typically a composite score of 128 or higher).

## 2. MAP Growth (Measures of Academic Progress)

MAP Growth is a nationally normed, computerized adaptive achievement assessment used in Grades 2–8 to identify *Specific Academic Ability*.

- **Adaptive Learning:** The assessment adjusts in real-time to the student’s performance, identifying both what the student knows and what they are ready to learn next.
- **Identification Criteria:** Students must score at or above the *95th percentile* rank to meet Ohio’s gifted identification criteria in Reading and/or Mathematics.
- **Note on Primary Grades:** MAP is not an ODEW-approved instrument for formal gifted identification in Kindergarten or First Grade.

## Alternative Assessments

Sycamore Community Schools recognizes qualifying scores obtained through external, individual testing performed by a licensed psychologist, provided the instruments are on the ODEW-approved list.

- **Validation:** Scores must meet the specific minimum requirements set by the state for that particular assessment.
- **Reporting:** External scores must be submitted via a professional report and/or certified in writing by the evaluator to be considered for district records.



## Gifted Testing and Assessment Dates

In accordance with Ohio Gifted Operating Standards, Sycamore Community Schools provides at least two assessment opportunities annually for students in grades K–12. Testing may be initiated by whole-grade screenings, parent/teacher referrals, or student requests.

### Cognitive Ability Testing (CogAT)

**Whole-Grade Screenings:** The district assesses every student for *Superior Cognitive Ability* during the winter window in the following grades:

- Grade 4
- Grade 6

**Whole-Grade Screenings:** The district assesses every student for *Superior Cognitive Ability* during the spring window in the following grades:

- Grade 1

**Optional Testing Windows:** Families receive registration details via school newsletters. *Late registrations cannot be accepted due to staffing and material requirements. All optional testing is conducted during the regular school day.*

- **New to District:** An optional fall window is available for new families. The Supervisor of Gifted Programming will provide registration links via email.
- **Winter Window:** Available for students in grades K, 1, 2, 3, and 5.
- **Spring Window:** Available for all students in grades K–8.

### Specific Academic Ability Testing (MAP)

All students in Grades 2–8 participate in MAP Growth Assessments in the fall, winter, and spring. These assessments, administered within the general education classroom, are used to identify giftedness in Reading and Mathematics.



## Testing Accommodations

Sycamore is committed to accurately assessing diverse learners. We use native-language testing (where available) and non-verbal components.

- **IEP/504 Plans:** Students receive all accommodations as detailed in their legal education plans.
- **English Learners (EL):** Personnel consults technical manuals to ensure instrument validity.
  - **Grades K–2:** Exempt from the Sentence Completion subtest (Verbal battery).
  - **Instructions:** Provided in the student’s native language when available.

## Screening Outcomes & Next Steps

After testing is processed, one of three outcomes will occur:

1. **Identification:** The student meets Ohio’s eligibility criteria for gifted identification.
2. **No Identification (Score is Distant):** Families retain the right to request a re-evaluation during any subsequent optional testing window.

**Note:** Information regarding optional testing is communicated via building newsletters. Parents may also contact their school counselor or principal to discuss evaluation requests.

## Screening and Assessment Procedures

Sycamore Community Schools ensures all learners have equal access to screening and assessment for potential gifted identification. The district adheres to the following procedures to maintain transparency and equity.

### Notification and Communication

- **Initial Results:** Once testing and processing are complete, parents receive written notification via email (using the address provided in Final Forms). This notification specifies the student’s area(s) of identification.
- **Internal Coordination:** District personnel responsible for gifted service delivery are notified of all newly identified students.



- **District Gifted Plan:** Fulfills the annual service plan requirement through the continuum of services outlined below.

### **Transfer Students & External Results**

- **Transfer Review:** The district reviews the cumulative records of all incoming students. Families of learners meeting Ohio identification or district service criteria will be notified of their status.
- **Testing Requests:** Parents of transfer students may request gifted testing; assessments will be conducted during the next scheduled testing window or within 90 days of the referral.
- **External Scores:** Sycamore accepts scores from ODEW-approved instruments administered by other districts or trained outside personnel (e.g., private schools, testing facilities). Scores must be submitted in a professional report, certified by the evaluator, and obtained within the last 24 months.

### **Professional Standards**

Assessments are administered by qualified employees trained in specific screening instruments. These personnel have direct access to licensed gifted education specialists to ensure testing integrity and accurate interpretation of results.

### **Appeals Process**

Parents may appeal assessment results, scheduling, or placement decisions. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Superintendent within 30 days of the district's notification of results. The district will work with parents to resolve the appeal in accordance with district timelines and service criteria.

### **Placement, Retention, and Withdrawal**

- **Score Fluctuation:** The district recognizes that student scores may fluctuate over time. Sycamore does not remove students from gifted services solely due to a subsequent score dropping below the initial eligibility criteria.
- **Collaborative Withdrawal:** A student may be withdrawn from an accelerated placement or enrichment program only if the service is determined to be having a negative impact on the student. In such cases, the school team and parents will meet to evaluate the best options for the student's academic and emotional well-being.



## Delivery and Continuum of Services

While Ohio law does not mandate gifted services, Sycamore Community Schools is committed to providing a rigorous, high-quality education that challenges every student. All students meeting district criteria are provided an equal opportunity to access gifted programming.

Through a comprehensive menu of opportunities, students in grades 2–12 may participate in a wide continuum of services designed to meet their unique academic and cognitive needs, including:

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Use of instructional strategies within the general education classroom to extend and enrich the core curriculum.
- **Gifted Program Placement:** Services for students identified with Superior Cognitive abilities and specific academic abilities.
- **Advancement and Acceleration:** Opportunities for both subject-specific and whole-grade advancement and acceleration for qualifying students.
- **Honors Courses:** Advanced coursework designed for junior high and high school students to bridge the gap toward high school rigor.
- **AP Programming:** High-level Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the secondary level for college-preparatory depth.
- **Early Milestones:** Provisions for Early Entrance to Kindergarten and Early Graduation for students demonstrating exceptional developmental and academic readiness.

### Kindergarten & First Grade

#### Superior Cognitive Ability

Sycamore Community Schools identifies students with **Superior Cognitive Ability** based on state-approved assessments; however, formal gifted services do not begin until **second grade**.

- **Record Keeping:** Any qualifying scores from *optional or early testing* are officially recorded in the student's gifted record.



## Superior Cognitive Services

### First Grade

#### Focus: Cognitive Reasoning and Problem-Solving

While *not a formal gifted service*, Sycamore Community Schools provides foundational enrichment to first-grade students during designated portions of the school year. This program is designed to provide students with exposure to high-level thinking strategies through the WIN (What I Need) instructional block.

#### Service Delivery:

- **informal service:** Focusing on targeted enrichment groups designed to challenge and engage students.
- **Instructional Focus:** Led by a Gifted Intervention Specialist (GIS), these sessions focus on developing skills across three core cognitive domains:
  - **Verbal:** Enhancing language-based reasoning and vocabulary.
  - **Quantitative:** Strengthening mathematical logic and numerical relationships.
  - **Nonverbal:** Building spatial awareness and visual-figural problem-solving.
- **Scheduling:** Services occur during WIN/NNI (What I Need/No New Instruction)time. This ensures students receive high-level enrichment without missing core academic content.

### Gifted Superior Cognitive Service Continuum: Grades 2–4

#### Superior Cognitive Ability

Students in grades 2–4 scoring 128 or higher on the CogAT or an ODEW-approved ability assessment receive enrichment services. *The enrichment program is a formal gifted service.*

#### Service Delivery:

- **Instruction:** A **Gifted Intervention Specialist (GIS)** designs and delivers enrichment tailored to each student's unique intellectual and independent learning needs.
- **Scheduling:** Services occur during WIN/NNI (What I Need/No New Instruction)time. This ensures students receive high-level enrichment without missing core academic content.



## Reading Service Continuum

### Gifted Reading Service Continuum: Grades 3–5

#### Specific Academic Ability

Students in grades 3–5 scoring at the 95th percentile or higher on MAP Reading or ODEW-approved achievement assessment receive reading services within the general education English Language Arts (ELA) classroom.

#### Service Delivery:

- **Instructional Model:** Students are clustered into small groups with peers of similar intellectual ability. This allows for peer-to-peer collaboration and deeper discourse during ELA blocks.
- **Teacher Expertise:** Instruction is provided by general education teachers receiving highly qualified professional development in gifted education, focusing on the academic and social-emotional needs of high-ability learners.
- **Curriculum: In 3rd and 4th grade, the district uses** the *Wit & Wisdom* curriculum, which provides a high ceiling for gifted learners. Rather than using simplified texts, *Wit and Wisdom* utilizes complex, authentic literature that demands sophisticated thematic analysis and advanced vocabulary. The curriculum's depth allows gifted students to engage in high-level inquiry, abstract thinking, and multi-layered writing tasks that extend well beyond standard grade-level expectations.
- **Curriculum: In 5th grade, the district uses Bookworms**, a high-quality literacy curriculum that challenges fifth-grade gifted learners through complex, authentic texts and rigorous analytical inquiry. It provides a platform for advanced students to engage in deep thematic discussion and sophisticated evidence-based writing, fostering critical thinking skills.

### Gifted Service Continuum: Grade 6

#### Honors English Language Arts (ELA)

Sixth-grade Honors ELA is a self-selected course designed for students who demonstrate readiness for advanced academic study. While families may choose this placement based on the readiness benchmarks below, formal gifted service is tied to state identification criteria.

**Formal Service Qualification:** Students identified as gifted by the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce (ODEW)—specifically those scoring at the 95th percentile or higher on the Reading MAP or another ODEW-approved achievement assessment—will be formally served in their specific academic area of Reading when they participate in this course.



**Readiness Benchmarks:** To ensure student success, families should consider the following benchmarks during the self-selection process:

- **Reading MAP:** A score at or above the 85th percentile within the last year.
- **CogAT:** A verbal ability score of 120+ on the most recent assessment.
- **Ohio State Test (OST):** A score of Advanced on the most recent ELA assessment.

**Service Delivery & Course Description:**

- **Instructional Model:** Honors students are served through increased rigor, faster pacing, and deeper analysis of complex texts. The curriculum focuses on critical thinking, academic discussion, and sophisticated writing.
- **Depth over Volume:** Expectations focus on the depth of inquiry and level of challenge rather than an increased quantity of assignments.
- **Learner Development:** Students engage in productive struggle, fostering independence, persistence, and an understanding that meaningful success is defined by intellectual growth and effort.

**Gifted Service Continuum: Grades 7–8**

**Honors English Language Arts (ELA)**

In seventh and eighth grade, students engage in authentic learning experiences that emphasize real-world problem-solving, curricular differentiation, and advanced enrichment. These courses are designed for learners with a high aptitude for language arts and the self-management skills needed to keep up with a faster instructional pace.

**Formal Service Qualification:** Sycamore Community Schools provides formal gifted services for students identified with **Specific Academic Ability in Reading**. To qualify for formal service within the Honors ELA environment, a student must meet the following dual criteria:

- **Achievement:** A score at or above the 95th percentile on the Reading MAP (or another ODEW-approved assessment).
- **Ability:** A composite score of 128 or higher on the CogAT (or another ODEW-approved assessment).



### Service Delivery & Course Description:

- **Instructional Model:** Honors ELA 7 and 8 are rigorous, on-grade level courses that provide in-depth instruction in reading, writing, and critical thinking.
- **Cognitive Demand:** The curriculum requires high-level cognitive processing, moving beyond standard comprehension toward sophisticated, multi-faceted analysis.
- **Expectations for Independence:** Students must demonstrate strong task-management skills to successfully navigate concurrent short-term and long-term reading and writing projects.
- **Communication & Literacy:** Learners participate in a wide range of speaking, listening, and viewing activities, alongside complex, multi-paragraph writing assignments designed to refine their academic voice.

## Math Services

### Gifted Math Service Continuum: Grades 3–8

For students with a subject-area identification in math, formal gifted services are provided on a continuum, with placement in a strategically designed math pathway based on a multi-measure math readiness data metric. Detailed information regarding Sycamore’s Advanced Math Pathway is available via [this link](#).

### Service Delivery:

- **Instructional Model:** The instructional model uses a curriculum framework to cover foundational standards at an accelerated pace. In some grades, content is strategically compacted into a single year, allowing students to complete approximately 1.5 years of math standards in one school year.
- **Teacher Expertise:** Instruction is provided by math specialists receiving highly qualified professional development in gifted education, focusing on the academic and social-emotional needs of high-ability learners.
- **Cognitive Demand:** Advanced math is designed to engage high-level students. Students are required to **dive deep into standards**, moving from basic skill practice to complex problem-solving and application. The cognitive focus is on building conceptual understanding and the ability to apply math in real-world contexts, ensuring that the increased pace is matched by a high level of academic rigor and intellectual challenge.



## **Gifted Service Continuum: Grades 9–12**

### **Math, Reading, and Superior Cognitive Ability**

Sycamore Community Schools provides formal gifted services for high school students through a rigorous selection of Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Students identified as gifted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) criteria receive formal service when enrolled in courses corresponding to their area of identification.

#### **Service Delivery:**

- **Instructional Model:** Students are served through high-level coursework that emphasizes depth, complexity, and rapid pacing. These courses are designed to prepare students for collegiate-level inquiry and professional-standard writing and analysis.
- **Formal Service Qualification:** Students identified as gifted in Reading, Math, or Superior Cognitive Ability are considered formally served when they participate in the following advanced pathways:

#### **English Language Arts (Reading Services):**

- English 9 Honors
- English 10 Honors
- AP Language & Composition
- AP Literature & Composition

#### **Mathematics (Math Services):**

- Geometry Advanced
- Algebra II Accelerated
- Pre-Calculus / Calculus Accelerated
- AP Calculus AB & AP Calculus BC
- Multivariable Calculus
- AP Statistics
- Calculus I (CCP)



## Gifted Resources

### Characteristics & Traits of Giftedness

Sycamore Community School recognizes that no gifted individual is the same. Gifted students possess unique patterns and traits. The following chart, linked [here](#), shows the traits that gifted learners may have in common. Gifted learners may not fit into every category. Additionally, a list of characteristics and a graphic of the various areas of giftedness are included.

### Internet Resources

- [Hoagies' Gifted Education Page](#). Exceptionally comprehensive, this site is outstanding for finding the latest research on educating and parenting gifted children. The Gifted 101 section clearly covers common concerns and definitions related to gifted education. Great ideas, great resources! Hoagie is also the webmistress for Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children
- [SENG \(Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted\)](#).
- [National Association for Gifted Children](#). NAGC's mission is to support those who enhance the growth and development of gifted and talented children through education, advocacy,
- [Ohio Association for Gifted Children](#) Since 1952, the Ohio Association for Gifted Children has been working with families and educators to promote the best interests of gifted children. It is the only organization in Ohio dedicated to gifted education advocacy.