
North Panola School District

Gifted Education Program Policies and Procedures

Revised and Approved by the North Panola Board of Trustees, September 19, 2017

NORTH PANOLA SCHOOL DISTRICT GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The North Panola School District provides a program of enrichment for intellectually gifted students in second through eighth grade. The classes are called “TARGET” and serve second through eighth grade students at each elementary school and the junior high school. Students at each school spend one day per week in the gifted “pull-out” program and the rest of the week in their general education classrooms.

Mississippi Department of Education gifted regulations and state mandate require that intellectually gifted students in grades two through eight be provided services by a teacher with gifted endorsement for a minimum of four hours per week, but a recommended five hours per week.

MISSION

The mission of the North Panola School District gifted program is to insure that intellectually gifted children, as defined by the Mississippi Department of Education, are offered appropriate educational experiences that are qualitatively different from those available in the regular classroom in order to provide opportunities for them to realize their abilities and potential.

MDE DEFINITION

The State of Mississippi defines “Intellectually Gifted Children” and “Gifted Education Programs” as follows:

“Intellectually Gifted Children” shall mean those children and youth who are found to have an exceptionally high degree of intelligence as documented through the identification process.

“Gifted Education Programs” (GEP) shall mean special programs of instruction for intellectually gifted children in grades 2-12, ... in the public elementary and secondary schools of this state. Such programs shall be designed to meet the individual needs of gifted children and shall be in addition to and different from the regular program of instruction provided by the district.

Although the State of Mississippi recognizes permissive programming for academically gifted students in grades 9-12; artistically gifted children in grades 2-12; and creatively gifted children in grades 2-12, only intellectually gifted programs in grades 2-6 are mandated by law. At this time, the North Panola School District offers the program for intellectually gifted children in the mandated grades, 2-6, but also serves students in grades 7-8.

PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Parents must be notified of their rights under FERPA. It is the obligation of North Panola School District to ensure that parents understand these rights. All information/data

collected as part of the identification process shall be placed in an individual eligibility file for each student. These files and the information contained therein shall not be placed in the student's cumulative record folder. The files shall be maintained in a separate locked storage facility/file cabinet, and access to the information shall be restricted to those personnel working directly with the identification process, working directly in the gifted education program, or that have a documented need to know. Once the referral process begins, parents must be informed of the information/data that is collected. Parents shall have access to these records. Each district shall have a policy that establishes the process that parents shall adhere to when requesting to access these files. Parents shall be made aware of their rights to an explanation of the results of the Assessment Team Report.

LOCAL SURVEY COMMITTEE (LSC)

Each district shall establish an LSC for the GEP. The LSC shall be involved in determining a student's eligibility for an intellectually gifted, artistically gifted, creatively gifted, and/or academically gifted program. The LSC shall include, but is not limited to, gifted education teachers and administrators. It may include regular education teachers, school psychologists or psychometrists, and parents. It should include a special education teacher when a student is being considered for eligibility under the twice-exceptional criteria. The LSC may be a building level committee which is responsible for students enrolled at that school, a district level committee which is responsible for student enrolled in the entire district, or a combination of the two.

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The identification process consists of a combination of subjective and objective measures to determine eligibility for the gifted program and includes an equitable opportunity for the inclusion of students who are culturally diverse, underachieving, disabled under IDEA guidelines, physically handicapped, or ADD/ADHD.

All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Access to this information is restricted to those personnel working directly with the identification process, working directly in the gifted education program, or that have a documented need to access. Parents have the right to view their children's records at any time.

STAGE 1: REFERRAL

Referral for the gifted education program is based on consideration of performance in the regular classroom, potential ability, test performance, intellectual characteristics, creativity, and/or leadership potential. While grades and/or achievement test scores might be an indicator of giftedness, by MDE Regulations, neither classroom behavior, grades, nor achievement test scores may be used to eliminate a student from the identification process.

As mandated in MDE Gifted Regulations, the North Panola School District follows the state minimal scale/percentile score criteria on all referral measures.

There are two types of gifted referral processes:

- Type One – The Mass Screening Referral Process addresses those students who are mass screened for gifted eligibility.
- Type Two – The Individual Referral Process addresses those students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility.

Type One: Mass Screening Referral Process

A normed group measure of intelligence will be administered to all first grade students in the mass screening referral process to assist in identifying students in underrepresented populations. All students who obtain a full scale/composite score at or above the 90th percentile shall move forward in the referral process.

In addition to the normed group measure of intelligence obtained in mass screening, a student shall satisfy two of the following criteria before moving forward to Stage 2 of the identification process, LSC Review of Referral Data:

1. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
4. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
7. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

Type Two: Individual Referral Process

This process involves students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility. Any student who does not meet the minimum acceptable criteria (score in the 90th percentile) on the normed group measure of intelligence during the Mass Screening Referral Process and does not qualify for the Emerging Potential for Gifted criteria, can be referred by anyone for the Individual Referral for Screening Process. The individually referred student shall not be excluded from the referral process by his or her performance on the normed group measure of intelligence administered during the Mass Screening Referral Process.

All students in grades served by the program comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients for gifted education services. A student may be referred for consideration, pending documentation of the above criteria, by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self, or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. A referral must be initiated by written request to the teacher of the gifted. The person initiating the referral shall sign the referral form and date it. Once the student is referred, the district personnel shall collect the data required to satisfy the referral criteria. Once a referral form has been initiated, signed, and dated, only the LSC or parents can stop the identification process.

Students participating in the Individual Referral Process shall satisfy three of the following criteria before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data Stage:

1. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a group measure of intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
4. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,

7. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
8. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

With parental permission, a group measure of cognitive abilities will be administered to all first grade and second grade students in a blanket preliminary screening for referral.

All students in grades served by the program comprise the initial screening pool of potential recipients for gifted education services. A student may be referred for consideration, pending documentation of the above criteria, by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self, or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. A referral must be initiated by written request to the teacher of the gifted. Once a referral process has been initiated with a dated and signed referral form, only the Gifted Local Survey Committee or parents can stop the identification process.

STAGE 2: LSC REVIEW OF REFERRAL DATA

Once the referral data have been collected, the LSC shall review all data and make one of the following recommendations:

1. the student has satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and should move forward to the assessment stage, or
2. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures, however, the LSC feels strongly that additional data should be collected and the student reconsidered at that time, or
3. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and the identification process should stop.

Provisions for Emerging Potential for Gifted Populations

At this point the LSC shall make the decision as to the possibility that the student could be eligible for consideration as a candidate for an emerging potential for gifted assessment. If it is believed that the student might have emerging gifted potential, then the Emerging Potential for Intellectually Gifted Assessment Checklist will be completed for possible use during the assessment process. The Emerging Potential for Gifted category makes provisions for factors that exist and may put the student at a disadvantage when inappropriate instruments are used during the assessment process.

STAGE 3: PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR TESTING

If a student meets the criteria for referral, the Gifted Local Survey Committee will recommend individual assessment to determine eligibility for an "Intellectually Gifted" ruling. Written parental permission for testing must be obtained before any individual testing is initiated and parents will be notified in writing of their rights under FERPA.

STAGE 4: ASSESSMENT

District personnel shall review and compile all data available on the student. This data shall be made available to a licensed examiner who will administer an individual test of intelligence.

In no case will the examiner be related to the student being tested. The examiner shall review all available data on the student to select the most appropriate test of intelligence. Standard operating procedures will be followed during the selection and administration of all assessments as reflected in the examiner's manuals.

A student must score at or above the 91st percentile composite/full scale or the 91st percentile on approved subtests (as per publisher) in order to satisfy eligibility criteria.

Identification criteria, as approved by the MDE on the North Panola School District Gifted Education Program Proposal, must be satisfied for a student to be ruled eligible by the LSC for the intellectually gifted education program.

Emerging Potential for Gifted

Students who have satisfied criteria on the Emerging Potential for Gifted Checklist who did not satisfy minimal acceptable criteria on an individual test of intelligence, but, did score at least at the 84th percentile or have a scale score that falls within the range of the 90th percentile confidence interval of the state minimum scale/percentile score, may be administered one of the following additional measures to determine eligibility:

1. A test of cognitive abilities with a minimal score at the 90th percentile,
2. A group intelligence measure with a minimal score at the 90th percentile, or
3. A district-developed matrix approved by the MDE.

Potentially Twice-Exceptional Students

In compliance with MDE gifted regulations, students who already have an eligibility ruling under IDEA and are being assessed for an intellectually gifted eligibility, will be considered potentially Twice-Exceptional. Students who did not satisfy all of the required minimal acceptable referral criteria, but did meet at least one referral criterion, shall have their results reviewed by the LSC and a licensed examiner. If the student scores at or above the 91st percentile on the individual test of intelligence composite score or approved subtest score or, in the opinion of the reviewing committee, would benefit from participation in the intellectually gifted program, the student may be granted a provisional eligibility for the intellectually gifted program for a period of one year. At the end of that year, the student's teacher of the gifted shall meet with the review committee to discuss the student's performance in the program. If the student has demonstrated success in the program, the LSC shall change the eligibility status from provisional to regular eligibility. If the student has not been successful in the program, the provisional eligibility shall be revoked.

STAGE 5: ASSESSMENT REPORT

District personnel shall compile an Assessment Report, which contains all the MDE required components:

1. Student's name,
2. Name of at least three measures from Stage 1: Referral that were used to determine the need to administer an individual test of intelligence,
3. Results of each measure,
4. Name of individual who administered or completed each measure and the date administered or completed,
5. Test behaviors for any individually administered test(s),
6. Interpretation of the results of each individually administered test(s),
7. Name of the person who administered the individual test of intelligence and date test was administered,
8. Qualifications of the individual who administered the individual test of intelligence,
9. Results of the individual test of intelligence to include scores on all subtests and, identified strengths and weaknesses,

10. Name of the person responsible for writing the Assessment Report, his/her signature, and position, and

11. Date of the Assessment Report.

STAGE 6: LSC ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Once the Assessment Report is finalized, the LSC shall meet to review all data and determine if eligibility criteria have or have not been satisfied. The LSC shall rule that the student is or is not eligible for the intellectually gifted program.

Parental Notification

Parents of each student tested will be notified in writing about the results of their child's assessment for the intellectually gifted program and their rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). District personnel shall offer to explain any of the results about which the parents have questions.

OUT-OF-STATE GIFTED ELIGIBILITIES

As each state has a unique set of eligibility criteria for placement in a gifted program, a student moving to Mississippi with a gifted eligibility from another state must satisfy Mississippi eligibility criteria before being considered for placement in the gifted program. The eligibility ruling from another state may be used to initiate the referral process in Mississippi.

There is no temporary placement in the gifted program while the student goes through the eligibility process within the district.

PLACEMENT IN THE GIFTED PROGRAM

Once a student is ruled eligible for placement in the gifted program, the parent has the right to agree to placement or withhold placement of the child in the program. Written parental permission must be obtained before the child can be placed in the program.

Participation in the Gifted Education Program is NOT a reward. It is an Entitlement under State Law (Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989, Mississippi Code Sections 37-23-171 through 37-23-181).

Once a student is determined eligible for a gifted program in Mississippi, no reevaluation testing is required to remain in the program. Although criteria may vary from district to district, an eligible determination is accepted by all school districts within the State of Mississippi.

INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

As TARGET students' work under specific Instructional Management Plan objectives and time frames, withholding permission to attend gifted classes shall not be used as a disciplinary measure.

North Panola Schools has a written IMP for the intellectually gifted program that the district offers. The IMP includes, at a minimum, the following components:

1. District mission/philosophy statement, including goals and objectives,
2. The components of the Mississippi Gifted Education Program Standards,
 - a. Differentiated activities,
 - b. Scope and sequence of program process skills (outcomes),

- c. Career exploration and life skills,
 - d. Exposure to and appreciation for the visual and performing arts,
 - e. In-class counseling/guidance for gifted students,
 - f. Socio-emotional needs of gifted students,
 - g. Affective needs of gifted students, and
 - h. Needs of gifted at-risk students.
3. Program outcomes for the specific gifted program(s) offered

The activities in the gifted class develop and enhance the process skills as established in the MDE required outcomes document, the teaching strategies notebook, and required components of the gifted program standards document. A differentiated curriculum that includes short-term exploratory activities and long-term activities that enhance the integration of advanced content and individual student's interests utilizing higher-level thinking skills, creative problem solving, critical thinking skills, research skills, personal growth and human relations exercises, leadership skills, and creative expression are provided in the gifted enrichment program. Activities also create an appreciation for the multicultural composition of the school and community. Failure to complete enrichment class assignments can be used as grounds for dismissal from the program.

CLASS SIZE

The Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989 requires teachers of the gifted to provide a gifted program that meets the individual needs of the gifted students being served. The size of each class in grades 2-8 should be fewer than 12 students. Once a class reaches 12 or more students, the integrity of the program could be negatively impacted. General education class size as mandated in the accreditation standards is inappropriate for gifted classes. The integrity of the program shall be maintained.

PERFORMANCE IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM

In the event a student has difficulty keeping up with regular classroom work, a conference will be held with the parent, classroom teacher, teacher of the gifted, and the student, if appropriate, to discuss the problem and to determine an appropriate course of action. The conference and plan of action will be documented and follow-up conferences will be held as needed.

As the academic progress and welfare of the students are of prime consideration, special situations will be handled on an individual basis.

HOMEWORK/CLASSWORK

As outlined in MDE Gifted Regulations, gifted students may not be required to make up classwork missed when they are scheduled to be in the gifted classroom. Gifted students shall be held accountable for demonstrating mastery of concepts and information on regularly scheduled tests. Homework assigned to the regular classroom students for the evening of the TARGET day must be completed.

GIFTED TEACHER'S TIME

All of the gifted program's teacher's instructional time is to be spent with identified, eligible gifted students. Teachers of the intellectually gifted cannot at any time teach students who are not eligible for the gifted program and/or teach the regular instructional program's curriculum to eligible gifted students assigned to them for gifted program services.

PLANNING TIME

Each teacher of the gifted in grades 2-8 should have a daily planning period of not more than 60 minutes. This time is needed to allow them to develop activities to meet the individual needs of their gifted students as required by law. If the time is combined, it may not exceed one-half day per week.

Each teacher of the gifted in grades 9-12 should have the same planning time as the regular education teachers at that school.

ASSESSMENT TIME

One teacher of the gifted may be assigned an average of one 60-minute period per day of assessment time to perform the duties related to referral, assessment, and LSC meetings. If the time is combined, it may not exceed one-half day per week.

VISITORS

Parents and interested parties are always welcome to visit the TARGET classes. Please contact the gifted education coordinator or teacher of the gifted to make arrangements.

ANNUAL REASSESSMENT FOR CONTINUED PLACEMENT

A committee shall meet at least annually to reassess each gifted student's continuation in the gifted program. The committee must include at least the student's teacher of the gifted and a designated administrative representative.

As stated in the MDE Gifted Education Regulations, "since participation in the gifted program is an entitlement under the law, the students should remain in the gifted program as long as they are being successful in the program. Grades and/or success in the regular education program are the responsibility of the regular classroom teachers and should not be considered as a reason for removal from the gifted program."

In the event a student fails to make progress or exhibits unsatisfactory participation in the gifted program, a meeting of the reassessment committee will be held to consider the student's performance. If the committee determines that the student is failing to make progress in the program, the student will be placed on probation in the gifted program for the next 9-weeks term. The parents will be notified and given an opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the decision and develop a plan of action. During this time, the student will continue to participate in the gifted program. If at the end of the period of probation, the student's performance improves to a satisfactory level, the student will be removed from probation and recommended for continued placement. If at the end of the 9-weeks term the student has failed to improve his/her performance to a satisfactory level, the reassessment committee can recommend the student be removed from the program. Documentation of all reassessment committee meetings must be maintained.

If the committee determines that the student should exit TARGET due to lack of progress and/or unsatisfactory participation in the program, the student's parents will be notified and given the opportunity to discuss the decision with the committee before the student is removed. Should the parents not agree to the removal of the student from the program, the district shall grant the parents a hearing.

HEARING PROCESS

Parents who are not in agreement with the school based committee decision to remove a student from the gifted program will present their concerns, orally or in writing to the principal of the school. The principal and parent will attempt to resolve the matter informally.

If the parents are not satisfied with the action taken by the principal, the parents shall, within five (5) school days after the meeting with the principal, put their concerns in writing and present them to the North Panola School District Gifted contact person. The gifted contact person will schedule a meeting of the District Local Survey Committee within five (5) school days or a timeframe agreed upon by the parents. Parents will be extended an invitation to attend the LSC meeting. The LSC will render a written decision based on information shared during the meeting.

REINSTATEMENT PROCEDURES

Students will be considered for reinstatement in the gifted program at the request of the parents and with the recommendation of classroom teachers. Consideration and arrangements for reinstatement in the program will be made through the Local Gifted Survey Committee and documented in the minutes. Written notification of the student's eligibility for reinstatement will be forwarded to the parents and teachers of the student. Written parental permission must be obtained before the student can be placed in the program.

PROPOSAL FOR GIFTED PROGRAM

The Proposal for Gifted Program Form must be submitted to the SBE for approval prior to providing a program for gifted students. Gifted Program Proposals may be approved for a period of up to five years, depending upon the district's annual self-evaluation on the Mississippi Gifted Education Program Standards and monitoring reports. Whenever a district makes changes to the local gifted program, the district shall submit a new Proposal for Gifted Program Form to the SBE for approval prior to implementing those changes. Districts shall submit a new Proposal for Gifted Program Form to the SBE within three months of the expiration of latest SBE approved proposal.

LOSS/REDUCTION IN FUNDING

If a district does not comply with the requirements of the Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989, the requirements of the Mississippi Gifted Education Program Standards, the requirements of these gifted program regulations, or fails to correct a problem identified during a program monitoring visit, state funds for the gifted program shall be withheld from that district until such time that compliance occurs. Prior to funds being withheld, the district shall be notified by certified mail of the intent to withhold funds and its right to request a hearing

For additional information or questions about the North Panola School District Gifted Education Program please contact LaShana Middleton, Gifted Contact Person.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

- Mississippi Gifted Education Act of 1989, Mississippi Code Sections 37-23-171 through 37-23-181
- Regulations for Gifted Education Programs in Mississippi (2006)