Gifted and Talented Education Plan

Waterford Township
School District

2026-27

Gifted and Talented Education Plan
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How is Giftedness Defined?

Children are gifted when their ability is significantly above the norm for their age.

Giftedness may manifest in one or more domains, such as intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or in a specific academic field such as language arts, mathematics, or science.

It is difficult to estimate the absolute number of gifted children in the U.S. and the world because the calculation is dependent on the number of areas, or domains, being measured and the method used to identify gifted children. However, many consider children in the top 10th percentile in relation to a national and/or local norm to be a good guide for identification and services.

It is important to note that not all gifted children look or act alike. Giftedness exists in every demographic group and personality type. It is important that adults look hard to discover potential and support gifted children as they reach for their personal best.

How to Support Giftedness

Educators play a privileged role in the lives of gifted children and their families. Their primary job is to help gifted children develop their intellectual and academic potential in collaboration with the child's parents.

Teaching gifted children is both exciting and challenging. Research shows that teachers encounter wide ranges of knowledge, skills, and abilities within their classrooms. Teachers must have the skills to differentiate their instruction to help children across the achievement spectrum to learn and grow every day.

Teaching gifted children may require special strategies like acceleration, flexible ability grouping, and even specialized pull-out programming. Pre-service training and professional learning will help ensure that students have teachers ready to help them.

Gifted Education Overview

Gifted education varies widely across the United States. While Federal law acknowledges that children with gifts and talents have unique needs that are not traditionally offered in regular school settings, it offers no specific provisions, mandates, or requirements for serving these children. Gifted education is a purely local endeavor and is dependent on local leadership. Unfortunately, leaving gifted education up to chance increases variability in the quality of services and creates inequities of access for students in poverty, from racial and ethnic minority groups, English Language Learners, and those with disabilities.

Gifted and Talented in Waterford Township School District

The Waterford Township School District Gifted and Talented Committee was assembled during the 2016-2017 school year. The primary purpose of the committee was to revise current practices and assess the level of need within the district. Since that time, the committee continues to meet at a minimum of twice per year (September/October and January/February) to review service delivery, curriculum development, and selection criteria.

Services

In Grades K-2, students will receive global services provided within the classroom by the classroom teacher. Students will receive additional challenges, differentiated instruction, and differentiated activities that not only align with the NJSLS but also are customized to meet their individual needs. Adjustments and modifications to content, products, processes, and learning environments will be considered and utilized to best meet students' needs.

In Grades 3-6, students will be pulled for services multiple times each week. Classroom teachers will continue to differentiate instruction to meet individual needs as well.

Gifted and Talented Selection Process & Criteria

Students who are recommended or identified for Gifted and Talented services will be screened annually using multiple measures of assessment. Typical measures utilized include a combination of but not all of the following: NJSLA scores for both ELA and Math, Benchmark averages, Otis Lennon Aptitude Test

scores, Spelling Stage and Instructional Feature data, LinkIt benchmark data, and teacher recommendation (when needed). GT acceptance is for one year, and all students will be reevaluated at the beginning of the following school year. Students who are "on watch" (ex, new students and those who may be on the cusp for qualifying) will be revisited in January.

The committee reviews the data and determines which students demonstrated the highest levels of ability when compared with their chronological peers (approximately the top 5-10% of students in the district). The district also analyzes its data to ensure that the district is taking the appropriate measures to reduce and/or prevent underrepresentation by any particular demographic of the population (ex, gender, race, etc.).

Process for Appealing a Non-Admission

The Waterford Township School District recognizes that not all children are able to be placed in our Gifted and Talented Program. However, we also recognize that not every process is flawless.

Parents will have the opportunity to appeal a student's non-admission into the Gifted and Talented Program. We will have two levels of appeal, the first being to contact the homeroom teacher directly to gain an understanding of why a student was not selected. Our level two appeal is a formal appeal that requires a parent to complete a form and submit it to the building principal for review. The form can be found on the district website (wtsd.org) under the Curriculum tab.

The building principal will then review the criteria used during the selection process and make a final decision about student entry into the program. Each building principal will have ten business days to respond to an appeal, but the principal's decision is final, and the student in question will have to wait until the following year to begin the process over again.

Link to Professional Development & PD Resources:

Certificated Staff and Administrators may access and use the following professional development and resources:

National and Regional Conferences

- Gifted and Talented Best Practices Regional Networking Meetings

- National Association for Gifted and Talented
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

Educators

Connecting for High Potential

Written by and for teachers and parents, *Connecting for High Potential* from the National Association for Gifted Children provides practical advice for parents, teachers, and community members to work together to support high-ability students.

Parents

- ***Resources for Parents***
- ***Educational Programs***

Gifted and Talented BOE Policy & Regulation

Link to WTSD Gifted & Talented BOE Policy #2464

Link to WTSD Gifted & Talented BOE Regulation #2464

Waterford Township Gifted and Talented Committee

Mr. Michael A. Nolan, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Christine Manna, Principal, Waterford Elementary School, and Supervisor of Gifted and Talented
Mrs. Heather Kondas, Principal, Atco Elementary School
Mr. Patrick Davidson, Principal Thomas Richards Early Childhood Center
Mrs. Amanda Magenta, Supervisor of Student Services
Mr. Shaun Laurito, GT teacher

Note: The number of students receiving G&T services in each grade level (disaggregated by race, gender, special education designation, and English Language learner designation), as well as the number of staff employed by the school district (whose job responsibilities include identification of and providing services to gifted and talented students) are provided annually to the NJ Department Of Education via NJ SMART.

Appendix A

Waterford Township School District
Gifted and Talented Appeals Process

If a parent or guardian feels the need to appeal the GT placement decision of the GT Selection and Placement Committee, or if a parent, guardian, or staff member believes a student has been denied access to or removed from the program unfairly, the following steps may be taken:

Informal Formal	Level One: School Level, Classroom Teacher Level Two: School Level, Administrative The Waterford Township School District recognizes that not all children are able to be placed in our Gifted and Talented Program. However, we also recognize that not every process is flawless. Parents have the opportunity to appeal a student's non-admission into the Gifted and Talented Program. There are two levels of appeal, the first being to contact the classroom teacher directly to gain an understanding of why a student was not selected. A level two appeal is a formal appeal that requires a parent to complete a form and submit it to the building principal for review. The form can be found on the district website under the Curriculum tab. The building principal will then review the criteria used during the selection process and make a final decision about student entry into the program. Each building principal will have up to ten business days to respond to an appeal, but the principal's decision is final, and the student in question will have to wait until the following year to begin the process over.

Level One	If you feel your child was excluded from Gifted and Talented and have reasonable evidence to suggest that he/she deserves to be identified and/or serviced, the first step in the process is to contact the classroom teacher. Upon contacting the classroom teacher, you will be provided with an explanation of the criteria and process used to determine eligibility for the program. In addition, you may request a meeting to sit down and discuss your child's criteria and scores. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, you will then be required to complete the level two appeals process.
Level Two	Once a family has gone through the level one appeals process and has additional questions, they are required to complete the level two appeal form found online. The building principal will review the student's criteria, set up a meeting with the family, and make a final determination as to whether or not the child should gain entry into the program and/or be identified as Gifted and Talented. The building principal's decision is final, and the appeals process ends once a decision has been made. The building principal has ten business days to review the documents, set up a meeting, and make a final decision. Principal, Atco Elementary School - Ms. Heather Kondas Principal, Thomas Richards Early Childhood Center - Mr. Patrick Davidson Principal, Waterford Elementary School - Ms. Christine Manna

Appendix B
Waterford Township School District
Gifted and Talented Program
Level Two Appeal Form

Directions: This form is to be completed and submitted to the building principal after the parent/guardian of a child has already reached out to and/or met with the teacher at the school. If the teacher has not been contacted prior to this form being completed, the building principal will require that you do so. Once you have completed the form, please either email it to the building principal or print it out and deliver it to the main office of the school.

Date:_____ Student Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Current Grade Level: _____

School: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian Filing The Appeal:_____

Email: _____ Phone:_____

Explain the issue being appealed:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Explain the reason(s) for filing the appeal:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____