



Newton County School System
Program for Gifted Students and Advanced Academics
Administrative Procedures Manual

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Purpose of the Newton County Gifted Program

The Newton County System and its educators are committed to the belief that education is a means by which everyone has the opportunity to reach his or her fullest potential. We believe that all students have a right to educational experiences that challenge their individual development whether it is below, at, or beyond the level of their age peers. In accordance with this philosophy, Newton County schools provide educational programs that recognize and make provisions for the unique and special needs of gifted and advanced learners. The Newton County Board of Education policy and the administrative procedures manual provide the framework for provisions of these services as outlined in State Board Rule 160-4-2-.38.

Definition

The Newton County School System determines that students are eligible for gifted education services in compliance with the definition found in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (20-2-152), Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) *Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services: A gifted student is defined as one who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/ or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/ or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities.*

Eligibility

The Newton County Board of Education has adopted eligibility criteria consistent with the Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) rule 160-4-2-.38. The Newton County Quest Search and Eligibility teams will meet to review all submitted evaluation information. The team will then make a program placement recommendation, according to state criteria, and submit the file for review. The NCSS Gifted Program Coordinator and Director of Curriculum and Instruction will review the file. One of the following determinations will be made:

Category	Option A	Option B
	Student must have a qualifying score in the mental ability AND achievement categories.	Student must qualify in <u>three of the four</u> categories.
Mental Ability	Grades K-2 ≥ 99th percentile composite score on a nationally age normed mental ability test Grades 3-12 ≥ 96th percentile composite score on a nationally age normed mental ability test	Grades K-12 ≥ 96th percentile composite OR appropriate component score on a nationally age normed mental ability tests
Achievement	Grades K-12 ≥ 90th percentile Total Reading, Total Math, or Complete Battery on a nationally normed achievement test	Grades K-12 ≥ 90th percentile Total Reading, Total Math, or Complete Battery on a nationally normed achievement test
Creativity	Evaluation data required	Grades K-12 ≥ 90th percentile on composite score on a nationally normed creativity test Grades K-12 Rating scales used to qualify student creativity must equate to the 90th percentile Grades K-12 Superior product/performance with a score ≥ 90 on a scale of 1-100, as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators
Motivation	Evaluation data required	Grades 6-12 Two-year average of a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale in regular core subject of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, science, and full year world languages Grades K-12 Rating scales used to qualify student motivation must equate to the 90th percentile Grades K-12 Superior product/performance with a score ≥ 90 on a scale of 1-100, as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators

- In option A and B, information shall be gathered in each of the four categories.
- At least one of the criteria must be met by a score on a GaDOE approved nationally normed- referenced test.
- Any data used to establish eligibility in one category shall not be used to establish eligibility in another category.
- If a rating scale is used to evaluate creativity, a rating scale shall not be used to evaluate motivation. If a rating scale is used to evaluate motivation, a rating scale shall not be used to evaluate creativity.
- Any piece of information used to establish eligibility shall be current within two years.
- Local school systems must establish policies in regard to the use of data gathered and analyzed by private entities.

Gifted Education Referral Process

The referral process has four steps: (1) nomination of students as possible candidates for formal evaluation; (2) review of nominations to determine if referral for formal evaluation is warranted; (3) evaluation to identify students who meet the SBOE criteria for placement in the gifted program; (4) analysis of data collected during the identification process to determine areas of strength and suggest instructional options to meet students' advanced learning needs.

1. **Nomination:** Nomination for consideration may be made by classroom teachers, specials area/connections teachers, counselors, administrators, parents or guardians, students' peers, the student himself/ herself or any other responsible individual who has knowledge of a student's intellectual ability. Individuals who wish to nominate students for consideration should contact the school's gifted program contact person. The individual then submits the necessary forms, along with samples of the student's work that show evidence of the student's advanced learning needs and existing standardized test information to the chairperson of the school's Search and Eligibility Team, usually the school's Quest teacher (K-5) or gifted program contact person (6-12).

Parents who nominate their children for gifted program consideration may present test scores that were obtained from an outside source (i.e., private psychologist, university clinic, etc.). The Search and Eligibility Team shall consider those test results as they determine whether to proceed with formal evaluation for possible gifted program eligibility, but these outside data shall not be substituted for data the school generates during the evaluation process and may never be the sole source of assessment data used to determine eligibility for gifted education services. Instead, outside test data may be used as part of a comprehensive profile of test and non-test evidence of advanced instructional needs.

The Newton County School System also uses an automatic referral procedure to provide equal access to gifted program consideration for capable students who might not otherwise be nominated. Any student who scores at or above the 90th percentile in Total Reading or Total Math or on the Total Battery of a nationally normed achievement test will be referred for consideration automatically. Also, any student who scores at or above the 92nd percentile on any area of a nationally normed cognitive ability test will be referred for consideration automatically.

* Scores used for automatic referral must be current within two calendar years.

In addition, each year, the Newton County School System screens all students for possible referral for gifted program consideration. Through an identified universal screening window, faculty and staff at our schools give particular attention to observing all students using a TABs observation form. Prior to the observation window, all certified staff members receive training surrounding how to look for typical traits, aptitudes, and behaviors (TABs) of a gifted child.

2. **Review of Nominations:** Each school shall have a Quest Program Search and Eligibility Team consisting of no fewer than three faculty members that meets as needed to review nomination information. This review team must include at least one regular classroom or specials area/connections teacher, a building level administrator and one gifted program teacher. Teachers with the gifted endorsement should be given preference for serving on the Search and Eligibility Team since they are trained to recognize the characteristics of gifted students and to implement strategies for appropriately differentiating instruction for gifted learners.

Individuals who nominated a student for consideration and others who have expertise in a content area or who have special knowledge about the student may attend the meeting to present evidence of the student's strengths. However, these additional individuals shall not have access to confidential assessment data, and they shall not participate in the Search and Eligibility Team's decisions regarding additional testing or formal referrals. The Search and Eligibility Team will document each review of a nominated student, using the *Search and Eligibility Review Form*. Upon review of available evidence of nominated students' advanced learning needs, the committee will make one of the following decisions regarding each nominee:

- a. The student is referred for formal evaluation. This decision is appropriate when committee members concur that collected information is sufficient and justifies continuation of the referral process. The Quest Program teacher will notify parents or guardians that the student has been recommended for possible gifted program placement and will request consent to begin the formal evaluation process. When written consent is obtained, the formal evaluation process may begin.
 - b. More information about the nominee may be requested. When the committee determines that collected information is insufficient to make a decision regarding formal evaluation, the committee may request that the nominator or others with knowledge of the student's abilities supply additional information to support the nomination.
 - c. The committee may decide that the collected information, though sufficient in quantity, does not justify a recommendation to continue the referral process. The student may be nominated again later if there is additional evidence that his/her advanced learning needs are not being met in the regular classroom. The committee will also inform the nominator of the reasons for its decision not to recommend formal evaluation.
1. **Evaluation of Referred Students:** Once a student has been referred by the Search and Eligibility Team for formal evaluation and parent(s) or guardian(s) have granted permission to test, a student shall be assessed in all four data categories. The assessment options and procedures meet all requirements of SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS.

The Newton County School System provides two evaluation windows for gifted education services-spring and fall. The fall window concludes in December each year. Students evaluated during this window, if eligible for placement, begin services during the months of January and February. In rare cases, follow-up testing may occur in January. The spring evaluation window concludes in May each year. Students evaluated during this window, if eligible for placement, begin services the following school year. In rare cases, follow-up testing may occur in the early fall. Final eligibility decisions are determined at the district level, following an extensive review process. Once the review process is completed, parents or guardians are provided a letter, via the United States Postal Service, announcing the eligibility decision.

- 2. Analysis of Data Collected and Recommendation of Services:** When mental ability, achievement, creativity and motivation assessment data have been collected, the chairperson, typically the Quest teacher or gifted contact person, of the Search and Eligibility Team notifies members that the student's name should be placed on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting. The Quest Program teacher/contact presents the assessment data to the team for review, and based upon the assessment results, the Search and Eligibility Team determines whether the student has met the eligibility criteria described in SBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR GIFTED STUDENTS as it is operationalized in the Newton County School System. The team makes a service recommendation, each team member signs the *Eligibility Report* and the Quest Program teacher or gifted contact person submits the completed file to the Board of Education for review and final eligibility decision.
Necessary documents and forms for file review and submission can be found on the Gifted Program Contact Canvas site

The Search and Eligibility Team recommends appropriate services/instructional modifications in response to strengths documented by assessment results for all students who go through the referral process, whether they qualify for Quest Program placement.

When the referral process has been completed and service options recommended, Quest Program teachers/contacts submit completed files to the Board of Education for review by the Gifted Program Coordinator and appropriate Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction makes final eligibility decisions at the conclusion of the appropriate evaluation window for gifted education services.
Necessary documents and forms for file review and submission can be found on the Gifted Program Contact Canvas site

The determination of ineligibility does not preclude reconsideration of the student later. However, re-evaluation may not occur within a two-year span. Exceptions will be made only upon the recommendation of the school's Search and Eligibility Team, Gifted Program Coordinator and the appropriate Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Transfer Students

The following procedures will be employed when placing transfer students into the Quest Program:

- 1. Students Transferring within the system:** Gifted students transferring from one Newton County school to another are automatically placed in the Quest Program of the receiving school if they were being served in Quest at the time of the transfer. It is the responsibility of the Quest Program teacher at the sending school to notify the Quest teacher in the receiving school of the transfer.
- 2. Students Transferring from Other Systems within the State of Georgia:** Students identified as gifted in any school system in Georgia enjoy reciprocal eligibility in all other school systems, as long as SBOE criteria were met at the time of initial placement and the students have met the continuation criteria of each LEA in which they have been served. Eligible transfers may be placed in the Newton County Quest Program after the receiving Quest teacher has had an opportunity to review eligibility documentation and participation history. Eligibility information received should be emailed to the Gifted Program Coordinator and uploaded in Infinite Campus. Once received, the Quest Program teacher or gifted contact person collaborates with the school's administrator and scheduling clerk so that the student may be entered into the Infinite Campus gifted database and scheduled for appropriate gifted courses.
If it is reported that the student was served in a gifted program in another Georgia school system, but records do not document original placement by SBOE criteria or and successful participation in the sending school system's program for gifted students, the Search and Eligibility Team at the receiving Newton County school should consider the student to be a new referral and follow the systems procedures for Quest Program consideration.
- 3. Students Transferring from Systems outside the State of Georgia:** Because definitions of giftedness and eligibility criteria for gifted program placement are established by individual states, there is no mandated reciprocity unless the student is a dependent of military personnel as provided in OCGA 20-1-2140. However, gifted program eligibility in other states serves as an indicator that students have exceptional strengths, and Newton County Quest Program teachers will expedite eligibility review to ensure rapid attention to placement needs. Quest teachers examine student records for assessment data that is less than two years old. If the type of assessment (e.g., standardized achievement test) and results meet the criteria established in Georgia's eligibility rule, the scores may be used to (partially) qualify the student for Quest Program placement. If not, then Quest Program teachers request parents'/guardians' permission to administer additional tests as needed to establish eligibility for Quest Program placement during the appropriate testing window.

The same review process is used for students who were identified as gifted in private schools that do not use Georgia SBOE criteria for establishing initial gifted program eligibility.

The child of an active military family does not have to be reassessed. After review of placement documents, the student may be placed in similar services without additional assessments. If there is a concern over student progress, additional assessments may be completed, but are not required.

The school's Search and Eligibility Team determines whether each transferring student meets Georgia eligibility requirements, makes placement recommendations, and determines how the student might best be served from the service options available at the school. If the student is found to meet Georgia's eligibility requirements, a Newton County *Eligibility Report* and *Eligibility Placement* form are completed. The Quest Teacher collaborates with the school's administrator and data entry clerk so that the student may be entered into the Infinite Campus gifted database and scheduled for appropriate gifted courses. Students should not be scheduled for gifted courses or counted for FTE until the school's Quest teacher or gifted contact person completes verification and documentation.

Gifted Education Services

Gifted Services Expectations and Continuation

Students eligible for gifted services shall receive at least five gifted segments per week, or the yearly equivalent. Students receiving services must maintain satisfactory performance through academic growth and progress towards mastery of the standards, in each class in which gifted services are provided. Intervention supports and an improvement plan should be provided if a student's performance in any class in which gifted services are provided suggests that support is needed. Intervention supports may include, but are not limited to supports that address academic, behavioral, or social and emotional needs. Removal of services shall only be considered if the intervention supports are proven, through progress monitoring data, to be ineffective. Documentation of the intervention supports; improvement plan and progress monitoring data should be maintained in the student's gifted eligibility platform in Infinite Campus. If changes in services are necessary, the changes should only affect the content area where intervention supports were provided.

Instructional Delivery Models

To meet the diverse needs of gifted learners, Newton County Schools uses a variety of instructional delivery models, all of them approved by the SBOE and described in the Georgia Department of Education *Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services*:

Direct Service Models:

Resource Class – Resource classes may be used to provide identified gifted students in grades K-12 with gifted education services. They have a strong academic content foundation but focus on rich interdisciplinary enrichment activities. Resource is the primary delivery model for Elementary Quest services. Enrichment units are provided for elementary gifted students in Quest classes. Units are correlated to enrich and extend as appropriate the state standards in core subject areas. All students in Resource classes must be identified as gifted by SBOE criteria, and the class size is limited to 24, per Newton County BOE resolution approved by the State BOE. Resource class teachers must have a Gifted Endorsement from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). Resource class services are limited to ten segments per week.

Advanced Content Class – Advanced Content classes provide core content instruction at an advanced level for gifted and other high-achieving students in grades K-12. Students are homogeneously grouped based on achievement and interest in a specific content area. Schools must develop a description of the Advanced Content course, showing clearly how the content, pacing, process skills emphasis and expectations of student outcomes differ from the course more typical students at that grade level would take in that content area. Students who are not identified as gifted but who are highly motivated and achieve at levels that indicate the need for a more challenging curriculum may participate in Advanced Content classes. Their participation is determined by achievement criteria developed at the school level and seat availability. Maximum class size for all grade levels is 28 per Newton County BOE resolution approved by State BOE. The maximum of 28 is for the total class size, not just those students identified as gifted.

Advanced Content is the primary delivery model for Quest Program services at the middle and high school levels; it includes courses such as College Board Advanced Placement (AP) courses and other courses that have been approved as honors-level courses.

Teachers of Advanced Content courses must have a Gifted Endorsement from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). Teachers of AP may have either (a) the GaPSC Gifted In-Field Endorsement **or** (b) have successfully completed College Board training in the specific course they are teaching plus an approved 10-hour professional learning course on characteristics of gifted learners at the secondary level and curriculum differentiation for gifted students.

Cluster Grouping (K-12) -- Identified gifted students are placed as a group (recommended 6-8 students) into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom, rather than being dispersed among all of the rooms/courses at that grade level.

1. The regular classroom teacher must have a current GaPSC approved gifted endorsement.
2. The teacher must document the curriculum differentiation for the gifted student(s) by completing individual or group contracts which include the following requirements:

- a. A description of the course curriculum which is based on Georgia standards that very clearly show how the advanced course content, teaching strategies, pacing, process skills, and assessments differ from courses more typical for student(s) at that grade level.
- b. Separate lesson plans which show reason(s) why the gifted student(s) need an advanced curriculum in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science or social studies
- c. Dates and amount of time (in segments) the student(s) will be engaged in the higher-level activities and how the students will be evaluated (formative and summative). The maximum size for the classroom containing a gifted cluster is the same as Regular Education for that grade level/content area.

Indirect Service Models:

Collaborative Teaching (K-12) – In the Collaborative Teaching model, a GaPSC gifted-endorsed teacher, regular classroom teacher and gifted students (when appropriate) collaborate in the development of challenging assignments that substitute for or extend core curriculum objectives. Direct instruction may be provided by the regular classroom teacher or the gifted specialist after they have collaboratively planned the gifted-level curriculum for identified students. Teacher-partners document curriculum modifications through (a) separate lesson plans, (b) time log of collaborative planning, and (c) individual student contracts. The gifted-endorsed teacher must be given one period during the day to devote to curriculum planning and support for every 24 segments of gifted instruction. The total number of gifted students whose instruction is modified through this collaborative approach may not exceed 8 per class.

Table 1: Planning Time for Gifted Program Specialist in the Collaborative Teaching Model

Number of classes within which the gifted specialist collaborates	Number of segments counted at the gifted weight	Required collaborative planning time in minutes
1-3	1-24	45-60
4-6	25-48	90-120
7-9	49-72	135-180
10-12	73-96	180-240
13-15	97-120	225-300
16-18	121-144	270-360

Gifted Program Evaluation

System-wide gifted contacts and leadership teams evaluate the Quest Program by meeting throughout the year to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Topics include: the identification process, including referral, assessment, and eligibility determination; curriculum effectiveness; delivery models/site schedules; strengths/weaknesses of gifted services.

Quest Program teachers continually evaluate student progress and adjust as needed with improvement plans being drawn up in accordance with the Quest Program Continuation Policy.

All teachers who provide gifted education services are evaluated annually by building-level administrators and supervisors. Professional learning opportunities are provided for all teachers through annual TABs training and Search and Eligibility Team training. Annually, district personnel keep records of the number of students referred for gifted evaluation, the sources of referrals, the number of students referred who qualify for gifted services and the number of students served in the gifted program. Data are kept by grade level, gender, and ethnicity.

In addition, the Newton County School System files its *LEA Gifted Education Self-Assessment Report* with the Gifted Education Specialist at the Georgia Department of Education as required.