



## East Central BOCES Gifted and Talented Handbook

## Purpose

East Central BOCES (ECBOCES) recognizes that the student population includes students with exceptional academic abilities and talents. These students have a need for educational services that are consistent with their ability levels and learning characteristics. Programming for these students is the shared responsibility of teachers, gifted and talented coordinators, administrators, counselors, parents, and the learners themselves.

## Rationale

*The Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) requires all administrative units (AUs) in Colorado to identify and serve students between the ages of five and twenty-one, and age four in administrative units with Early Access, whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Administrative units include: school districts, Charter School Institute (CSI), multi-district administrative units and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).*

## The ECEA Definition of Gifted Children

*Those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any*

*or a combination of these areas of giftedness:*

- *General or specific intellectual ability*
- *Specific academic aptitude*
- *Creative or productive thinking*
- *Leadership abilities*
- *Visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities 12.01(16)*

## ECBOCES Gifted Education Mission

To provide access and support to gifted students and collaborators by using data to drive identification and programming through a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion which cultivates students' academic and social emotional growth while being mindful of the unique challenges of rural education.

## Overview of Identification

ECBOCES school districts follow state guidelines for identification of gifted students. Procedures have been established using a multiple criteria assessment approach. Multiple sources of assessment data and other qualitative information are reviewed over a period of time before formally identifying a student as gifted in one or more areas.

Students who demonstrate advanced abilities, but who do not have a complete body of evidence, will be placed on a talent pool list. They may receive intervention services and support as appropriate, but will not be formally identified unless a sufficient body of evidence is established. Identification decisions are made based on sound reasoning and data interpretation by a review team.

## Referral Process & Screening

### Referrals

Parents, teachers, counselors, community members, other students, and students themselves are invited to submit the names of students they view as potentially gifted or talented at any time. They are asked to indicate what they believe to be the student's particular strength area(s) and will be asked to complete a referral form. Once a student is referred, the identification team has 30 days to gather

documentation and evidence to assist in making an identification decision. At that point, one of three decisions are made: a student is formally identified as gifted, the review team finds that more data must be gathered, or the student is placed in the talent pool. Giftedness exists within all sub-groups of the population, and continuous attempts to improve the process will be made so that children identified as gifted reflect the diversity of the local community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Referral forms can be found on the ECBOCES gifted website at [ecboces.org](http://ecboces.org) or requested from the district GT coordinator.

## Screening

Standardized test scores for all students at all grade levels are screened for evidence of exceptionally high levels of performance on achievement tests. These assessments may include NWEA MAPs, iReady, CMAS, PSAT, SAT, and ACCESS. In addition, the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is administered to all 2nd grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students each year. This screening process, along with referrals, yields a list of nominees for identification for which GT coordinators will begin the process of gathering a body of evidence.

## Body of Evidence (BOE)

### Collection of Body of Evidence

The next stage in the identification process is to gather additional information that will aid in determining the student's talents and his or her programming needs. Data may be gathered in the following categories: Intellectual Ability, Achievement, Behaviors and Characteristics, Interviews, and Demonstrated Performance. All information collected will be placed on the BOE form.

### Review of Body of Evidence

Student data is analyzed by the district review team which consists of the gifted and talented coordinator and one or more of the following: classroom teacher, school counselor, building administrator, or ECBOCES gifted coordinator. The make-up of this group may change in order to include staff who are familiar with the child's abilities.

Some students do not perform well on standardized tests but may show evidence of exceptional ability in other ways. This is often true for those who are Twice-Exceptional (both gifted and learning disabled), second language learners, and children from low income backgrounds. In these cases, team discussion is necessary and further evidence may need to be gathered. Students are not denied services or identified on the basis of performance on any single score or instrument. Rather, those evaluating the data are looking for *sufficient evidence* of exceptional talent or ability to warrant special programming or services. This review is an *ongoing process*, and a student is not formally identified until a sufficient body of evidence is collected. Gifted identification recognizes and delineates exceptional strengths and potential in learners so that appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications can be provided.

## Types of Assessment and Data for Body of Evidence

Collection of data for a body of evidence (BOE) includes, but is not limited to assessment results from multiple sources and multiple types of data (i.e., qualitative and quantitative, cognitive ability, performance, parent and teacher input, motivation and observations of gifted characteristics and behaviors). The BOE contains data to identify the strength area(s) according to the definition of gifted children and also determines appropriate programming services. A BOE may consist of the following assessments:

### Cognitive Tests

Cognitive tests are designed to measure a student's general intellectual ability. Such tests do not measure specific academic aptitude in various content areas such as reading or math. Many general intelligence tests and checklists include items that assess both fluid reasoning, such as analogies, block designs, and pattern arrangements, and crystalized abilities, such as mathematics problems, vocabulary, and comprehension of reading passages (Johnsen, 2004).

### Creativity Tests

Assessment data from standardized, norm-referenced creativity tests are used to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in the area of Creative and

Productive Thinking. Creative aptitude is demonstrated by a student scoring at the 95th percentile or above on norm-referenced creativity tests. Some students who do not achieve qualifying scores on cognitive or achievement tests may still demonstrate characteristics of giftedness. Some students who do not achieve qualifying scores on cognitive or achievement tests may still demonstrate characteristics of giftedness, such as the high level of creativity typical of many gifted students.

### Achievement Tests

Assessment data from standardized, criterion- and norm-referenced tests are utilized to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in a specific academic area. Specific academic aptitude areas include reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language. Specific academic and talent aptitude is demonstrated by a student scoring at the advanced/distinguished level on criterion-referenced assessments and/or 95th percentile or above on norm-referenced achievement tests. Districts may use alternative achievement tests to determine advanced academic competence.

### Language Proficiency Tests

Students who are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs) are assessed annually on the ACCESS to measure acquisition of the English language. Data that shows accelerated achievement and/or accelerated growth may qualify as a piece of evidence for gifted identification.

### Behavioral Observation Scales

Gifted students often demonstrate characteristics that lead to a referral for the gifted identification process. Through the use of valid and reliable scales, stakeholders can identify outstanding talent by observing students in one or more settings that enable them to display their abilities. These characteristics may include leadership, motivation, strong memory, reasoning, curiosity, creativity, problem solving, and an advanced sense of humor. Norm-referenced observation scales may be used as qualifying data for gifted identification.

## Performance Evaluation

Gifted ability is often not measured on a specific assessment, but rather demonstrated through some type of performance. Identifying a student with exceptional abilities in a content area or a talent area such as art, music, dance, psychomotor, creativity or leadership may require an evaluation of performance. There are many types of performance data that might be utilized to develop a body of evidence. These may include:

### Juried Performance:

Students often participate in events within school or outside of school that are judged and evaluated. Students receive some type of rating based on their performance. Data from a valid and reliable juried performance may be considered as qualifying evidence if the jury consists of a team of experts in their field. An example of such a performance would be a student selected for a statewide choral group or debate team.

### Contest or Competition:

Contests and competitions may be available to students in or outside of school. Top placement in a regional, state or national competition may be considered as a qualifying measurement for gifted identification. An example of such a performance would be a student finishing first in a state science fair or Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) categorical competition at the state level.

### Portfolio:

Over time, some students develop a portfolio of work that may be evaluated by a team of experts in the field. The advanced or distinguished rating of a portfolio may be considered as qualifying evidence for gifted identification. A valid and reliable rubric is used in the evaluation of a portfolio to ensure consistency and equal opportunity. An example would be a collection of a student's artwork throughout elementary school with an evaluation of the portfolio by a committee of regional experienced art teachers. The ECBOCES districts have experts in the arts areas who are consulted for evaluating portfolios.

## Gifted Determination

When the review team has completed the review process, parents and teachers are notified of the decision. If the student has met the requirements for identification, an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) will be created within 30 school days. The student will then receive specific programming to match the area of identification.

## Programming

Programming for gifted identified students is meant to ensure that they continue to make appropriate growth in their strength area and to perform at advanced and distinguished levels. Programming is described in the student's Advanced Learning Plan and depending on resources available, may include advanced classes, curriculum compacting in the regular classroom, differentiated instruction in the regular classroom, rapid pacing through the curriculum, mentoring, social emotional support, or other targeted services. Programming may also include content area or grade level acceleration when appropriate. The district follows an acceleration policy when making whole grade acceleration decisions. Staff, parent(s), student and community all share responsibility for encouraging and supporting the student's continued growth in his or her identified strength area(s).

## Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)

The State of Colorado mandated that all identified gifted and talented students shall have an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP). These plans are to be reviewed and updated annually. Each plan consists of at least one strength-based goal for each identified area of giftedness, an affective goal, and a description of how the goals will be achieved. Plans are developed collaboratively with school personnel, the student, and family. Academic and affective goals are progress monitored midyear and at the end of the school year and results are shared with the parents. A copy of the ALP is placed in the child's cumulative file or on the district's electronic platform. The district has a transition process for transferring the ALP to the next grade level.



## Underachievement

In the event of a gifted student performing below their ability, the district uses its gifted education review team and the MTSS/RtI process to determine underlying issues affecting the student's achievement. A plan is developed and the student receives appropriate support and interventions as available.

## Portability

The Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) requires that a student who moves from one district in Colorado to another district in the state retains his/her gifted identification. This concept is referred to as "portability." This rule does not apply to students who transfer from out of state.

Portability means that a student's identification in one or more categories of giftedness transfers to any district in the state. Gifted programming must continue according to the receiving district's programming options. Portability of identification is a part of the student's permanent record and ALP. AUs will determine the process and procedure used to ensure the appropriate and timely transfer of a student's ALP that includes the student's gifted identification body of evidence. When the district receives a new student, the ALP is reviewed within 45 days and communication with parents occurs within 60 days.

## Parent, Family, Student Communication and Engagement

ECBOCES districts strive to provide opportunities for families to be involved with and participate in the school community. Parents are informed of identification procedures through information included in this handbook, letters sent home, and gifted identification information posted on the district and ECBOCES websites. Progress reporting of ALP goals occurs during parent teacher conferences and/or progress reports sent home. Programming options are discussed with parents and students during the development and review of the ALP. Parents are encouraged to participate in the school community by attending parent teacher conferences, school accountability committee meetings, and family nights hosted by the school. Parents have access to education about gifted topics and parenting gifted children through the ECBOCES gifted education website, monthly newsletters, book studies,

and parent speakers at GT regional events. ECBOCES and the districts have small libraries of books on the topic of parenting gifted students that may be checked out by parents.

## Procedure for Disagreement

### Dispute Resolution

ECBOCES recommends that member districts follow the dispute resolution guidelines listed below when concerns are presented in relation to gifted identification and programming.

- 1) Parents are notified of the identification or programming decision in writing by the local school district within five business days of the decision.
- 2) Parents have seven days from receipt of the notice to file a written notice of dispute with the school district gifted and talented coordinator.
- 3) The district gifted and talented coordinator (and teachers as needed) meet with parents to discuss the dispute.
- 4) At the end of the meeting, parents receive a summary of the meeting, including any decision adjustment if made.
- 5) If parents still have a disagreement with a school decision, parents have seven days to request district administration (principal and/or superintendent) to review the decision.
- 6) Parents receive a written summary of the meeting within five business days, including any decision adjustment if made.
- 7) If there is still no agreement, at the parent's or district's request, the ECBOCES gifted coordinator will review the case and may meet with parents and district representatives to assist with mediation.
- 8) Within five business days, parents receive a summary of findings and of any decision made after review of the case by the ECBOCES gifted coordinator.
- 9) If an agreement is not reached, parents can address the local district school

board who will be responsible for the final decision.

10) Parents are notified of the final decision in writing by the local school board within seven days.

## Gifted Education Websites

These links are posted as they may contain useful information but they link to sites that are not affiliated with East Central BOCES. While we strive for full accessibility in our digital content, we have no control over the content posted there and cannot guarantee the level of accessibility on these sites.

[East Central BOCES website \(ecboces.org\)](http://ecboces.org)

[Colorado Department of Education GT page \(http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt\)](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt)

[Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented \(https://www.coloradogifted.org/\)](https://www.coloradogifted.org/)

Contact Jodi Church at [jodic@ecboces.org](mailto:jodic@ecboces.org) to subscribe to GT family newsletters.

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