Talent Development and Acceleration Services
FAQs-Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if my child is gifted?

There is no definite way to know when a child is gifted. There are myriad of stories which illustrate that gifted children often think and/or perform differently from other children their age. Children identified as gifted typically have mental abilities in the upper 2 1/2 to 3 percent of the population. Parents are often the first to recognize a child’s giftedness. They see that their child seems advanced in language and the ability to understand and infer compared to others of the same age. If you feel your child may be gifted, please contact the gifted and talented contact at your child’s school site.

I believe my child is gifted and would like to have him/her evaluated. What do I do?

If you feel that your child is gifted and is currently enrolled in a St. Paul public school, please contact the TDAS Contact at your child’s school. If your child is a preschooier, attends school at a charter school, or attends a school in a different district, please visit the Talent Development and Acceleration Services website for information about the portfolio process. You can also contact the district elementary or secondary gifted and talented teacher on special assignment or the TDAS Supervisor. See the website for more detail: spps.org/tdas

When are students identified and when do they start service?

In SPPS we assess students through the CogAT7 and the portfolio process. It is our intention to provide multiple measures for students to be assessed. When students are identified for accelerated services this identification remains with them throughout their K-12 academic career in SPPS.

All SPPS kindergarten and 2nd grade students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT7). Students in grades 1, 3, 4, and 5 may take the test by nomination from a parent, teacher, family member of other knowledgeable party. The CogAT7 measures general reasoning abilities in three domains: verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal.

Gifted and Talented services are site based, you can contact your child’s school to find out specific details about G/T services that are available for your child. As students move into the middle school level, this information is shared with the middle school staff who continue the process of matching student needs with academic opportunities. During the registration process for middle and high school students and families are made aware of advanced academic opportunities by school counselors and administrative personnel.
How will I know if my child has been identified?

Families of students who are identified for gifted and talented services receive letters from the Talent Development and Accelerated Services department. Families may also be contacted by the gifted specialist in the school the child attends. You can contact your child’s school for information about gifted and talented services that are available at your child’s school.

What kind of information is used in identifying student needs?

A variety of evidence is used for student identification for gifted and talented services. Generally, measures of performance, cognition, and achievement are collected by the CogAT7 test or through the comprehensive portfolio process. The CogAT7 measures general reasoning abilities in three domains: verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal. The portfolio review includes: student demographic information, academic test scores, multi-dimensional holistic rating scales, a parent inventory, and a student work sample.

What are the benefits of the portfolio process for gifted and talented identification?

In SPPS the portfolio process is an alternative way to identify gifted learners. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), using a standardized test may not accurately effectively identify all students. Portfolio reviews may include: student demographic information, academic test scores, multi-dimensional holistic rating scales, parent inventory, and student work samples. Family members, school teachers/staff/administrators, or community members can recommend a student for the portfolio process.

Which standardized gifted and talented test is administered in the St. Paul Public School district?

SPPS currently administers the following standardized test at the elementary level which are used as evidence in making decisions concerning gifted programming: Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) which measures verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative aptitude.

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Do gifted programming efforts change as students move from elementary to middle to high school?

As students grow and move from the elementary level to the middle school level to the high school level opportunities and programming efforts vary as does selection criteria for those opportunities. Gifted opportunities are available in each of our district schools. Additionally, independent selections: honors course, college prep, Advanced Placement courses, College in The Schools, and Post-Secondary Educational Options are available at the High School level.
If my child was in another district’s gifted program, are they guaranteed placement in St. Paul Public Schools program?

Participation in a gifted program in another school district does not necessarily qualify a student for gifted service in St. Paul Public Schools. We evaluate a new student’s needs in the same way we evaluate the needs of all SPPS students. We review information a student brings from another school district. At the high school level, a counselor analyzes the student’s transcripts and works with the student to find appropriate course selections and extracurricular opportunities.

Are there any International Baccalaureate (IB) Schools in the St. Paul Public School district?

Yes, SPPS has several IB schools. At the elementary level we have three International Baccalaureate-Primary Years Programme sites: Benjamin E. Mays, Highland Elementary, and Hazel Park Preparatory Academy. At the Secondary level we have the Middle Years Programme at Highland, Ramsey, and Hazel Park Preparatory Academy. We have the Middle Years Programme & Diploma Programme at the following senior high schools: Central, Harding, and Highland.

How is Saint Paul Public Schools developing the talent of children district wide?

SPPS offers professional development for the gifted and talented building contacts. The information gained through professional development impacts instruction in the classroom. Examples of professional learning topics include: differentiation, enrichment in the general education classroom, acceleration, and other topics as requested by sites. The Talent Development and Acceleration Services department also works in collaboration with professional development provided by other academic areas (ie. literacy, math, science, social studies, etc.) across the school district.

How can I find out about different extracurricular opportunities that might appeal to my gifted child?

Contacting the school site your child attends is the most efficient way for options to be reviewed. At the high school level, contact the guidance counselor at your child’s school. You can also look at options that may be available on our TDAS website under Enrichment Resources for Students and Families. If your question about gifted services in St. Paul Public Schools was not answered in this FAQ list, please contact the Talent Development and Accelerated Services team: tdas@spps.org