

GIFTED EDUCATION HANDBOOK



EAGLE COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Every child deserves a challenging curriculum and the support they need to flourish. Eagle County School District offers gifted and talented programming and supports designed to address the unique strengths, needs and interests of gifted and advanced learners.

Our mission is to identify, support, and challenge gifted and advanced learners through equitable access, responsive programming, meaningful partnerships, and opportunities that foster growth, well-being, and talent development. We believe all gifted and advanced learners should be recognized, supported, and challenged through rigorous opportunities that promote excellence, resilience, and growth.

Our work is grounded in four core beliefs:

Excellence: We pursue high standards and continuous improvement in gifted identification, instruction, and service delivery by reducing barriers and increasing access to gifted programming.

Well-being: We support the emotional, social, and mental health of gifted learners through belonging, connection, and wellness.

Meaningful Partnership: We believe educators, students, families, schools, and community organizations share responsibility for supporting student success.

Growth: We foster curiosity, self-awareness, resilience, and the ongoing development of each student's talents and potential.

Gifted identification is not just a single moment in time. It is part of a continuous educational journey. We identify gifted learners, monitor their growth, and work with school teams and families to ensure students have access to meaningful academic challenge, enrichment, talent development, and social-emotional support.

Gifted students include students with exceptional abilities or potential, including gifted students with disabilities, often referred to as twice-exceptional learners. Our services are available to all eligible students, regardless of race, gender, language, disability, or socioeconomic status.

We value your partnership and look forward to working together to support your child's growth, well-being, and success.

Sincerely,

Eagle County School District Gifted Education Team

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For more information about gifted programming, services, and resources,
visit www.eagleschools.net/departments/gifted-education.

AREAS OF GIFTEDNESS

A gifted child is someone over the age of four* whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one (or more) areas is so exceptional or developmentally advanced they they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior in any of the following areas, either individually or in any combination:

General or Specific Intellectual Ability

Exceptional capability or potential recognized through processes such as memory, reasoning rate, rate of learning, spatial reasoning, problem solving abilities, and/or the ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections.

Specific Academic Aptitude

Exceptional capability or potential in one or more academic content areas. Examples include a strong knowledge base or the ability to ask insightful questions within the content. All academic content areas are considered.

Creative or Productive Thinking

Exceptional capability or potential in mental processes such as critical thinking, creative problem solving, humor, or independent/original thinking and/or products.

Leadership Abilities

Exceptional capability or potential to influence and empower people. Students gifted under this category exhibit elevated levels of social perceptiveness, visionary ability, communication skills, inter- and intra-personal skills, and sense of responsibility.

Talent Aptitudes

Exceptional capability or potential in visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor (physical) abilities.

*Gifted children under the age of five may also be provided with early childhood special educational services.

Bright students enjoy school and their peers;
gifted students **enjoy learning** and **prefer adults**.

Bright students know the answer;
gifted students **ask the question**.

Bright students are interested and attentive;
gifted students are **highly curious** and **involved**.

Bright students have good ideas;
gifted students have **wild, silly ideas**.

Bright students answer the question;
gifted students **elaborate and discuss the answers** in detail.

Bright students are at the top of their class;
gifted students are **beyond the class**.

Bright students listen with interest and learn with ease;
gifted students show **strong feelings and opinions** and already **know the content**.

Bright students enjoy straight-forward, sequential presentations;
gifted students **thrive on complexity**.

Bright students are pleased with their learning;
gifted students are **highly self-critical**.

Bright students absorb information, understand ideas, and grasp meanings;
gifted students **manipulate information, construct abstractions, and draw inferences**.

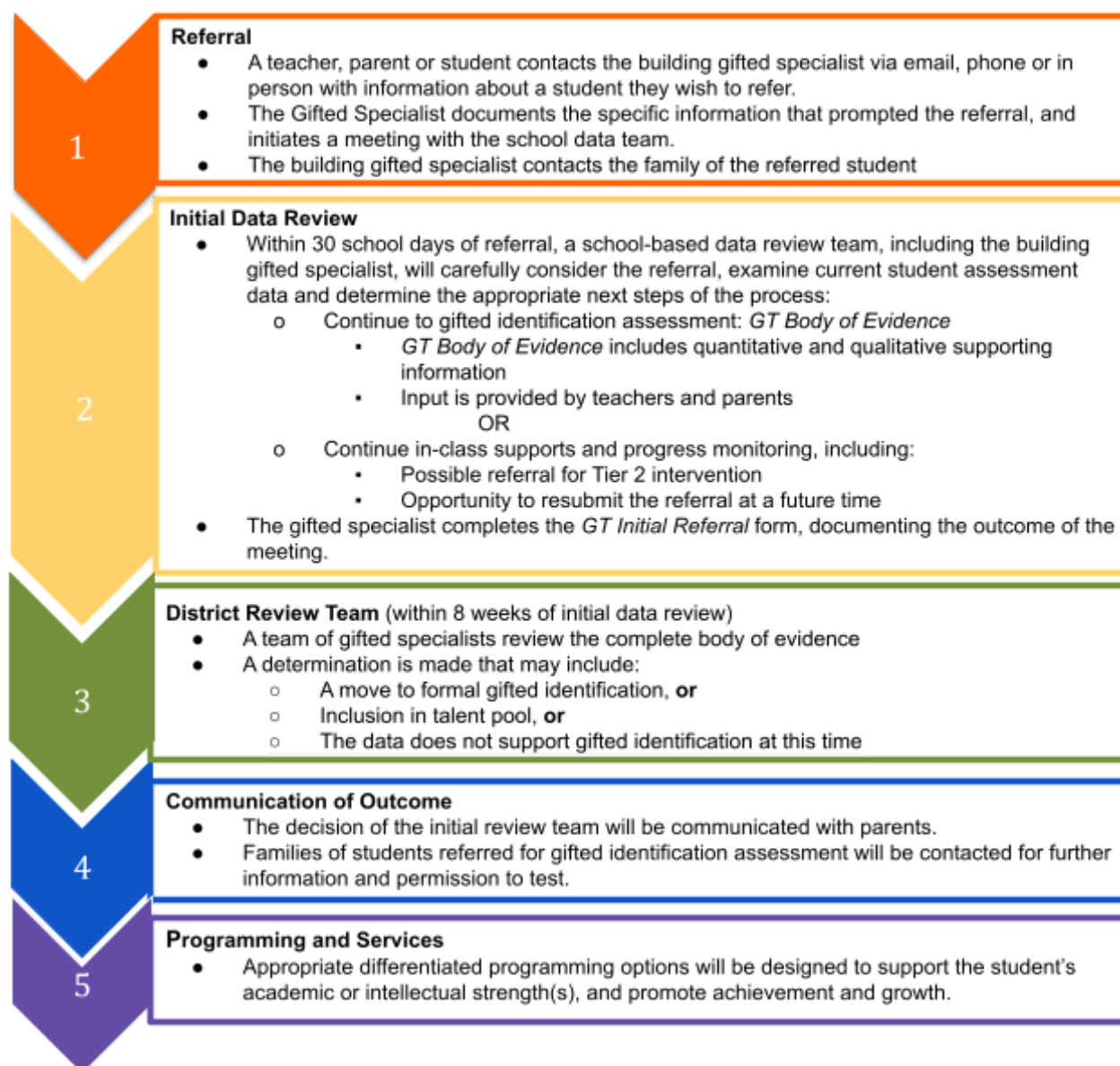
Bright students are technicians, copying accurately and completing tasks;
gifted students are **inventors, creating new designs & initiating projects**.

ECSD Gifted Referral Process

Teachers, parents, or students may initiate referrals for gifted identification assessment at any time throughout the school year, using information from a variety of sources, including:

- Test data
- MTSS data
- Universal Screening data (2nd and 6th grades)
- Student performance and observations
- Anecdotal records, questionnaires, or interviews
- Gifted identification or services in a previous school/district

A referral for possible gifted identification does **not** necessarily lead to the automatic administration of assessments. The identification team will carefully consider the referral, examine current student assessment data, and determine appropriate next steps, which may or may not include administering additional tests.



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ADVANCED LEARNING PLANS

Advanced Learning Plans are legal documents outlining programming for gifted students, and are used as a guide for educational planning and decision making. Students actively participate in their Advanced Learning Plan process, and parents are engaged in the plan's development.

Advanced Learning Plans include:

- Annual achievement goals developed for a student's strength area
- Goals reflecting development of personal competency, social competency, communication skills, leadership skills, and/or cultural competency
- A description of supplemental curriculum, activities, specific strategies, and extended or expanded opportunities that support those goals

For students in eighth grade and on, their Advanced Learning Plan is blended with their Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP).

TALENT POOL

A student who is not formally identified as gifted may be included in a Talent Pool: a group of students who demonstrate an advanced ability in a particular area, but at this time do not meet the criteria for gifted identification.



Students in a talent pool are often provided with advanced or gifted programming services. As students are presented with more challenging curriculum, increased achievement may occur, potentially leading to a gifted identification at a later date. Students identified as gifted in one area may be part of a talent pool for a different domain. Not all students will stay in the talent pool for the same amount of time.

STUDENT PROGRESS MONITORING

Gifted specialists in each building collaborate with classroom teachers to monitor the growth and achievement of identified gifted students. Progress monitoring data is used to guide instructional decisions and track a student's progress in their strength area(s). This data is gathered using standardized tests and other assessments in the classroom.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS

Small groups are offered for gifted students up to eighth grade. Group conversations foster personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills. These groups encourage:



Personal Competence

Growth in competence and disposition for exceptional academic and creative productivity. These include self-awareness, self advocacy, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation, resilience, independence, and curiosity.



Social Competence

Students develop positive peer relationships & social interactions.



Leadership Skills

Students learn and demonstrate personal and social responsibilities to practice their leadership skills.



Cultural Competence

Students learn to value their own and others' language, heritage, and circumstance. Students use positive strategies to address social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping.



Communication Skills

Students demonstrate advanced oral and written skills, bi- and multi-literacy, and creative expression. Students display fluency with technologies that support effective communication.

Gifted students in high school meet individually with a gifted specialist to discuss and set personal goals based on National Association for Gifted Children Standards, with consideration to their strengths, interests, needs, and plans after high school.

ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Our gifted services include supports at three levels, or “tiers,” for identified gifted students, as well as those who demonstrate high ability or potential in one or more academic areas.



Tier 1: Universal

This tier includes differentiated instruction that deepens learning to maximize the achievement of advanced learners in a general education setting with the classroom teacher. Gifted specialists support classroom teachers by providing advanced level resources and strategies to deliver this differentiation through flexible grouping, problem-based learning, and student-centered instruction and activities. Instructional decisions are guided by assessment data, and there are multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their mastery of content.



Tier 2: Targeted

This tier supports the content of the general education classroom with added depth, complexity, abstraction, and pace. Gifted Specialists work with a small group of students in SEED groups or exploratory classes once or twice a week. These groups are flexible and are guided by student observation and classroom data; students may move about them throughout the year. Targeted interventions include real-world independent and group inquiry, specialized curriculum, skills-based and conceptual learning, and abstract and high-level thinking.



Tier 3: Intensive

Some students require a curriculum that significantly differs from their same-age peers. Intensive tier instruction may take place in addition to the differentiation options offered within the other two tiers. Acceleration and individualized learning plans, together, best meet the needs of highly gifted students who require programming that allows them to continue to grow to their full potential. Acceleration options include single-subject or whole-grade acceleration, early entrance to kindergarten or first grade, concurrent enrollment, and online learning.

Skill and Exploratory Educational Development (SEED) Groups | Gifted elementary students will experience SEED groups which support students in the development of creativity, leadership and critical thinking skills through project based units.

Exploratory Classes | Gifted middle school students are encouraged to participate in an exploratory class, which uses project-based learning to develop student skills and interests through individual or small group inquiry. Exploratory classes also offer students the opportunity to enter competitions in areas of skills and interests, such as Model United Nations, Science Olympiad, or Battle of the Books.

College-Career Supports | Gifted secondary students have the opportunity to receive college, career, and post-secondary planning support via individual meetings with the high school gifted specialist.

EARLY ACCESS

“Early Access” refers to early entrance into kindergarten at age 4, or into first grade at age 5 for highly advanced, gifted children who are placed in a grade level above their same aged peers. To qualify for early access, the student must:

- by October 1, be age 4 for kindergarten *or* age 5 for first grade
- be formally identified as gifted, *and*
- meet requirements for accelerated placement as determined in a body of evidence

Early Access Identification Process

Regular public or private preschools or homeschooling meet the needs of the majority of gifted 4 and 5 year olds. The early access identification process recognizes there are highly advanced, gifted children who require comprehensive academic acceleration.

1 Application

Submission of an application to the Gifted Education Department. Applications are accepted between February 10 and April 1 each year for placement in the following school year.

2 Interview

After reviewing a student’s application, the Gifted Education Department may choose to conduct an interview with the student and their family. During this interview, staff will review a portfolio of the student’s evaluations assembled by the parents.

3 Testing

Gifted Education staff members and school staff will administer appropriate testing to the student and compile a body of evidence to determine a student’s strength area, affective needs, and appropriate programming options.

4 Determination

Eagle County School District will make a determination about a child’s eligibility for early access. This determination will be made within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the screening portfolio.

ACCELERATION

Students master grade-level curriculum at different rates, and a student may need acceleration in their area(s) of mastery. Acceleration can be either content-based or grade-based, and data will show the student's mastery of grade-level curriculum.

Content-based acceleration includes single-subject acceleration, dual enrollment (DE) and advanced placement (AP) classes, and credit by examination.

Grade-level acceleration, also known as “grade-skipping,” is placing a student on a full-time basis in a higher grade level than is typical for the student's age.

Eagle County School District uses a comprehensive structure to guide acceleration decisions: the Iowa Acceleration Scale. This scale looks at many factors in the child's life and education history, including physical and social emotional development in addition to a collection of assessment data in student achievement, ability, and aptitude.

TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS

Twice-exceptional refers to students who are identified as gifted *and* with a disability that qualifies them for either an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. Gifted specialists attend IEP and 504 Plan meetings to ensure the strengths of the student are considered in all areas of the student's programming plan, including the student's Advanced Learning Plan.

Advanced Learning Plans for twice-exceptional students focus on strength-based programming and supports to develop social emotional skills such as self-advocacy and perseverance. We believe twice-exceptional students engage in their learning and demonstrate growth in both their strength and deficit area(s).

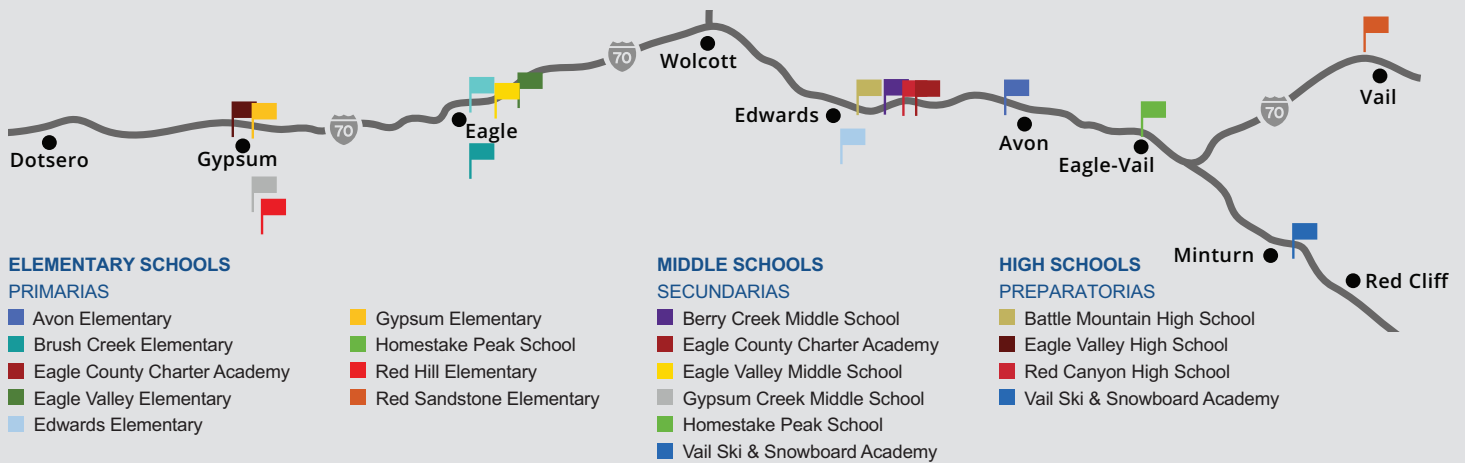
TRANSFERRING GIFTED STUDENTS

Any student identified as gifted within Eagle County School District is able to transfer into the gifted program of any other school district in the state of Colorado, in accordance with the new district's programming options. This “portability” is part of a student's permanent record and Advanced Learning Plan.

For students moving into Eagle County from another state, district personnel will review their records for evidence of giftedness and determine if additional assessments are needed to confirm if the student meets Colorado criteria for gifted identification. In the event a transferring student's gifted identification does not meet these guidelines, the building gifted specialist will collect a body of evidence, which may include administering additional assessments. An identification decision will be made within 60 days of the student's transfer documentation.

16 SCHOOLS SERVING EAGLE COUNTY COMMUNITIES

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