



# Walker County Schools Gifted Education Handbook

Revised, August 2017



To the Parents/Guardians of Gifted Education Students:

Congratulations! Your child is eligible for gifted services in Walker County Schools. The gifted program is designed to encourage students to discover their potential both academically and personally by providing challenges both in and outside the classroom setting.

Information has been included in this handbook that provides insight into the gifted delivery models used at each school, as well as a collection of forms and information related to gifted students.

Gifted teachers in Walker County meet frequently with classroom teachers to discuss your student's ability, motivation, potential, grades, and progress. Gifted teachers work with teachers in all grade levels to encourage differentiation in your child's instruction through lesson planning, content, assessment, products, and projects. Should your child start to have problems for any reason, please contact your child's teacher for a conference. These are conducted as needed but especially at progress report and report card times.

Gifted teachers may work directly with a group of students through collaboration with the classroom teacher -- looking for better ways to enrich and deepen student understanding of the curriculum through the state-mandated standards.

Please feel free to contact me or the school with questions, comments, or concerns. My email and telephone contact information has been included in this information.

Walker County Schools thanks you and appreciates this opportunity to work with your child!

Sincerely,

Robin Samples  
Director of Curriculum & Instruction  
Walker County Schools  
P: (706) 375-8049  
[robinsamples@walkerschools.org](mailto:robinsamples@walkerschools.org)

Our Mission: To ensure ALL students graduate  
Ready for College, Ready for Work, Ready for Life!

### **Gifted Education Mission Statement**

Georgia educators are committed to the belief that education is a means by which each individual has the opportunity to maximize his or her fullest potential. We believe that all students have a right to an educational experience that challenges their individual development and enhances their academic achievement. In accordance with this philosophy, the Walker County School District provides educational programs that recognize and make provisions for the unique needs of gifted and talented learners.

### **Definition**

A gifted student is 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 needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities. A gifted student may demonstrate expertise and experience in the specific content area. (Refer to O.C.G.A 160-4-2-.38)

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Gifted Education Goals**

Gifted students will develop and use advanced research skills and methods. Curriculum for gifted students should allow for the in-depth learning of self-selected topics within the area of study. This might also include using an accelerated pace and compacting curriculum as needed.

**Rationale:** Gifted learners possess an extensive knowledge base, learn at an accelerated pace, and are capable of advanced levels of comprehension. In addition, many gifted students are highly curious and intrinsically motivated, especially to pursue topics that interest them. As compared to their age-peers, gifted learners tend to have longer attention spans, exhibit a stronger need to know, and can follow-through with assignments. If gifted students are to benefit fully from these abilities, the gifted program must emphasize the development of skills that enable them to become effective as independent learners.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

Because of the advanced nature of their abilities and interests, gifted students need to learn how to access advanced-level reference materials, including a variety of print and non-print references and information retrieval systems. They need learning tasks that allow them to explore personal interests through guided research, independent study, and community involvement. In order to conduct authentic research, students need instruction and guidance in learning to ask the right kinds of questions by looking at techniques used by experts in the specific field. They need instruction in the development of a written plan of research (with emphasis on how one gathers, categorizes, analyzes, and evaluates information in particular fields), assistance in evaluating their own work, and consideration of implications for future research.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**Gifted students will develop and practice creative thinking and creative problem-solving skills with a variety of complex topics within the area of study.**

**Rationale:** Gifted learners have the ability to generate original ideas and solutions, and they characteristically see diverse and unusual relationships. Their instruction must allow opportunities to develop and apply these skills in meaningful situations. Because gifted individuals often exhibit differential patterns of thought processing (e.g., divergent thinking, sensing consequences, making generalizations), they need curricular opportunities to explore alternatives and consequences of those choices and to draw and test generalizations. Others may in some settings perceive the original thoughts and ideas often expressed by gifted students as odd or off-task. This results in the inhibition of creative thinking. The gifted program must provide an environment in which students feel free and safe to stretch beyond the "right" answer that often comes so easily for them. They should be encouraged to take risks and to experiment so that creativity can be developed.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services

**Gifted students will develop and use advanced communication skills. Curriculum for gifted students should encourage the use of new techniques, materials, and formats in the development of products that will be shared with real audiences.**

**Rationale:** It is important to remember that throughout history we have recognized "giftedness" in individuals because of the impact they have made on other individuals and society at large through their products, whether the area of giftedness is art, science, leadership, literature, etc. Feedback from real audiences provides gifted learners with a chance to improve their communication skills. Internal motivation develops when students pursue ever-increasing levels of excellence in their final products and receive confirmation from real audiences that others value their intellectual and academic talents.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**Gifted students will develop an understanding of self and how their unique characteristics may influence interactions with others.**

**Rationale:** Many gifted children experience difficulty in accepting some aspect of their giftedness. Their heightened self-awareness, accompanied by feelings of being different, can result in low self-esteem and inhibited growth emotionally and socially.

Consequently, there is a need to provide gifted students with time for interaction with other gifted students, reflection, and discussion for the purpose of self-understanding. A strong aptitude for solving problems allows gifted students to deal effectively with these concerns when given the opportunity and guidance needed. This type of involvement can also help provide students with a foundation for leadership development.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Referral, Screening, and Testing**

Anyone--teachers, counselors, parents, or administrators--may refer students for consideration for the gifted program. For acceptance into the program, tests and procedures are used to determine eligibility for gifted services. These tests and procedures meet standards of validity and reliability for the purpose of identifying gifted students and are nondiscriminatory with respect to race, national origin, gender, disabilities, or economic background.

School principals, counselors, and teachers shall also review the results of any norm-referenced testing that is available. Any student with a 90th percentile composite score, a 90th percentile total reading (including reading comprehensive), or a 90th percentile total math shall be considered. School principals, counselors, and teachers shall also review the results of the Georgia Milestones Assessment (GMAS). Any student who has achieved distinguished level on the reading and/or math for that grade level will be considered. These criteria shall constitute an automatic referral procedure.

Students may be retested after a calendar year. Tests given the year of the initial referral will not be re-administered. No student may be tested more than 3 times during elementary school. Written consent shall be obtained from parents **before** the evaluation process begins. Once parental permission for further evaluation has been secured, the current edition of the Cognitive Abilities Test shall be administered (or other approved norm-referenced test of cognitive abilities). Classroom teachers shall complete appropriate rating scales (Creativity Characteristics and Motivation Characteristics for grades K-6 and the Hawthorne, Creativity and/or Motivation Characteristics for grades 7-12). Only one rating scale may be used for placement. Scores that are available from an achievement test during the prior two years shall be entered on the referral form. Teachers and/or counselors shall help the student in gathering any product/performance information to be submitted as evidence of giftedness.

A panel of three educators composed of a gifted-endorsed educator, a teacher based in the school where the child attends, and another teacher or administrator based in the school where the child attends shall evaluate any projects/performances submitted. All evaluators must have expertise in the content area of the product/performance and experience working with children of the age level being evaluated.

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking is currently the primary source of determining eligibility for creativity. There are two forms of this test, offering variety between testing sessions if retesting is required. Product/performance could be used to determine eligibility in creativity, using the same committee process, but like a rating scale, product/performance should only be used in one area. Eligibility sheets will be used by the gifted education teacher to see if the student meets Georgia Department of Education criteria for placement in the Gifted Program and will be maintained on file for review. Parents shall be informed in writing of the student's eligibility status and shall be afforded an opportunity for a conference to discuss the student's eligibility criteria and placement.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must either (a) score at the 99th percentile (for grades K-2) or the 96th percentile (for grades 3-12) on the composite or full scale score of a standardized test of mental ability and meet one of the achievement criteria described below, or (b) qualify through a multiple-criteria assessment process by meeting the criteria in any three of the following four areas: mental ability (intelligence), achievement, creativity, and motivation. To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must meet the criterion score on a nationally-normed test and either have observational data collected on his or her performance or have produced a superior product. Information shall be collected in each of the four data categories for all students who are referred for gifted program evaluation. Any data used in one area to establish a student's eligibility shall not be used in any other data category. Any test score used to establish eligibility shall be current within two calendar years.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**1. Mental Ability.** Students shall score at the 96th percentile or above on a composite or full scale score or appropriate component score, as defined in Appendix A of the Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services, on a standardized test of mental ability. Mental ability tests shall be the most current editions of published tests that measure intelligence or cognitive ability, be reviewed for bias, and be normed on a nationally representative sample that includes minority representation within a 10-year period (group tests) prior to administration. These tests shall yield percentile rankings by age(s).

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**2. Achievement.** Students shall (a) score at the 90th percentile or above on the total battery, total math, or total reading section(s) of a standardized achievement test or (b) have produced a superior student-generated product or performance in which the superior performance is one that can be translated into a minimum score 90 on a scale of 1-100 as evaluated by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators. Standardized achievement tests shall be the most current editions of tests that measure reading skills, including comprehension, and shall give a total reading score and/or a total mathematics score based upon a combination of scores in math concepts and applications. These tests shall yield percentile rankings by grade(s). Performances and products shall be judged by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators and must have been produced within the two years prior to evaluation.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**3. Creativity.** Students shall (a) score at the 90th percentile or above on the total battery score of a standardized test of creative thinking or (b) receive a score at the 90th percentile or above on a standardized creativity characteristics rating scale or (c) receive from a panel of three or more qualified evaluators a minimum score of 90 on a scale of 1-100 on a structured observation/evaluation of creative products and/or performances.

Standardized tests of creative thinking shall be the most current editions of tests that provide scores of fluency, originality, and elaboration. These tests shall yield percentile rankings by age(s) or grade(s). Rating scales used to evaluate creativity shall relate to the construct of creativity and differentiated levels such that judgments equivalent to the 90th percentile are possible. As evidence of creativity, students, or individuals on behalf of students, may submit products or evidence of outstanding performances completed during the two calendar years prior to evaluation. The products/performances submitted shall be reviewed by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators as part of a comprehensive portfolio of creative productivity.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**4. Motivation.** Students shall (a) receive a score at the 90th percentile or above on a standardized motivational characteristics rating scale or (b) receive from a panel of three or more qualified evaluators a minimum score of 36 out of 45 on the Walker County Referral Rubric or (c) have a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale (as defined in Appendix A of the Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services), in which a 4.0=A and 3.0=B when using an average of grades from the regular school program. If the student is in grades 3-12, this average must have been earned during the previous two school years. Rating scales used to evaluate student motivation shall relate to the construct of motivation and differentiated levels such that judgments equivalent to the 90th percentile are possible. As evidence of motivation, students, or individuals on behalf of students, may submit products or evidence of outstanding performances made during the two calendar years prior to evaluation. The products/performances submitted should be reviewed by a panel of three or more qualified evaluators as part of a comprehensive portfolio that demonstrates a high degree of motivation and consistent productivity.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Outside Test Data**

Assessment data that has been gathered and analyzed by a source outside the student's school or school system must be considered as part of the nomination and evaluation process. However, the outside data shall not be substituted for data the school generates during the testing/evaluation process and may never be the sole source of assessment data. Systems shall never rely on them exclusively for determination of eligibility for gifted program services. Instead, outside test data may be used as part of a comprehensive profile of test and non-test evidence of advanced instructional needs. If any system elects to use outside test data to help establish student's eligibility, the local board of education shall collect and maintain statistical data that will allow the Department of Education to evaluate the impact of this practice on the identification of gifted students from all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

## **Curriculum Overview**

There are certain characteristics that generally differentiate gifted learners from more typical learners: the ability to learn at faster rates, their capacity to find, solve, and act on problems, their ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections, etc. Although it is recognized that not all gifted students exhibit identical behaviors and characteristics and, thus, have different needs, it is the unique behaviors and characteristics of gifted learners that must serve as the basis for establishing gifted program curriculum goals and then making decisions regarding specific curriculum units and activities.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

## **Principles of a Differentiated Curriculum for the Gifted/Talented**

Present content that is:

- Related to broad-based issues, themes, or problems.
- Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study.
- Present comprehensive, related, and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study.
- Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the area of study.
- Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
- Develop productive, complex, abstract, and/or higher level thinking skills.
- Focus on open-ended tasks.
- Develop research skills and methods.
- Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum.
- Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce new ideas.
- Encourage the development of products that use new techniques, materials, and forms.
- Encourage the development of self-understanding, i.e., recognizing and using one's abilities, becoming self-directed, appreciating likenesses and differences between oneself and others.
- Evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria through self-appraisal, criterion referenced and/or standardized instruments.

Source: National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented, Developed by the Curriculum Council (James J. Gallagher, Sandra N. Kaplan, A. Harry Passow, Joseph S. Renzulli, Irving S. Sato, Dorothy Sisk, Janice Wickless)

## **Elementary Services**

The Walker County School District's elementary gifted curriculum presents content that is related to broad-based issues, themes, or problems and is integrated into multiple disciplines as recommended by the Georgia Department of Education Gifted Education Program. The content and skills are complex, abstract, and challenging. This curriculum is a connection to core content standards (College and Career Georgia Performance Standards).

The primary delivery models at the elementary level are the Resource Model, Collaboration, and/or Cluster Model. The curriculum as mandated by the state is an interdisciplinary enrichment curriculum. National and state standards are embedded in the elementary curriculum. All elementary gifted students receive at least five (5) segments of gifted instruction per week.

The content of all gifted education curricula should be advanced for that grade level. Even when the Resource Model is used and the emphasis is on enrichment, as opposed to the delivery of core content, the subject matter should be advanced. In all delivery models the advanced content should be related to broad-based issues, themes, and problems.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**The Resource Class Model** is a model that meets the needs of gifted learners outside the regular classroom/core curriculum -- e.g., time to explore areas of interest in depth; opportunity to dig into complex, interdisciplinary studies; activities to help them develop research skills, creative thinking and creative productivity skills; time to be together with intellectual peers (which is important for both social-emotional and motivational reasons); etc. The Resource teacher

must have a current GaPSC approved gifted endorsement. **The Resource Model is not intended for delivery of core content instruction.**

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

**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. The regular classroom teacher must have a current GaPSC approved gifted endorsement. A maximum of two (2) gifted FTE segments per day may be counted at the gifted weight. The teacher must document the curriculum differentiation for the gifted student(s) by completing individual or group contracts which include the following requirements:

1. 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.
2. Separate lesson plans which show reason(s) why the gifted student(s) needs an advanced curriculum in the content areas of English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages; and
3. Dates and amount of time (in segments) the student(s) will be engaged in the higher-level activities and how the student(s) will be evaluated (formative and summative).

Additional information may be secured from <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Gifted-Education.aspx>

**The Collaborative Teaching Model (K-12)** -- Direct instruction may be provided by a regular classroom teacher, but there must be substantial, regularly scheduled collaborative planning between the content area teacher and the gifted specialist (the teacher with the gifted endorsement who is serving as the instructional facilitator). The gifted specialist, the regular classroom teacher, and the gifted student (when appropriate) collaborate in the development of challenging assignments that substitute for or extend the core curriculum objectives, which the identified gifted student has already mastered. Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

The curriculum activities and delivery models used in gifted programming should (a) be sensitive to the unique social and emotional needs of gifted students and (b) encourage the development of self-understanding. Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

Student achievement should be evaluated by using appropriate and specific criteria based on the higher expectations we have for our most capable students. Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Secondary Services**

The Walker County School District's secondary gifted curriculum presents content that is related to broad-based issues, themes, or problems and is integrated into multiple disciplines as recommended by the Georgia Department of Education Gifted Education Program. The content and skills are complex, abstract, and challenging. This curriculum is a connection to core content standards (College and Career Georgia Performance Standards). The primary delivery models at the secondary level include the **Advanced Content Model, the Cluster and/or Collaborative Model, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and Dual Enrollment**. National and state standards are embedded in the curriculum at all levels and include students who have demonstrated exceptional ability and motivation in a particular content area. Students who are not identified as gifted but who have demonstrated exceptional ability and motivation in a particular content area may be included in these courses.

The **Advanced Content Model** is one model used to deliver gifted instruction at the secondary level. Students are homogeneously grouped on the basis of achievement and interest in a specific academic content area. The district includes students who are not identified as gifted but who have demonstrated exceptional ability and motivation in a particular content area. Secondary teachers of the gifted must provide a syllabus that identifies the accelerated/advanced content of the course. Types of courses included in the Advanced Content Model are:

1. Advanced Placement (AP) Courses -- The teacher must have the appropriate content area certification. In addition, the teacher must (a) have been trained by the College Board in that specific AP course and have had at least 10 clock hours of staff development in characteristics of gifted learners and curriculum differentiation for gifted students; and (b) have the gifted endorsement.

2. International Baccalaureate (IB) Courses -- The teacher must have the appropriate content area certification. In addition, the teacher must (a) have been trained by the International Baccalaureate Program in that specific IB subject area and have had at least 10 clock hours of staff development in characteristics of gifted learners and curriculum differentiation for gifted students; and (b) have the gifted endorsement.

3. Gifted/Honors Courses -- The teacher of a locally developed honors course curriculum must have the appropriate content area certification and a current GaPSC gifted endorsement in order to count the gifted students in the class at the gifted FTE weight.

4. Dual Enrollment—Students may access college courses while still enrolled at the high school level. Students are required to satisfy academic criteria in order to receive services using this model.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Continued Participation**

Each school within the system shall review the progress of each student receiving gifted education services each year. Any student who receives gifted education services shall continue to receive services, provided the student demonstrates satisfactory performance in gifted and regular education classes as described in the system's Continuation Policy. Local schools shall provide to any student who fails to maintain satisfactory performance in gifted education classes and/or regular education classes a probationary period in which the student shall continue to receive gifted education services while attempting to achieve satisfactory performance status. The length of this probationary period shall be determined by the team, but is for a minimum of six weeks before the team meets to determine progress. Students who fail to demonstrate satisfactory performance in gifted and/or regular education classes during the probationary period and for whom gifted services are no longer appropriate shall have a final review before cessation of services occurs. A student may resume receiving gifted education services upon meeting the criteria adopted by the school team (minimum of six weeks between meetings).

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Reciprocity**

Any student who meets the state eligibility criteria for gifted education services shall be considered eligible to receive gifted education services in any school system within the state. However, a student transferring from one school system to another within the state shall meet the criteria for continuation of gifted services in Walker County. The Georgia General Assembly enacted several laws relating to the education of children of military families that impact the gifted education reciprocity of students whose households include a member of the United States uniform services. The goal of the legislation is to maximize a student's educational continuity despite the frequent movement across states and school districts. These laws are codified at O.C.G.A. 20-2-2140 through 20\_2-2180. Eligible students are school-aged children whose household includes at least one of the following:

1. An active duty member of the uniformed services.
2. A member or veteran of the uniformed services who is severely injured and medically discharged.
3. A member of the uniformed services that died on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty. There is no mandated reciprocity between states.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

Students who transfer into the Walker County School System with gifted placement from another state shall be automatically referred for evaluation. The gifted program teacher shall evaluate existing test scores and shall determine if additional testing is needed to meet Georgia requirements.

### **Curriculum and Services Provided**

Curriculum for gifted students in Walker County incorporates the State Board of Education approved student competencies and Georgia Performance Standards. Curriculum objectives shall focus on developing cognitive, learning, research and reference, and metacognitive skills at each grade grouping, using principles of differentiation, in one or more of the following content areas: mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, foreign language, fine arts and vocational/technical education. Walker County submits to the Georgia Department of Education a description of the differentiated curricula used for instruction of gifted students. The local system shall review and revise (if revisions are needed) its curricula for gifted students at least annually. An updated copy of the local program description shall be submitted to the Department of Education whenever changes are made.

Students identified as gifted and whose participation has received parental consent shall receive at least five (5) segments per week (or the yearly equivalent) of gifted education services, using one of the approved models described in Section V of the Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

Source: Georgia Department of Education Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

### **Probation and Termination of Services**

According to State and Walker County Procedures, continued placement in the Program for the Gifted shall be based upon satisfactory performance in gifted and regular education classes.

For **elementary students**, satisfactory performance in regular education shall be based on the student maintaining passing grades in all gifted education subjects and an overall 80 average (at least a 3). Satisfactory performance in the gifted resource class shall be based on the recommendation of the teacher of the gifted student, with such recommendation to be based on required products, active participation, and regular attendance. A child who fails to meet these criteria will be placed on probation for a time period as determined by the committee. At the end of the probationary period the student's status regarding continued placement will be reviewed.

For **middle school and high school students**, satisfactory performance in gifted education shall be based on maintaining passing grades in gifted education classes. However, middle and high school students should not be removed from gifted level courses that they are passing without parent consent. Parents will be notified when a student's placement is in danger. A student who fails a gifted level class will not be allowed to continue to take gifted level classes in that content area during the following semester. Upon satisfactory performance in a subsequent honors level class in that content area, a student will be allowed to petition for reinstatement in a gifted level class. After a period of academic probation, any student who has not demonstrated appropriate academic progress in accordance with the Walker County School District's policy for the continuation of gifted services will be terminated.

### **Professional Development**

Walker County promotes participation of gifted education specialists and general education teachers in professional development communities designed to increase subject matter knowledge, improve the use of curricula and instructional strategies, and assessment measures that are appropriate for gifted and talented students. Professional learning opportunities are also provided to enable teachers to acquire gifted endorsement.

### **Program Revision**

All gifted program operations and services will be reviewed annually for compliance with state regulations and program changes.

## Gifted Education Referral and Eligibility Process Chart

