Highly Capable Services

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 student's 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 are present within all protected classes.

Students who are highly capable may possess, but are not limited to, these learning characteristics:
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/or focus.

The following procedures will be employed to refer, assess, and select students to participate in the program. The process for identifying the most highly capable students will prioritize equitable identification of low-income students.

Referral

Referrals are permitted and accepted based on data or evidence from teachers, other staff, parents, students, and members of the community. Referrers will use the district’s online referral form to refer a student to be considered for eligibility for Highly Capable Services.

Screening

The district will screen each referred student to identify students who are eligible for further assessment. Screening criteria may include administration of a cognitive abilities assessment such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT).

Assessment

The district will obtain written parental permission prior to conducting assessments to determine eligibility to receive Highly Capable services. The permission notice shall include a link to:
a) A full explanation of the procedures for identification of a student for entrance into the highly capable program;
b) An explanation of the appeal process;
c) An explanation of the procedures to exit a student from the program; and
d) Information on the district’s program and the options that will be available to identified students.

Referred students identified for further review through the screening process will be assessed using multiple objective criteria:

a) The district must use 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;

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.

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

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.

Assessments may include: *(Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) previous Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) scores, and/or additional Independent Educational Cognitive Ability Evaluations (IEE) provided by the parent.)* Test results will be recorded in the student's cumulative file.

**Selection**

A Multi-Disciplinary Selection Committee (MDSC) will review the above assessment data and additional qualitative and quantitative data that has been collected for each of the referred students and will make a final selection of the most highly capable students for eligibility for Highly Capable services. The (MDSC) is composed of: a special teacher as defined in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) (provided that if a special teacher is not available, a classroom teacher shall be appointed); a psychologist or other qualified practitioner with the training to interpret cognitive and achievement test results; a certified coordinator or administrator with the responsibility for the supervision of the district's highly capable program; and additional professionals, if any, that the district deems desirable.

The (MDSC) will evaluate individual student assessment profile data and make the selection decision based on:

1. A preponderance of evidence from the profile data demonstrating that a student is among the most highly capable;

2. Evidence of clear need for highly capable services; and
3. Determination of which students would benefit the most from inclusion in the district's program.

A single assessment score or indicator will not prevent a student's selection for the Highly Capable services. However, individual pieces of evidence, if strong enough, can indicate that the student would be eligible for Highly Capable 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. This professional judgment shall be documented in writing.

The district will:

A. Notify parents by United States Mail as to whether their student is eligible for Highly Capable services. Parents will receive a full explanation of the procedures for identification, an explanation of the process to exit a student from the program, information about the district's program and the options that are available to identified students and an explanation of the appeals process.

B. Obtain parental permission to place identified students in the program before any special services and programs are provide to the student.

C. Conduct periodic review of each student’s educational plan.

**Process for Appeal**

Parents/legal guardians have the right to appeal the MDSC’s decision. Individuals appealing the selection committee's decision must submit a completed appeals form or letter requesting review of selection/placement decision. The written request must include reasons for the appeal and, to support reconsideration, provide additional evidence of significantly advanced cognitive or academic levels and/or outstanding intellectual, academic, or creative abilities.

The appeal request and supporting evidence must be submitted to the Highly Capable Program Tacoma Public Schools 601 South 8th Street, Tacoma, WA 98405 within 15 school days of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Committee's decision notification.

The district's Appeals Committee will review the student's file, assessment profile data, and additional evidence provided in the request for appeal. The Appeals Committee is composed of: A special teacher (provided that if a special teacher is not available, a classroom teacher shall be appointed); a psychologist or other qualified practitioner with the training to interpret cognitive and achievement test results; a certified coordinator or administrator with the responsibility for the supervision of the district's highly capable program; and additional professionals if any, that the district deems desirable.
A decision will be made by the Appeals Committee within 30 school days after receipt of written request for reconsideration. The parent/legal guardian will be notified of the decision in writing. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

Exit Process

The exit process may be initiated for students who no longer demonstrate a need for highly capable services. A request may be made by a teacher or program administrator for highly capable student identification and placement discontinuation. The MDSC will convene a meeting to review the student’s profile to determine if the student qualifies for program services based on assessment data and selection criteria. The MDSC may request additional evidence of student capabilities and/or willingness to participate in the program. If the MDSC determines that the student no longer qualifies for participation in the highly capable program, it may be recommended that the student be exited from the program. The parent will be notified in writing of the committee’s decision and of the appeal’s process.

A parent/legal guardian may request that the student be withdrawn from receiving services or a student of legal age may voluntarily withdraw from the program. A meeting will be offered by the Highly Capable Services Coordinator to discuss the request with the MDSC and then with the parent. If the parent/legal guardian desires to withdraw the student from receiving services, the request will be honored.

Program Design

The district will offer appropriate services, as mandated by OSPI, to students who are eligible for Highly Capable services. A continuum of services will be provided to identified students in grades K-12. The district will keep on file a description of the educational services provided for eligible students. The district periodically reviews services for each student to ensure that the services are appropriate.

The district will offer highly capable students the following instructional programs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-2</td>
<td><strong>Flexible Grouping</strong> Identified students may be clustered into a general education classroom.</td>
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<td><strong>Whole Grade Acceleration</strong> Individual students under consideration for whole-grade academic acceleration will be assessed, with parental permission, using the current edition of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS). Results of the IAS will be reviewed by the MDSC to decide whether whole grade acceleration is appropriate. The process for selecting highly capable students for whole grade acceleration is separate and distinct from acceleration procedures defined in District Policy/Regulation 2421.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td>Program/Description</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
<td><strong>SAIL</strong> (Self Contained Advanced Individual Learning) A program designed specifically for the top tier of eligible students served in regional locations around the district. Students experience intellectual rigor, accelerated pacing, expectation of early content mastery, and greater depth and exploration of content. The Highly Capable Services office enrolls students into the SAIL class.</td>
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<td><strong>GATE</strong> (Gifted and Talented Education) Blended classes at the neighborhood school that may include both identified and non-identified students. Cluster-grouped students are involved in enrichment and project-based learning. Students are enrolled into the GATE classroom by the school.</td>
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<td><strong>Flexible Grouping</strong> Identified students may be clustered into a mixed ability classroom.</td>
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<td>6-8</td>
<td><strong>Mathematics Acceleration</strong> Based on the acceleration pathway selected, students may earn high school credit while enrolled in middle school.</td>
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<td><strong>English Language Arts Acceleration</strong> Springboard is the College Board’s official Pre-AP program in English language arts which begins in grade six. Students in springboard courses may be cluster grouped.</td>
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<td>9-10</td>
<td><strong>Mathematics Acceleration</strong> Students may continue on the acceleration pathway they begin in middle school. Students will be 1, 2 or 3 years accelerated in math according to the Washington State graduation requirements. Students may use the state-wide End of Course (EOC) assessment to determine acceleration placement in a provided pathway.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>English Language Arts Acceleration</strong> Springboard is the College Board’s official Pre-AP program in English Language Arts. Students in springboard courses may be cluster grouped.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td><strong>Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit</strong> Students can earn college credit and useful college-level skills while in high school.</td>
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<td>* Advanced Placement (AP) * International Baccalaureate (IB) * College in the High School (CiHS) * Technology Preparation * Running Start</td>
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**Reporting**

Students eligible for Highly Capable services will be identified in the District's student information system for the end-of-year reporting activities.

The Superintendent or designee will provide an end-of-the-year report to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) which includes:

- Number of students served by grade level K-12;
- Student demographic information;
- Data to determine if students who are highly capable met the goals set and if the programs provided met the academic needs of these students;
- Number and content of professional development activities provided for special teachers and general education staff;
- Program evaluation data and, if needed, program changes that will be made based upon this information; and
- Final Fiscal document that reports on activities and staff funded by this program.

Adoption Date: **04/23/2015, Revised 02/26/2019**

Classification: Instruction

References:  
RCW 28A.185.040  
WAC Chapter 392-170