

## **Programs for Highly Capable Students**

### **Definition**

Highly capable students are students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present not only in the general populace, but are present within all protected classes.

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

- (1) Capacity to learn with unusual depth of understanding, to retain what has been learned, and to transfer learning to new situations;
- (2) Capacity and willingness to deal with increasing levels of abstraction and complexity earlier than their chronological peers;
- (3) Creative ability to make unusual connections among ideas and concepts;
- (4) Ability to learn quickly in their area(s) of intellectual strength; and
- (5) Capacity for intense concentration and/or focus.

The following procedures shall be employed to nominate, assess and select students to participate in the program:

### **Nomination**

Referrals are accepted in the fall. Anyone may refer students, including but not limited to: teachers, parents/guardians, staff, friends, students, members of the community, however, parent/guardian permission will be required for testing. Referral forms are available on the district website, from secretaries at each building, the Sequim Boys & Girls Club, and the Sequim Public Library.

### **Transfer Students**

Students previously identified as Gifted or Highly Capable have an opportunity to present records of eligibility within 3 months of enrollment in the Sequim School District. Students who transfer from out-of-district and have qualified to receive Highly Capable/Gifted services in their previous district will not automatically be enrolled in the Highly Capable program. The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee will review test scores and placement letters from the prior district to determine if they meet the selection criteria of the Sequim School District. With parent permission, the student will begin to receive Highly Capable Program services or will be asked to participate in the next Sequim School District identification process.

Students who transfer to Sequim School District after the referral window has closed and have not been previously identified as Highly Capable/Gifted, will have the opportunity to be assessed for the Highly Capable program during their first three months of enrollment with parent/guardian permission.

**Screening**

The district will screen each nominee to identify students who qualify for further assessment. Screening criteria may include, but is not limited to, state assessment scores, and/or achievement scores. The district will also review state assessments for students who may have not already been referred.

**Assessment**

Students who are nominated will be assessed.

Prior to conducting assessment(s) to determine eligibility for participation in the program the district Highly Capable Program Coordinator shall obtain written parental permission.

Nominees will be assessed using multiple objective criteria. The assessment process shall be based upon a review of each nominee’s capability as shown by multiple criteria, from a wide variety of sources and data, intended to reveal each nominee’s unique needs and capabilities. The assessment criterion consists of both qualitative and quantitative instruments and may include, but is not limited to:

- CogAT7 Full Scale Test Battery Scores
- State assessment scores, achievement scores
- SIGS (Scales for Identifying Gifted Students) from the student’s teacher and parent(s)/guardian(s)
- SOI Creativity Short Form
- Classroom assessments and performances, and/or other corroborating or extenuating evidence, at the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee’s discretion (WAC 392-170-055).

Test results shall be recorded in the Highly Capable Program files.

To the extent practicable, screening and assessments will be given in the native language of the student. If native language screening and assessments are not available, a nonverbal screening and assessment will be used.

**Selection**

A Multidisciplinary Selection Committee, composed of: a special teacher (provided that if a special teacher is not available, a classroom teacher shall be appointed); a psychologist or other qualified practitioner with the training to interpret cognitive and achievement test results; a certificated coordinator or administrator with responsibility for the supervision of the district’s highly capable program; and additional professionals, if any, that the district deems desirable, will evaluate individual student assessment profile data. The selection decision is based on:

- (1) A preponderance of evidence from the profile data demonstrating that a student is among the most highly capable;
- (2) Evidence of clear need for highly capable services; and
- (3) Determination of which students would benefit the most from inclusion in the district’s program.

A single assessment score or indicator will not prevent a student's selection for the Highly Capable Program; however, individual pieces of evidence, if strong enough, can indicate that the student would benefit from services.

Highly Capable selection decisions will be based on consideration of criteria benchmarked on local norms, but local norms may not be used as a more restrictive criteria than national norms at the same percentile.

Subjective measures such as teacher recommendations or report card grades may not be used to screen out a student from assessment. These data points may be used alongside other criteria during selection to support identification but may not be used to disqualify a student from being identified.

The parent(s)/guardians(s) of students tested will receive notification from the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee. Notification will indicate that the student:

- a. Will receive Highly Capable Program Services,
- b. Will not receive Highly Capable Program Services at this time, or
- c. That more information is needed.

The notification will also contain:

- a. Full explanation of the procedures for identification of highly capable students,
- b. An explanation of the appeals process,
- c. An explanation of the procedures to exit a student from the program, and
- d. The information on the district's program and the options that are available to identified students.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) must complete and return a program participation permission form before any special services and programs are provided to the student.

### **Process for Appeal**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) have the right to appeal the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee's decision. Individuals appealing the Selection Committee's decision must submit a completed appeal form or letter (written or email will suffice) requesting review of the selection/placement decision. The written request must include reasons for the appeal and, to support reconsideration, provide additional evidence of significantly advanced cognitive or academic levels and/or outstanding intellectual, academic, or creative abilities.

The appeal request and supporting evidence must be submitted to the Program Coordinator within 15 school days (including Spring Break) of the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee's written decision. The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee will review the student's file, assessment profile data, and any additional evidence provided in the request for appeal. The appeals decision will be sent to parent(s)/guardian(s) in 3 weeks' time from the closing date of the appeals process. The decision of the appeals committee is final.

**Exit Process**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may request that their children not participate in services that are offered. If the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) choose to exit from the Highly Capable Program, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must turn in an Exit form to the Coordinator of the Highly Capable Program. If exited from the program, the student *maintains eligibility*. Students will be exited from the program when leaving the school district; however, maintains eligibility upon re-entering to the school district.

**Program Design**

The district will make a variety of appropriate program services available to students who participate in the program. Once services are started, a continuum of services will be provided to identified students in grades K-12. The district will keep on file a description of the educational programs provided for identified students. The district reviews services annually for each student to ensure that the services are appropriate.

The District will offer highly capable students the following programs, which may include, but are not limited to:

**Classroom Cluster:** Identified highly capable students in a grade level are assigned to a single classroom with a teacher who has specialized training in education of gifted students. The other students in the class are of mixed ability (1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Honors Courses:** Curriculum is delivered more quickly and with greater depth and complexity.

**Flexible Grouping:** Students may be identified either by interest or ability and grouped accordingly for instruction and/or learning experiences. This group can include multiple ages and can reconfigure as the curricular content changes.

**Independent Study Projects:** Students may work with a teacher, the Highly Capable Program Coordinator, or a counselor to independently learn material about a subject of personal interest.

**Accelerated Courses:** Students may take a course above their grade level with eligibility. Students in grades 9 through 12 are guided by our high school counselors and Highly Capable Program Coordinator to a variety of Honors, accelerated, and/or AP classes.

**Reporting**

The Superintendent or designee shall provide at the close of each fiscal year an end-of-the-year report on forms provided by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) which may include:

- Number of students served by grade level K-12;
- Student demographic information;
- Data to determine if students who are highly capable met the goals set and if the programs provided met the academic needs of these students;
- Number and content of professional development activities provided for special teachers and general education staff;

- Program evaluation data and, if needed, program changes that will be made based upon this information; and
- Final fiscal report that reports on activities and staff funded by this program.