COLORADO
Department of Education

# Gifted Identification

## *Chapter 3 - Revised*


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# Introduction

The Exceptional Children's Educational 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).

ECEA Rules specify the areas for gifted identification in Colorado. A student may be identified in **one or more** of these domains (areas):

**General or Specific Intellectual Ability**
Intellectual ability is exceptional capability or potential recognized through cognitive processes (e.g., memory, reasoning, rate of learning, spatial reasoning, ability to find and solve problems, ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections).

**Specific Academic Aptitude**
Specific academic aptitude is exceptional capability or potential in an academic content area(s) (e.g., a strong knowledge base or the ability to ask insightful, pertinent questions within the discipline). All academic areas should be considered.

**Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Musical, Dance or Psychomotor Abilities (Talent Aptitudes)**
Visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance or psychomotor abilities are exceptional capabilities or potential in talent areas (e.g., art, drama, music, dance, body awareness, coordination, and physical skills).

**Creative or Productive Thinking**
Creative or productive thinking is exceptional capability or potential in mental processes (e.g., critical thinking, creative problem solving, humor, independent/original thinking, and/or products).

**Leadership Abilities**
Leadership is the exceptional capability or potential to influence and empower people (e.g., social perceptiveness, visionary ability, communication skills, problem solving, inter- and intra-personal skills, and a sense of responsibility).

**Identification ensures that appropriate programming meets the academic and affective needs and post-secondary outcomes of identified gifted students.**

# Portability

The Exceptional Children's Educational 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."

**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 Advanced Learning Plan. AUs will determine the process and procedure used to ensure the appropriate and timely transfer of a student's Advanced Learning Plan that includes the student's gifted identification profile (body of evidence, or BOE). The transfer process may include secure electronic file transfers or mailing of the student's record to the new district/school. When a student transfers from one district to another, it is important that the sending district include gifted education records with all other student records sent to the receiving district. Names and contact information of AU Gifted Directors/Coordinators may be found on the CDE Gifted Education website.

Administrative units are encouraged to have a process to notify the appropriate gifted educator in a district of a newly enrolled gifted student. This may occur with a review of an incoming student's records and through the registration process when parents indicate their child has a gifted identification.

The rule for gifted portability means districts shall develop identification processes that are aligned to identification procedures defined by the Colorado Department of Education. Common guidelines support a universal and consistent practice for recognizing students with exceptional ability and potential. Districts are responsible for selecting appropriate tools that will support identification of students from underrepresented populations. Although rules require portability, districts have the autonomy to select the specific instruments and procedures that will be utilized for gifted identification. These assessment tools may vary across districts but the criteria do not vary. **If the receiving district's gifted review team determines the previous district identified the student using criteria not aligned to state guidelines, the rule for portability does not apply.** If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the receiving district to consult with the former district, parents and student to re-evaluate the identification determination.

The rule for portability does not apply to students moving into Colorado from another state. However, the receiving school should review the student's records for evidence of giftedness, and then determine whether additional assessment is necessary to confirm if the student meets Colorado criteria for gifted identification. Districts should also be aware of the parameters within the Military Compact Agreement for identified gifted students moving to Colorado as a result of a military transfer.

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children created legislation to ease school-to-school transfers for military children. The intent of the Compact is to minimize the disruption in education when a military child is forced to move as a result of a transfer or deployment. The Compact states:

> *The receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational programs based on current educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state or participation/placement in like programs in the sending state. Such programs include, but are not limited to: 1) gifted and talented programs; and 2) English as a second language (ESL). This does not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.*

The following graphic illustrates the steps for portability:

# Assessment

**Assessment** is the process of gathering information using appropriate tests, instruments and techniques. The information is gathered for a specific purpose such as screening, classification or selection, curriculum planning or diagnosis, program planning and progress evaluation (Johnsen, 2004).

The purpose of assessment is to gather information relevant to making a decision (Davis, 2003). The gifted identification process focuses on research-based assessment practices to ensure multiple pathways to identification are available. Not all gifted students demonstrate the same profile of potential and/or ability. Gifted abilities are manifested in a variety of ways; therefore, multiple pathways to identification must be explored through the use of a variety of types and sources of assessment. The National Association for Gifted Children's *Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards* state, "Each student reveals his/her exceptionalities and potential through assessment evidence so that appropriate instructional accommodation and modifications can be provided" (2013).

Assessment means methods, tools, and data collected as a **body of evidence** (BOE) for use in identification and programming. [C.R.S. 22-20-202(5)]

**2.2.2. Educators select and use multiple assessments that measure diverse abilities, talents, and strengths that are based on current theories, models, and research.**

# Body of Evidence

A body of evidence should consist of quantitative and qualitative measures to determine if a student meets the criteria for gifted identification **and** to build a student profile of strengths and interests. Quantitative assessment provides numerical scores or ratings that can be analyzed or quantified. Qualitative assessment provides interpretive and descriptive information about certain attributes, characteristics, behaviors or performances. The former is considered objective, while the latter is considered subjective.

| Quantitative | Qualitative |
| --- | --- |
| • Norm-referenced test (e.g., cognitive and achievement)<br>• Criterion-referenced test (e.g., state assessment and curriculum based measures) | • Rubric<br>• Performance<br>• Observation<br>• Checklist<br>• Interview |

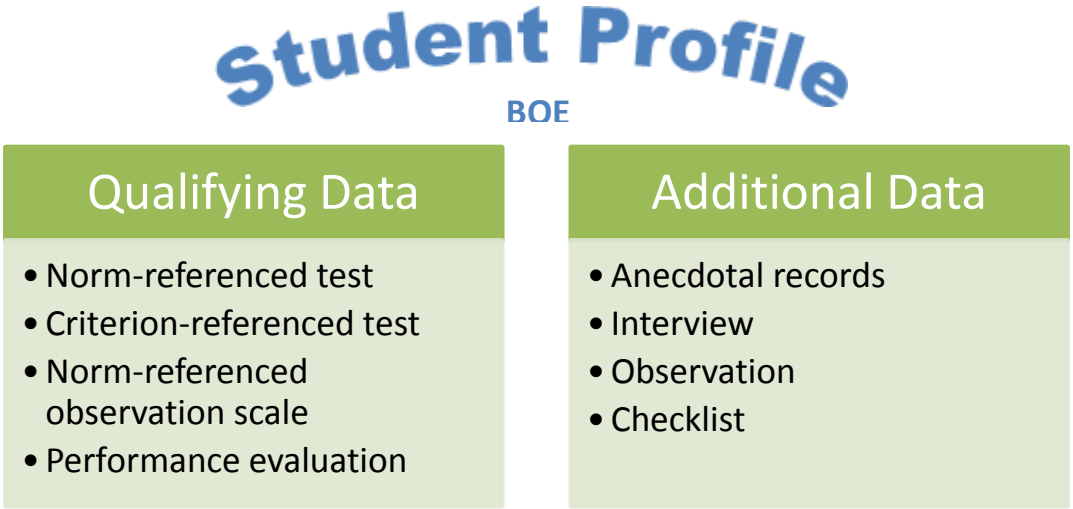
While some of the data in a body of evidence will be used to meet the **criteria** for gifted identification, other data or information may be used to build a learner profile for the purpose of developing appropriate programming options.

Criteria are the rules for evaluating a level of exceptionality for identification assessment. The 95th percentile ranking and above describes the rule for demonstration of exceptionality on a standardized, nationally-normed test or observation tool. A performance assessment that indicates exceptionality compared to age mates includes a rating that exceeds expectations or demonstrates distinguished/advanced command. Performance indicators may include criterion-referenced tests, portfolio or observation. Criterion-referenced data may be used as qualifying evidence if the student's performance level exceeds grade-level expectations or if "up-level" assessments are used.

**Criteria are not cut-off scores.** Typically, cut-off score terminology is used in reference to practices that eliminate students from access to further identification assessment because a **single** test result or score did not provide evidence at the exceptional level. Colorado does not adhere to cut-off score practices. Review teams should continue to explore additional data to reveal student strengths.

**Although the criteria for identification may be met by cognitive assessment data, a comprehensive body of evidence is still collected and examined to determine a student's strength area, affective needs and appropriate programming options.**

A variety of measures are contained within a body of evidence. A measure is the tool; a metric is the numeric result of using that measure. A cognitive test is an example of a measure that assesses general intelligence. This test provides a metric to express a level of cognitive ability.




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 data about achievement, cognitive ability, performance, parent and teacher input, motivation and observations of gifted characteristics/behaviors). The body of evidence contains data to identify the strength area(s) according to the **definition** of gifted children, and also informs decisions about appropriate programming services.

**A body of evidence considers intellectual, academic and talent areas through use of multiple sources and types of data.**

CDE has developed a resource matrix describing the most common assessments used in Colorado for the purpose of gifted identification. It is important to note that the matrix is intended for informational purposes as CDE does not approve specific identification instruments. An AU must consider the purpose, reliability and validity of a specific test to guide appropriate instrument selection for the purpose of identification. The scope of the assessment should include items to measure exceptional ability and not just grade-level, foundational skills.

See the ***Matrix of Commonly Used Assessments*** found on the CDE Gifted Education website. http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt

## *A body of evidence 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).

For example, the *Cognitive Abilities Test* (CogAT) is divided into three batteries: Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal. An exceptional score on the nonverbal battery does not mean the student should be identified gifted in the area of nonverbal. "**Nonverbal**" is not one of Colorado's areas for identification. An exceptional score on the nonverbal battery indicates a student demonstrates a strong command in general or fluid reasoning and can conceptualize at an advanced level using the format of pictures and images. The Nonverbal CogAT battery and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test **do not** measure visual-spatial ability. The multi-dimensionality of the nonverbal items does not require a student to create a mental model or use three-dimensional problem solving to select a correct response. Therefore, the battery is not measuring spatial abilities. Rather, it is measuring fluid reasoning.

When only cognitive ability assessment data meets criteria in a body of evidence (95$^{th}$ percentile or above), the review team **may** determine that the student is identified with general or specific intellectual ability. This **exception** to the typical body of evidence is critical in identifying students with exceptional ability who may not yet be performing academically or demonstrating strong interests in the school environment. This student might lack motivation or have gaps in learning thereby requiring additional guidance and educational support services. Although the criteria for identification may be met by cognitive assessment data, a comprehensive body of evidence is still collected and examined to determine a student's strength area and academic and affective needs for goal setting and programming as recorded on an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP). This general intellectual identification meets the condition of portability.

It is important to thoroughly review cognitive test manuals to ensure proper **and** ethical test administration practices are followed. This includes knowing the allowable accommodations that can be provided to students with an IEP/504, the appropriate use of practice tests prior to administration of an actual cognitive test and sections within a battery that can be eliminated to reduce the language load for English Language Learners.

Additionally, it is important to review test manuals to ensure appropriate interpretation of assessment scores used for the purpose of identification. For example, Dr. Lohman, creator of the Cognitive Abilities Test, states the composite score should **not** be used for identification purposes, rather the scores from individual batteries are used to identify exceptionality.

> "Therefore, procedures for identifying academically talented students that either deliberately or inadvertently rely on a single composite score that averages across ability domains will exclude many children who reason well in particular symbol systems. Even students with strong ability to reason in two symbol systems can have scores in the third area that bring down their composite score. Consistently high scores across multiple domains is not a necessary feature of

giftedness. True, those who exhibit high scores in all domains tested are very able. But they are not the only gifted students who warrant special attention" (Lohman, 2008).

If a student scores at the 95th percentile or above on the composite of CogAT, but does not score at the 95th percentile or above on one or more of the separate batteries, it is recommended to consider providing the student a different cognitive or intellectual assessment that is perhaps untimed, administered individually or an instrument that approves the use of a composite score to measure exceptionality.

## Creativity Tests

Assessment data from standardized, norm-referenced creativity tests are used to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in the area of creativity. Creative aptitude is demonstrated by a student scoring 95th percentile or above on norm-referenced creativity tests (e.g., Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking [TTCT], Profile of Creative Abilities [PCA]).

Some students who do not achieve qualifying scores on cognitive or achievement tests may still demonstrate many characteristics of giftedness. Many gifted traits and behaviors are evidence of the high level of creativity typical of many gifted students. To aid in identifying students who do not score at or above the 95th percentile on cognitive or achievement measures, creativity tests may be useful in building a body of evidence for formal identification, because these tests add validity to the observed creative characteristics. A score at the 95th percentile or above on a creativity test is <u>not</u> required for identification in the arts areas.

## Achievement Tests

Assessment data from standardized, criterion- and norm-referenced tests are utilized to determine if a student demonstrates exceptional ability in a specific **academic** area. Specific academic aptitude areas include reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language. Specific talent aptitude areas include visual arts, performing arts, music and dance. 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.

**If a student does not demonstrate exceptional general intellectual ability from a cognitive assessment,** but <u>does</u> demonstrate exceptional abilities in a specific academic area, best practice recommends observing and collecting data **over time** and not moving to formal gifted identification based on achievement data collected from just one grade level. Typically, students who are identified as gifted in the Specific Academic Aptitude area who do **not** demonstrate exceptional general intellectual ability are not identified until multiple achievement data points support the academic determination.

When a young child (kindergarten-third grade) demonstrates specific academic potential without a qualifying cognitive score, differentiated pace and depth of instruction can be used to build additional data over time to identify exceptionality. The Colorado READ Act requires that teachers assess the

literacy development of all kindergarten-third grade students. Data from these reading competency tests are used to determine if a student has a significant reading deficiency and may be included in a student learning profile, but are **not** used as qualifying data for gifted identification. Assessments utilized to **progress monitor** student achievement or **diagnose** an academic deficiency are often defined as diagnostic instruments. Diagnostic assessments or skill inventories measure proficiency of grade-level foundational skills. Diagnostic and inventory assessments are not intended to measure exceptional abilities in a specific content area. Therefore, these instruments are **not** used as qualifying data.

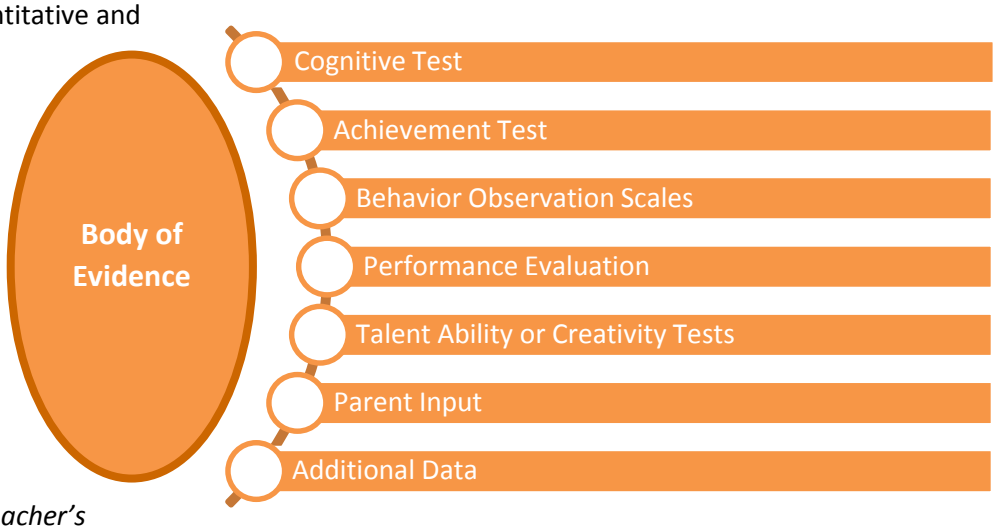
## Behavior Observation Scales

Gifted students often demonstrate characteristics that lead to a referral for the gifted identification process. Through the use of these norm-referenced behavior observation scales, educators and parents can identify outstanding talent by observing students in one or more settings that enable them to display their abilities. Characteristics such as leadership, motivation, memory, reasoning, creativity and sense of humor are measured in observation scales. Such measures add valuable information to the body of evidence and focus on more than the academic aptitude measured by many traditional tests students encounter in school.

Norm-referenced observation scales are used as qualifying data for gifted identification. These scales are a valid and reliable way for educators and parents to evaluate gifted behavior characteristics. Examples of qualifying measures are the *Scales for Identifying Gifted Students* (SIGS), *Gifted Evaluation Scale* (GES), and the *Gifted Rating Scales* (GRS). The SIGS provides a norm-referenced scale for parents to complete. The parent scale **may** be used as qualifying data.

Other methods of obtaining information on gifted characteristics may also be utilized to develop a student profile. Informal tools, such as an interview or checklist, can provide beneficial information to better understand a student's strengths and interests. These tools provide parents the opportunity to give important input about their child during the assessment process.

Districts may use quantitative and qualitative measures to collect behavioral data. Certain observation scales have been very successful in recognizing students with potential from under-represented populations. Examples of such scales are the *Kingore Observation Inventory* (KOI) and *Teacher's*



*Observation of Potential in Students* (TOPS). Research-based practices have been created for teachers to implement when observing student behaviors during specific planned experiences. Data from these scales are used to determine students who might require additional assessments and/or to develop a talent pool. **Data collected from a KOI or TOPS provide information for the student profile but are not used as qualifying data for identification.**

It is important to note that some educators have particular stereotypical expectations of how gifted students should perform, therefore, [eliminating] certain students who do not demonstrate the more typical gifted characteristics (Johnsen, 2004). If these types of data are collected, it is important that one recognize that different genders, cultures, races, ethnicities, and social classes have different ways of communicating that may impact an observer's/interviewer's perspective on what behaviors constitute giftedness (NAGC, 2008).

## 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, theater, dance, psychomotor, creativity or leadership requires 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/Competition:** Many contests and competitions are available to students within school 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.

- **Portfolio:** Over time, some students develop a portfolio of work that might be evaluated by a team of experts in the field. The advanced/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 art work throughout elementary school and the portfolio being evaluated by a committee of district art teachers and local artists.

- **Classroom Performance:** Classroom teachers are often critical in providing qualitative data about a student's performance within the classroom. As the curriculum experts, teachers can identify those students working above their same-age peers. Evidence of above grade-level performance builds a student's profile. An example of this might be a fourth-grade student who has already demonstrated mastery of fourth and fifth grade math standards and has successfully

completed all the pre-algebra modules from an online math program. Advanced classroom performance must be measured through examples of above grade-level work. Earning an "A" in a class does not necessarily indicate exceptional performance. Grades lack standardization and are influenced significantly by students' motivation, classroom behavior, personal appearance, and study habits. Further, teachers' knowledge of students' IQ scores, income, SES, area of residence, and family structure contribute to stereotypes by teachers that are frequently characterized by low and negative expectations (Ford, 2013).

## Local Norms

In some cases, AUs choose to develop local norms on nationally norm-referenced cognitive and achievement tests to ensure access and inclusion of students from underrepresented populations in gifted programs, or to show qualifications for specialized programming. However, the use of local norms on norm-referenced cognitive and achievement tests is not data for statewide portability of identification. National norms should be used for the purpose of gifted identification when applying the rule of portability.

Establishing local norms may assist a district/school in setting priorities for instruction and interventions. In these situations, it is important that users of local norm data do not confuse typical performance within the district, school, or classroom with acceptable proficient/advanced performance, or on-track to pass state assessments. Problems with confusing local performance with acceptable standards of performance may be reduced by knowing the correlation between locally normed test scores and the relevant tests being used for identification (Stewart & Silberglitt, 2008).

**When local norms are used for district identification results, portability of identification is not confirmed until re-evaluation provides evidence of exceptionality according to state criteria.**
Note: It is the district's responsibility to explain to parents and students that identification and programming may not continue when the student transfers to another district.

Use of local norms on a district developed standards-based criterion referenced test aligned to state academic standards (e.g., a district math criterion-referenced assessment at grade 2) is portable for identification. A few districts have developed criterion-referenced tests to complement/verify state assessment results. These could be helpful in identification, especially at the primary level where state assessment data are not available.

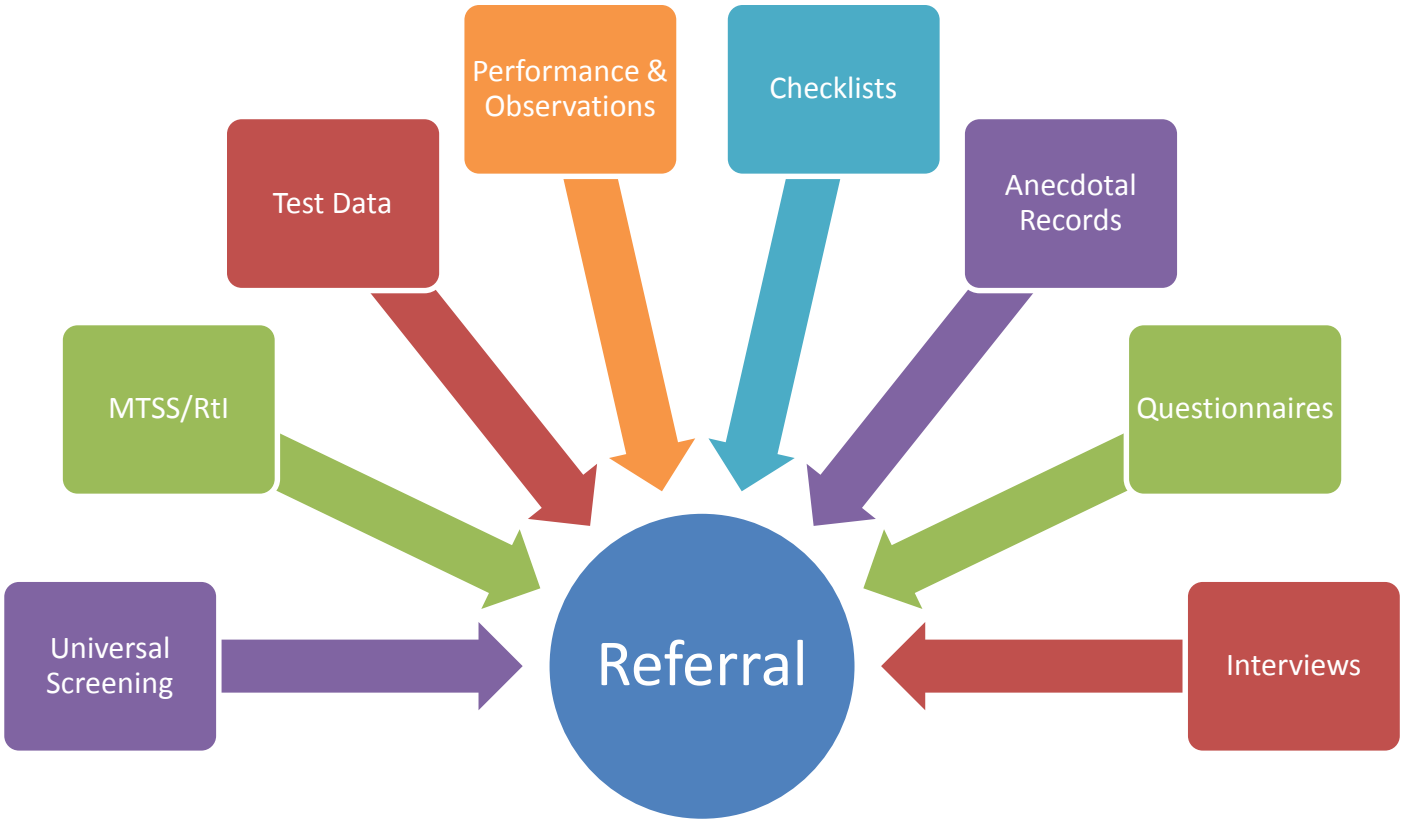
Administrative units are not encouraged to use local norms, unless the AU determines that such data will enhance services to student groups who may in the future qualify for gifted identification under national norms and/or performance demonstrations.

# Screening

Screening means an assessment method that uses a tool(s) to determine if the resulting data provide evidence of exceptional potential in an area of giftedness. Screening tools may be qualitative or quantitative in nature, standardized and/or normative. Screening data are part of a body of evidence for making identification and instructional decisions.

A student may enter into a screening through many different entry points.

- AUs shall develop screening procedures that seek referrals from a variety of sources used for conducting identification assessment. Identification is not just a moment in time or the use of data from one assessment. Referrals for gifted screening may include but are not limited to:



## Referrals

ECEA Rules state an identification team has a timeline of no more than 30 **school** days after a referral is received to determine whether a student will be formally identified or if more time is needed to continue with identification assessment. The team's decision should be communicated to the parent, student and other educators. This does not mean an identification determination must be made within 30 days; rather all stakeholders should receive information on intended next steps of the identification process within this timeline.

A referral made for possible gifted identification does **not** necessarily lead to the automatic administration of specific assessments. The identification team will carefully consider the referral, examine current student assessment data and determine appropriate next steps. This may or may not include administering additional tests.

# Universal Screening

Universal screening is one of the many different pathways from which a student might be referred.

"Universal Screening" means the systematic assessment of ALL students within a grade level for identifying students with exceptional ability or potential, especially students from traditionally underrepresented populations; and/or screening in conjunction with creation of each student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP).

Districts/AUs are strongly encouraged to include universal screening in identification procedures.

The intent of a universal screener is to find indicators of exceptionality in all student groups. A universal screener is a tool that allows students to show their ability and potential in areas such as reasoning, perception, creativity, motivation and problem solving. Universal screening supports cultural fairness and non-biased testing in identification assessment.

A universal screener is not just for the specific purpose of identifying highly capable or gifted students. Data collected through a universal screener provide information to support instructional planning for:

- **All** students
- Students referred for further gifted identification assessment
- Students recommended for talent pool

Many of the commonly used universal screening instruments provide resources to support all students along with technical assistance when interpreting the data.

There are two types of universal screening tools widely used in gifted education. One provides quantitative data collected through the use of a cognitive abilities test. The other provides qualitative data through the use of reliable and valid (proven) classroom observational tools. Tests or inventories that are considered qualitative use the results and tally of observations to describe and understand an

individual's strengths or other characteristics. Quantitative assessments use metrics to describe and understand an individual's strengths or other characteristics (Ryser, 2004).

Universal screening data enable decisions about referrals or talent pool designation in gifted identification assessment. Students who require a referral will need additional tests or information about achievement, performance, and/or behavioral characteristics for building a body of evidence. In turn, the BOE is included in a student profile that is used by a team when making identification determinations. Students identified for a talent pool will require further differentiated instruction and experiences with monitoring of progress over time to decide when and if a formal referral and comprehensive body of evidence is required for identification determinations.

Universal screening at the middle school level includes both identified and non-identified gifted students at a specific grade level who receive different measures. For the non-identified gifted students, a cognitive abilities screener will provide data about strengths and indicators of giftedness that might initiate a body of evidence for gifted identification. Results from this screener may identify students new to the AU or whose strengths did not manifest at an earlier age. When testing gifted students, it is not necessary to re-administer a cognitive abilities test. Administrative units may consider the administration of an assessment that will be most useful when developing the student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP). Consider the use of an up-level or norm-referenced test. Performance and portfolio assessment might be administered.

### *Examples of widely used universal screening tools:*

## Cognitive Instruments

A type of universal screening involves collecting objective data through the administration of a norm-referenced cognitive instrument. Cognitive instruments provide quantitative data indicating potential in the area of intellectual ability. Cognitive data may lead to a referral for gifted identification. Data are also used to designate a talent pool of students that may not be identified through the use of achievement tests. Results can also be used to make programming and curricular adjustments for all students.

Two types of cognitive assessments widely used in Colorado are the *Naglieri Non-verbal Ability Test-Second Edition*, referred to as the NNAT2, and the *Cognitive Abilities Test Form 7*, referred to as the CogAT7. Both assessments have an online testing platform or can be administered paper-pencil. Like all norm-referenced assessments, training for correct and ethical administration should occur each year for all test administrators.

If an AU chooses to use the *Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) Screener*, data from the test may be used to refer a student for identification assessment; however, data from the *CogAT Screener* may not be used to meet the criterion for identification. A *CogAT Full Battery* should be administered to the student to gather the data necessary for identification.

## Observational Instruments

Qualitative data provide subjective information from people who know the student. Two common instruments used to collect qualitative data for universal screening are discussed here. One is the *Kingore Observation Inventory* (KOI) and the second is the *Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students* (TOPS). Both instruments use specific planned experiences for all students. Teachers observe student behaviors and performance during these experiences and record their observations. After completing a specified number of planned experiences, teachers analyze their findings. These results contribute names for referrals.

Qualitative instruments support teachers in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally and linguistically different families and for children with disabilities. A lack of appropriate recognition and response can lead to problems for gifted children, their families and educators. For example, young gifted children who are not extended in their learning can experience boredom, alienation, social difficulties and depression. Some become underachievers, failing to reach their full potential, and develop negative attitudes towards their early childhood setting or school (Morrisey & Grant, 2013).

Districts/AUs that choose to utilize these observational tools for a universal screening must be aware of the instruments' limitations and cautions. To maintain the validity of these research-based observation tools, gifted directors must ensure they have developed specific guidelines and procedures for the administration of the planned activities. This must precede the use of the actual observation tool to guarantee all students in a grade level have a common and consistent experience. Proper administration requires a very targeted and specific training of teachers. Training materials have been developed that can be purchased in addition to the screening materials. A plan for annual training of all new staff must be developed. Additionally, there must be a plan for the calibration of the scoring process to ensure inter-rater reliability. This includes examining administration practices to uncover any potential for unrecognized bias. A team should evaluate the results after the screening is complete and reflect on the process to determine if the students identified as demonstrating advanced potential mirror the demographics in the district.

**Universal Screening ensures fair and equal access for ALL students to demonstrate ability and potential.**

# Partnerships with Parents

The AU's comprehensive program plan describes how parents are informed about access to identification procedures. Parents often provide valuable insight into their child's strengths, abilities and interests. Primary points for parental involvement are referral and adding important information to the body of evidence. This might include parents completing a questionnaire or checklist or participating in an interview. After thirty years of research at the Gifted Development Center, Dr. Linda Silverman states, "Parents are excellent identifiers of giftedness in their children." Additionally, early childhood identification procedures, because of age and lack of contact with the school, have to consider parental feedback more carefully (VanTassel-Baska, 2000). In Early Access, parents will have more involvement in terms of initiating referral and data collection in accordance with the AU's Early Access procedures.

# Review Team Process

Each administrative unit, through its program plan, shall use identification assessment and review by a team, as described in state board rule, to identify gifted children. The team shall use a body of evidence upon which to base the determination of giftedness, which evidence must include, at a minimum, the identification assessment results, parental input and multiple types of measures and data sources.

A review team should include at least one person trained or endorsed in gifted identification and programming. Training may include work towards an endorsement or the completion of specific courses in gifted education. **The AU determines whether an educator is sufficiently trained in gifted education.**

The review team provides opportunity for input from all teachers working with the student and from the student's parents.

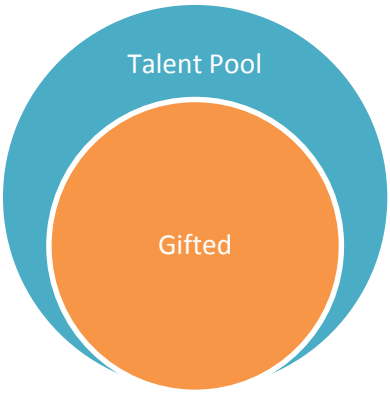
The review team examines the body of evidence and may make one or more of the following determinations:

- Move to formal gifted identification
- Identify student for a talent pool
- Select new tools to collect additional data
- Determine data do not support identification at this time
- Determine a student may need to be referred for special education assessment in addition to his/her gifted identification (twice-exceptional students)

# Talent Pool

The body of evidence for some students may not lead to formal gifted identification, but data may demonstrate the student should be included in a "talent pool."

A **talent pool** is defined as a group of students who demonstrate an advanced or even exceptional ability in a particular area, but at this time do not meet the criteria for gifted identification. Often students in a talent pool are provided advanced or gifted programming services. As students are presented with additional levels of challenge and rigor, increased achievement may occur. A student may meet the criteria for gifted identification at a later date.




Some students identified gifted in one domain may be part of a talent pool for a different domain. For example, a student who demonstrates a specific academic aptitude in reading as an elementary student may be included in a talent pool for mathematics. Over time, data are reevaluated to determine if this student meets the criteria for specific academic aptitude identification in the area of mathematics. Multipotentiality in gifted students often leads to identification in additional domains later in a child's educational path.

Students within the talent pool should receive appropriate programming options and/or interventions to address strength or potential areas. A review team may also consider if additional assessments need to be administered to collect additional data and/or continue to review the student's data over time to determine if gifted identification is appropriate at a later date. Gifted identification should never be just a moment in time during the educational path of a student. Identification is fluid and continuous throughout the school years.

Students whose scores on a screening assessment are lower than the 95$^{th}$ percentile, or whose results on observation or performance assessment screening tools are not at the level to meet identification criteria, may be recommended by the review team for further data collection and observation or for inclusion in a talent pool.

AUs may determine if a talent pool is used and the length a time in which a student participates. Selection for a talent pool is not just being included on a list for future identification assessment. Rather, it is inclusion into appropriate differentiated programming options necessary to develop an academic or talent aptitude and promote achievement and growth. Research indicates that some students talented in the arts may not have enough experience and talent development to meet criteria until middle school. This suggests that not all students will stay in the talent pool for the same amount of time.

# Gifted Determination

The program plan shall describe the assessment process used by the AU for identifying students who meet the definition specified in ECEA, section 12.01(16) and for identifying the educational needs of gifted students.

The assessment process shall recognize a student's exceptional abilities or potential, interests, and needs in order to guide student instruction and individualized planning and programming. In traditionally underrepresented student groups and visual/performing arts student groups or talent pools, identification may require the collection of student information over time, using additional data points from a response to intervention approach.

**Not meeting criteria on a single assessment tool shall not prevent further data collection or consideration for gifted identification, if other indicators suggest exceptional potential as observed in a body of evidence.**

All qualifying data points in a body of evidence must be regarded **equally**. Placing greater emphasis on a specific test or awarding more points to a test score above a specific percentile is not considered an ethical practice in gifted identification. This practice is often referred to as a "weighted matrix." This creates an opportunity for unintentional bias and is unfavorable to culturally different students (Ford, 2013). Additionally, this could be a violation of a student's civil rights. No one assessment or source of information should carry more weight than another (Johnsen, 2004).

Once a student has been identified, programming continues through graduation. Instead of eliminating gifted students who underachieve from gifted programming, efforts should be made to target the source(s) of the students' underachievement and develop individualized interventions based on this information (Rubenstein, et al., 2012).

# Coding

Beginning with the 2016 fall pupil count, gifted student coding will align to the areas of ECEA gifted identification. A district **may** choose to use the new coding for the 2016-17 school year. All districts must use the new coding for the 2017-18 school year.

A student may be marked in **one or more** of the following areas:

- General or Specific Intellectual Ability
- Creative or Productive Thinking
- Leadership Abilities
- Specific Academic Aptitude
    - Reading
    - Writing
    - Mathematics
    - Social Studies
    - Science
    - World Language
- Specific Talent Aptitude
    - Visual Arts
    - Performing Arts (Drama/Theater)
    - Musical
    - Dance
    - Psychomotor Abilities

# High-achieving versus Gifted

Specific Academic Aptitude is an area of identification in Colorado. Cognitive tests provide information for identification in the intellectual domain; however, these tests may or may not be helpful in identifying a student with exceptional abilities in a specific content area. Some students who are high-achieving in an academic area may qualify for gifted identification. However, not all high-achieving students are gifted.

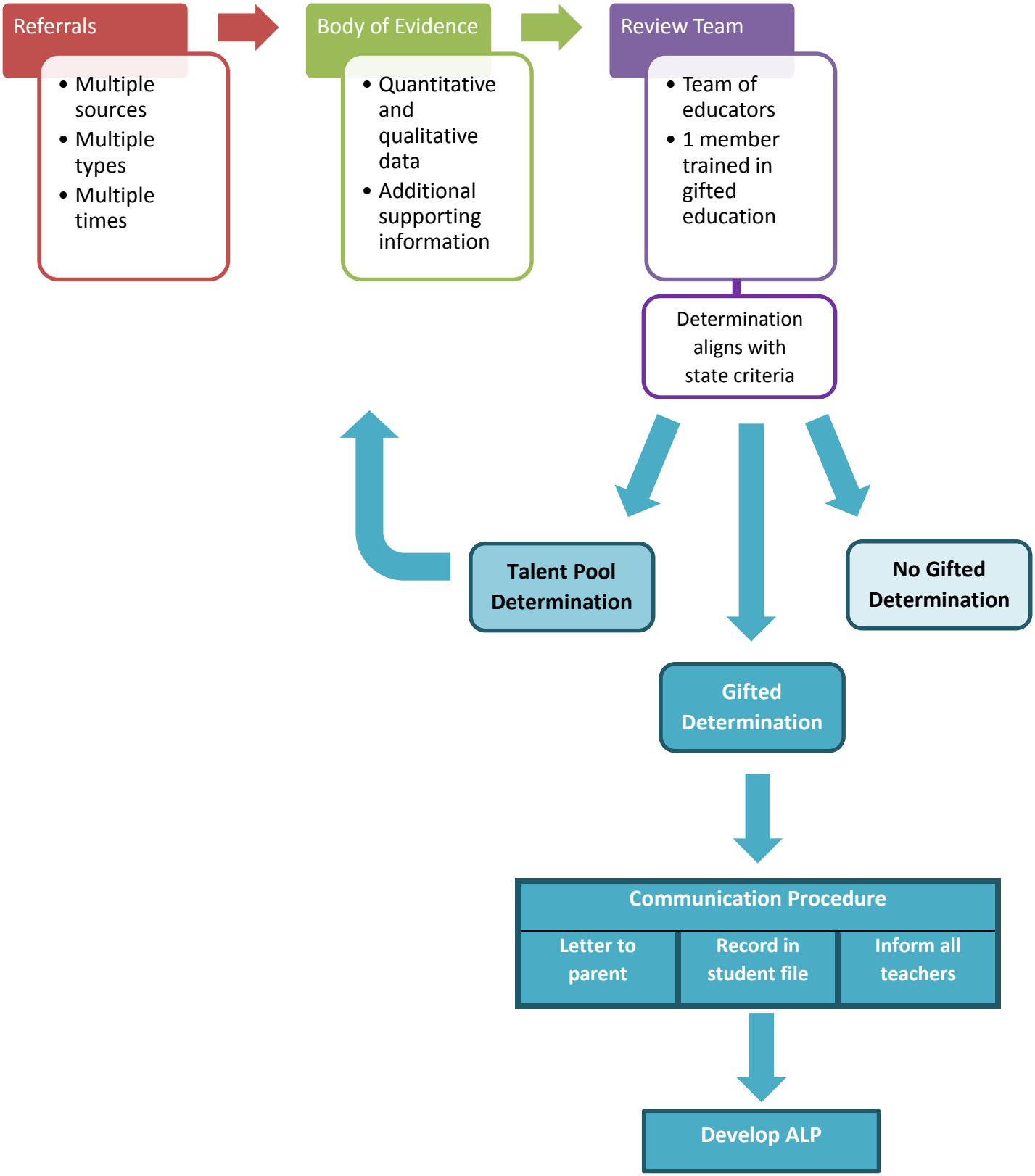
Some high-achieving students may not have evidence of exceptional cognitive ability, but other data including standardized achievement tests, classroom performance, evaluation of a portfolio or norm-referenced checklists provide multiple indicators of exceptional ability. According to Dr. Marcia Gentry, Director of the Gifted Education Resource Institute at Purdue University, "Achieving at a high level requires high ability in that content area. Requiring an assessment of "g" to confirm what is already shown in the achievement measure is not necessary, nor is it sound."

In the primary years it is not uncommon for a student to demonstrate above grade-level performance in areas such as reading or math. A child may enter school as an early reader or can learn math facts rapidly and demonstrate accurate computation skills. However, over time, the student may not continue to exhibit above grade-level capabilities. The question then becomes, "Did the student's achievement plateau because of a lack of rigorous and challenging course work, or as a natural progression of the child's academic growth?" Without the use of a cognitive score, identification of students at the primary level should be made with caution. A comprehensive collection of data using a variety of tools should be examined to make a gifted determination. If the identification team determines more time is needed to make a gifted determination, it is important to provide the necessary advanced, differentiated programming the student requires for continued growth and achievement.

Generally, a high-achieving student is one who works hard to succeed; is attentive in class; learns with ease; memorizes facts; correctly answers questions; and earns good grades. In comparison, a student who might be considered gifted in a particular content area is performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment compared to grade level peers; generates complex, abstract ideas; comprehends complex ideas; infers and connects concepts; is self-directed in learning; and can answer content-related questions but also asks complex questions (Kingore, 2014).

No two gifted children are alike. The professional judgment of the identification team ensures that gifted determinations are made according to the unique traits and characteristics of each child in the identification process.

***A gifted identification assessment should include the following components*:**



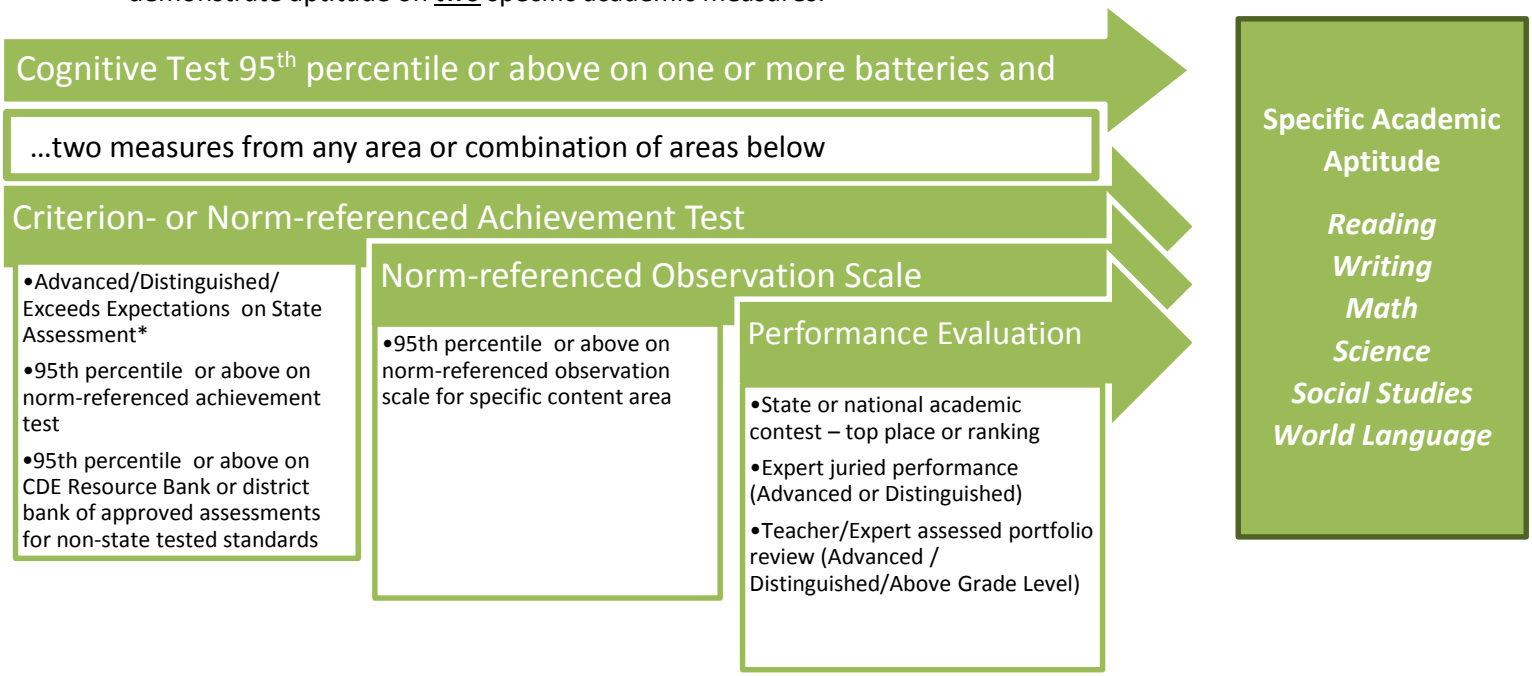
# Gifted Identification Criteria

Multiple pathways can lead to a determination of giftedness. The following models represent the criteria utilized to determine an area (domain) of gifted identification. While some qualitative and quantitative data are used as qualifying measures, additional data within the body of evidence are utilized to develop a student's learning profile of strengths and interests. This profile leads to the development of the ALP and ICAP.

## Area of Giftedness: Specific Academic Aptitude

Content areas for specific academic aptitude include: reading, writing, math, science, social studies and world language. **Two pathways may lead to identification in the area of specific academic aptitude.**

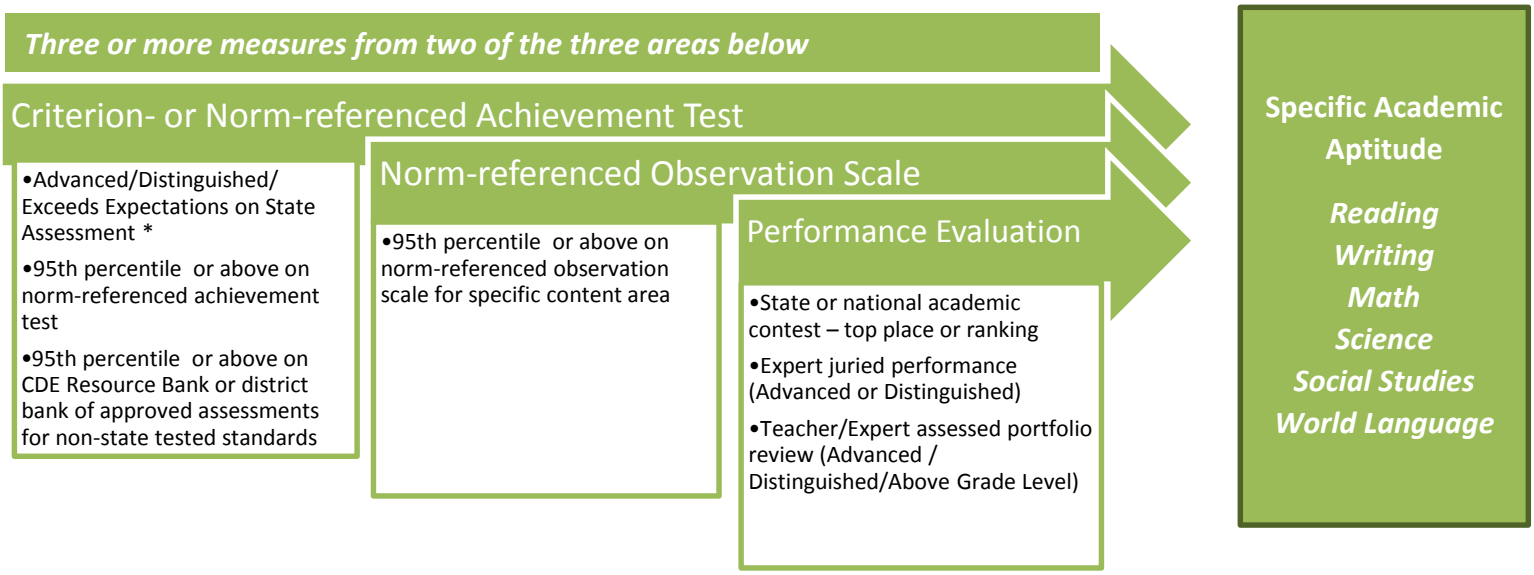
First, a student may score 95th percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive test and demonstrate aptitude on two specific academic measures.




*A performance level of Exceeds Expectations on the ELA state assessment is qualifying evidence for identification in **both** reading and writing. If a student has a qualifying ELA state assessment score and a cognitive score of a 95th percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive assessment, **one** additional reading measure would be needed to make a determination for Specific Academic Aptitude in the content area of reading. Likewise, **one** additional writing measure would be needed for a writing determination.

Second, a student may not score 95th percentile or above on a cognitive test. However, a review team may determine a **comprehensive** body of evidence demonstrates gifted academic ability. Content-specific measurement tools to meet criteria for identification should include at least three or more measures from two of the three areas below. When cognitive data do not meet gifted criteria, identification in a specific academic aptitude requires an examination of multiple data points and trends over time.

Using this pathway in the primary years requires caution and sufficient data from multiple data points. At any time when the team needs more time to make a determination, ongoing opportunities in the specific domain are needed to ensure the child's continued growth and engagement in the content area. Additionally, continued examination of multiple data points and trend data over time, three years or less, may be necessary. (See page 21.) High-performing districts that have a significant percentage of their students identified as gifted in the area of specific academic aptitude may determine Tier II programming can be provided within the regular classroom because the curriculum exceeds grade-level standards. Tier III programming would then include targeted, specific, independent projects or activities to meet the needs of the profoundly gifted student whose needs cannot be met with typical course placement options available at the school.



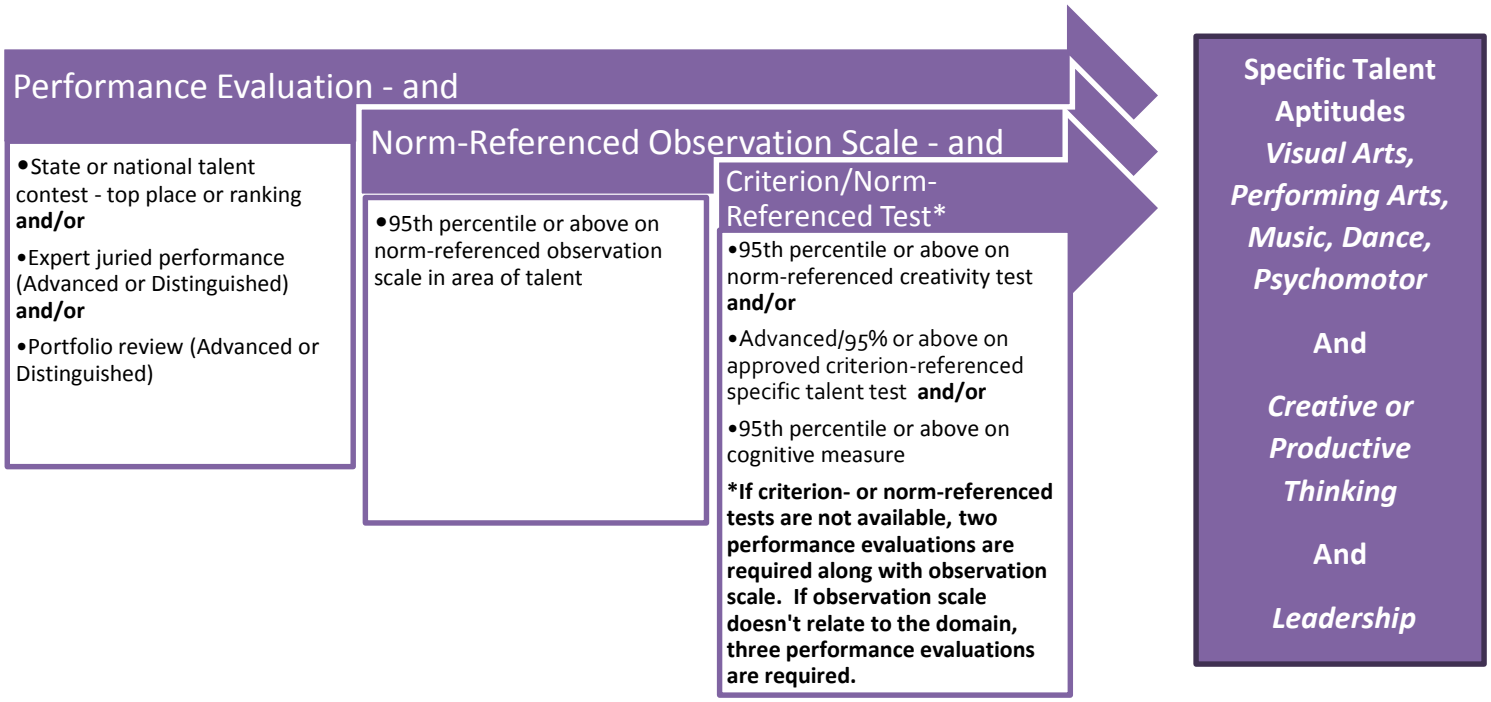

*A performance level of Exceeds Expectations on the ELA state assessment is qualifying evidence for identification in **both** reading and writing. If a student has a qualifying ELA state assessment score and does not have a qualifying cognitive score, **two** additional reading measures would be required to make a determination for Specific Academic Aptitude in the content area of reading. Likewise, **two** additional writing measures would be needed for a writing determination.

## Area of Giftedness: Creative or Productive Thinking, Leadership and Specific Talent Aptitudes

Identification in creative and productive thinking, leadership and specific talent aptitudes requires the examination of a variety of instruments and the multiple pathways that lead to identification. Talent domains include visual arts, performing arts, music, dance and psychomotor. Often criterion- or norm-referenced assessments are not available in these areas; therefore **performance** evaluation is an important component in the body of evidence. If data from a valid and reliable test are not available to demonstrate exceptional ability, two or more indicators in the performance area may be used to meet identification criteria along with an exceptional rating on a norm-referenced observation scale. Identification in the area of psychomotor is designated for state- or national-level elite athletes who have received this ranking from the sport's national governing body. These athletes may require a gifted determination to address the interventions necessary as a result of the amount of time the student is out of school or to earn credits for specific courses. Districts are **not** required to provide or financially support athletic coaching, training or competitions for students identified in this area.

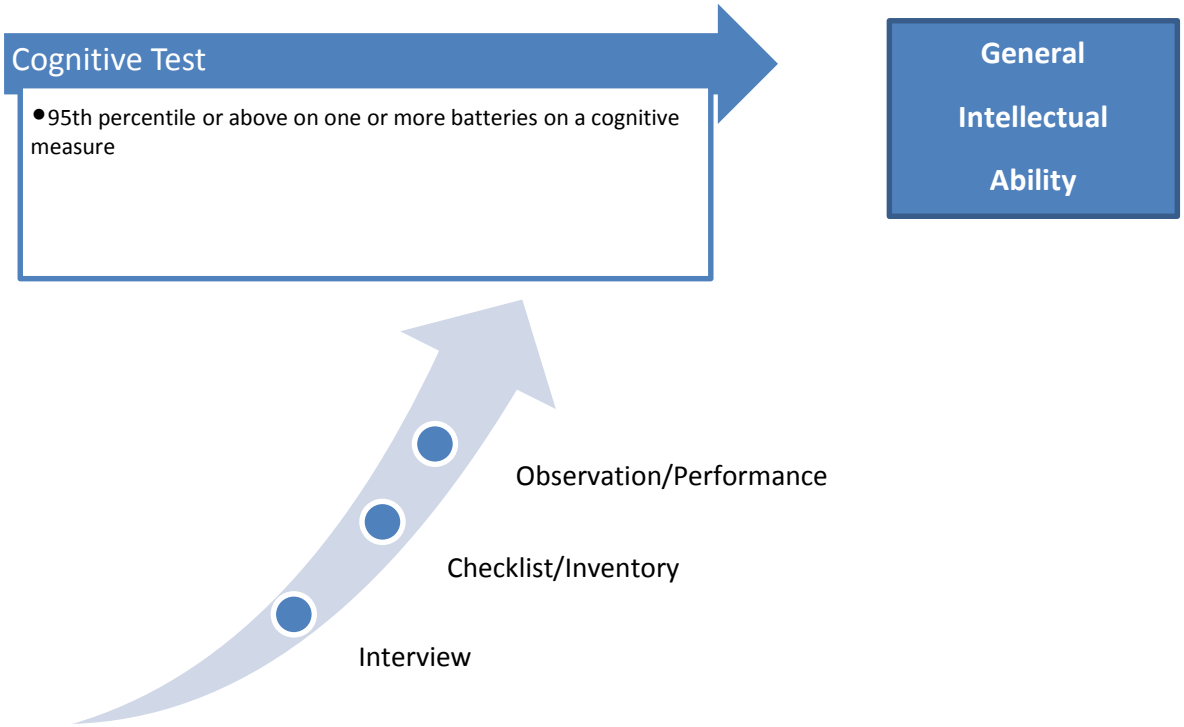
The body of evidence for psychomotor identification would include **three** of the following four indicators:

- 95th percentile or above on the Motivation section of Gifted Rating Scales (GRS) or Gifted Evaluation Scale (GES);
- Portfolio that chronicles the student's exceptional performance;
- Top state or national ranking as determined by the sport's national governing body;
- Student or team receiving a top placement or ranking in a multi-state or national competition.



## Area of Giftedness: General Intellectual Ability

Students may qualify in the area of general intellectual ability with a score of 95th percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive test. The determination team must collect and review additional data for the body of evidence to develop the student's learning profile. A gifted determination based solely on a cognitive assessment score, without any other qualifying data, is the **exception**. A review team should use their professional judgment to determine if identification is appropriate by examining supplemental or non-traditional information collected through interviews, observations or performances beyond the academic content areas. Students from underrepresented populations may not demonstrate gifted abilities through the use of traditional achievement data. When only cognitive ability assessment data meet criteria in a body of evidence (95th percentile or above), the review team **may** determine that the student is identified with general or specific intellectual ability. This meets portability requirements.



# Summary Comments

The identification assessment is a comprehensive process set by the local administrative unit that encompasses procedures, materials, and personnel for successful identification practices across schools and student groups. Implementation of this process with fidelity is critical for the integrity of identification portability within Colorado. The purpose of these guidelines is to build common understanding and set a foundation for this portability.

The guidelines provide local administrative units with decision points about: how referrals are sought; what screening method and tools will be conducted; what qualitative and quantitative tools will be used for recognizing strengths; the composition of the review team; and determination results. Talent pool decisions are also local AU considerations.

The result of identification is programming. Knowing the student's profile of strengths and interests is the backdrop for developing the individual advanced learning plan (ALP). Through the ALP, relevant academic and affective goals set the stage for developing academic and talent aptitude over time. The ultimate outcome of identification is that all gifted students attain postsecondary career and college goals, act with self-esteem and self-advocacy, and are creative, productive members of society.

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