



*Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

# K-8 HIGH ABILITY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

2018

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - IDENTIFICATION

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) instructs districts to identify those students who perform, or show potential to perform, at an outstanding level of accomplishment in English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math when compared to students of the same age, experience, or environment. These students require differentiated curriculum, instruction and/or programming options during regular school hours in order to best meet their academic needs.

### ***What is the definition of a High Ability student?***

According to Indiana Code, a high ability student (1) performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and (2) is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests (IC 20-36-1-3).

### ***What criteria does Carmel Clay Schools use to identify students as High Ability for ELA?***

In accordance with guidance from the IDOE, Carmel Clay Schools has established the following criteria in the area of ELA:

- $\geq$  98<sup>th</sup> percentile (K-5) or 96<sup>th</sup> percentile (6-8) on Reading subtest of a standardized norm-referenced achievement test (such as NWEA) OR
- $\geq$  96<sup>th</sup> percentile on a norm-referenced test of verbal reasoning OR
- Performed within the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) on reading achievement test *or* the verbal reasoning ability test AND also demonstrates outstanding potential or performance in ELA on additional qualitative data.

### ***What criteria does Carmel Clay Schools use to identify students as High Ability for Math?***

In accordance with guidance from IDOE, Carmel Clay Schools has established the following criteria in the area of Math:

- $\geq$  96<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Math subtest of a standardized norm-referenced achievement test (such as NWEA) OR
- $\geq$  96<sup>th</sup> percentile on a norm-referenced test of quantitative reasoning or a partial composite of quantitative and non-verbal reasoning subtests OR
- Performed within the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) on either the Math achievement test *or* the Math reasoning ability test (quantitative and/or partial composite of quantitative and nonverbal reasoning subtests) AND also demonstrates outstanding potential or performance in Math on additional qualitative data.

### ***What is the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM)?***

Standard Error of Measurement is an estimate of the precision of a test score for an individual student. The amount of variability in an individual's test scores on the same testing measure is a function of the test's reliability: the smaller the standard error, the more precise the test score estimate. Since no measure can be constructed that provides a perfect reflection of an individual's true test score, the Standard Error of Measurement is taken into consideration when analyzing quantitative data.

### ***What is NWEA MPG/MAP testing?***

NWEA assessment is the norm-referenced achievement test developed by The Northwest Evaluation Association and is administered to all CCS students in grades K-8. NWEA tests are untimed and individualized for each student, enabling measurement of performance in Reading and Math (grades K-8). Tests are taken on-line, and the results help teachers, parents, and administrators improve learning for all students by identifying what each student is ready to learn. NWEA results help educators make informed decisions that promote academic growth for every student.

### ***When are the NWEA assessments administered at Carmel Clay Schools?***

NWEA assessments are given twice a year (fall and winter) to students in grades K-8.

### ***How will the school meet my child's needs without identifying him/her as a high ability student?***

Students who do not meet the criteria for identification as high ability will continue to receive responsive instruction within the general education classroom. In this classroom environment, students are provided with differentiated small group instruction with peers of similar intellect and skill. They have access to above grade level reading selections, rigorous collaborative learning experiences, and meaningful independent application of skills and content. In addition, teachers closely monitor students' progress and performance in mathematics to determine if placement in Advanced Math is appropriate.

***What do I do if my elementary student is not invited for placement into the Advanced Math program based on the NWEA math score?***

If you feel strongly that your student's performance on the NWEA Math assessment does not reflect his/her true capability, please contact your child's classroom teacher, school counselor/student services coordinator and/or principal to discuss your concerns.

***My 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade student is enrolled in On-Grade Level/Advanced Math and would like to test for Advanced/Honors Math. Is this possible?***

Math assessments are administered in the spring for current 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. After the 5<sup>th</sup> grade year, there is no formal testing process because it is generally not in students' best interest to skip the critical skills and concepts addressed in Pre-Algebra and Algebra I. If a student is achieving at a level where his/her needs cannot be met in the current math placement, a teacher recommendation for advancement may occur. Questions regarding mathematics placement should be directed to the mathematics department chairperson at your child's middle school.

***If my child isn't identified as high ability, how will that affect his/her future opportunities?***

Your child will receive a strong academic experience in the general education classroom and, if he or she excels, may have an opportunity to be considered for high ability identification next year. Each year assessment data is reviewed, and parents of students with exceptional performance will be contacted. Sometimes additional time to mature and develop improves a student's classroom performance. All students, including those who are not identified as high ability in elementary or who are not in the middle school Honors English program, have the opportunity to enroll in Honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Dual Credit courses at Carmel High School, depending on their grades, performance on various assessments, and personal academic goals.

***What if my child finds his/her placement too easy or too difficult?***

The district's placement procedures are designed to be very accurate in determining the appropriate level of instruction for students. The achievement tests are comprehensive and provide ample evidence of your child's knowledge and skills. All Carmel Clay teachers utilize formative assessments throughout the year to appropriately differentiate instruction. If the fit of the class continues to be a challenge, the school counselor/student services coordinator and teacher will work with you and your child to determine next steps to best meet his or her needs.

***What do I do if my student is not identified as High Ability based on NWEA scores?***

If you feel strongly that your student's performance on the NWEA assessments does not truly reflect his or her capability, then you may submit a request for a Data Review conducted by a team of building-based professionals familiar with your child and his/her classroom performance at Carmel Clay Schools. The request for Data Review must be submitted within 2 weeks of receiving NWEA results. To request a Data Review, please access our website at <http://bit.ly/CCSDDataReview> to register.

***What is the Data Review process?***

The Data Review process is a review of recent achievement data or other existing ability data. In some cases further assessment data may be required. This could include the administration of the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) and/or an ability test. Any additional testing administered by Carmel Clay Schools will be at no cost to parents. Staff members that may consult in this process are: supervisor of learning, director of curriculum, principal, school counselor/student services coordinator, classroom teacher or other qualified professional.

***What is a SIGS Assessment?***

The Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) is a norm-referenced rating scale designed to assist in the identification of high ability students. At Carmel Clay Schools, SIGS is used as a qualitative inventory of characteristics of high ability learners in the areas of Language Arts, Math, and General Intellect. Its primary purpose is to assist in the appropriate identification of students with high ability potential who might not otherwise have met eligibility requirements in the areas of English/Language Arts and Math. It is designed to be completed by the student's classroom teacher, school counselor/student services coordinator, or other professional who has observed the student for an extended time, generally at least six (6) weeks.

***If, after undergoing the Data Review process, my child is not recommended for high ability identification, is there an appeal process?***

If you feel that the outcome of the Data Review process does not accurately portray your student's capabilities, you should discuss your concerns with your child's teacher and/or school counselor/student services coordinator to seek their perspectives and advice. If, after careful thought and consideration, you still believe your child should be identified as high ability, you may submit an application for appeal. ***Given the rigor and accuracy of the placement tests, an appeal should be exercised only in instances where classroom performance clearly and substantially indicates that your child is performing at an outstanding level of achievement and where his/her needs may not be met without identification as a high ability student.***

***How do I submit an appeal for elementary high ability identification?***

The appeal application must be submitted to the district supervisor of learning within two weeks of receiving Data Review results. The appeal form is located on page 9 in the CCS High Ability Handbook.

***How do I submit an appeal for Honors placement?***

The appeal application must be submitted to the appropriate middle school department chairperson within two weeks of receiving Data Review results. The appeal form is located on page 10 in the CCS High Ability Handbook.

***If an ability test is administered to my child as a result of the Data Review or during the appeal process, what does the ability test measure?***

The raw score (number of questions answered correctly on the test) for each subtest is converted to a percentile rank (PR). A PR is an indicator of where a student's performance fits within the performance of other students of the same age or grade. PRs are placed on a scale of 1 to 99 that indicates the percentage of students of the same age or grade group who obtained the same score or lower on a test. For example, a student scoring at the 40<sup>th</sup> PR scored as well as, or better than, 40 percent of students in the norm group. It also means that 60 percent of the students exceeded this score. PRs do not indicate the percentage of questions a student answered correctly.

PRs are placed on a curve, so it is important to keep in mind that PRs are much more compactly arranged in the middle of the curve since that is where the majority of students fall. For example, the difference of 5 percentile points between a PR of 50 and a PR of 55 is relatively insignificant; however, a difference of 5 percentile points between a PR of 90 and a PR of 95 is very significant. A percentile rank is useful in identifying students for high ability programs because it represents how well a student performs compared to other students in the test's nationwide norm sample.

The raw score from each subtest administered is converted to a standard age score and percentile rank based on the child's age. A partial composite score or composite score is an overall score. The verbal score predicts success in a wide range of achievement domains that rely heavily on language, and the quantitative/nonverbal partial composite score best predicts achievement in mathematics and technical domains.

***What is the format of the test?***

The ability test is a group administered ability test designed to measure students' learned reasoning abilities in the three cognitive domains most closely related to success in school: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and nonverbal reasoning. These reasoning abilities play an important role in reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, and problem solving. The ability test is a timed test in grades two through eight and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete each battery. It is untimed for first grade students and takes approximately 40 minutes to complete each battery.

Within the Carmel Clay Schools, staff members at each building share responsibility for providing a nurturing and responsive learning environment that enables all students to realize individual potential. With this outcome in mind, building principals assign students to classroom sections using Total School Cluster Grouping, an organizational model that enables teachers to effectively address a range of unique learning needs, including the educational needs of high ability students.

### ***What is Total School Cluster Grouping?***

Total School Cluster Grouping (TSCG) is an organizational paradigm that takes into account the academic achievement and educational needs of all students within a grade level and places them in classrooms with the goal of narrowing the range of achievement levels within each classroom. This in turn increases opportunities for differentiation of curriculum and instruction for all students, resulting in increased student achievement school-wide (Gentry, 2014; Brulles & Winebrenner, 2012). Demonstrated benefits include:

- High ability students regularly interact both with their intellectual peers and other grade level peers, providing opportunities for social emotional learning alongside rigorous academic pursuits.
- Flexible grouping within a grade level creates opportunities to expand instructional options across content areas for all students.
- Cluster grouping reduces the range of student achievement levels that must be addressed within the classrooms of all teachers. Curricular differentiation is more efficient and likely to occur when a group of high-achieving students is placed with a teacher who has expertise, training, and a desire to differentiate than when these students are distributed among many teachers. A similar benefit is noted for average and lower achieving students.
- Student achievement school-wide increases when cluster grouping is used.
- Removing exceptionally high achievers from most classrooms allows other achievers to emerge and gain recognition.
- Over time, fewer students are identified as low achievers and more students are identified as high achievers.

### ***What are the goals of Total School Cluster Grouping in the Carmel Clay Schools?***

- Provide full time services to high achieving and high ability elementary students, K-5.
- Help all students improve their academic achievement and educational self-efficacy.
- Help teachers more effectively and efficiently meet the diverse needs of their students.
- Increase opportunities for collaboration among high ability, general education, and special education staff to best address the educational needs of all students.
- Weave the benefits of evidence-based practices for high ability students into the fabric of all educational practices in the school.
- Improve the representation of traditionally underserved students identified over time as above average and high achieving.
- Provide educational opportunities and supports for high ability students in alignment with findings from the Carmel Clay Schools High Ability Program Evaluation (2015).

***How will the needs of high ability students be addressed within this model?***

- Differentiated materials, in conjunction with grade level programming and curricula, provide opportunities for acceleration and enrichment in alignment with grade level and advanced Indiana academic standards.
- Instructional pedagogy, aligned with evidence-based practices for high ability learners, provides rigorous and engaging learning opportunities for all high ability students.
- Opportunities for flexible grouping within the classroom and across each grade level provide a variety of engaging, differentiated options in all content areas to maximize learning.
- Opportunities for daily engagement with high ability and other grade level peers create a rich environment for social interaction that nurtures personal growth and honors the whole child.
- Social emotional needs are addressed through grade level and school-based activities and supports in alignment with local curricula and programming. Professional development for issues specific to high ability learners (e.g., anxiety, perfectionism) will be provided for all teachers in conjunction with building counselors and/or student service coordinators.

***How will this impact the educational experience of my high ability child?***

Teachers with specific training and interest in high ability education will continue to provide highly responsive, differentiated academic learning opportunities through evidence-based instructional practices such as compacting, acceleration, and enrichment using curricula and materials adopted specifically for high ability students. As has always been the case in the Carmel Clay Schools, curriculum and instruction for high ability learners are aligned with grade level and advanced Indiana Academic Standards and are extended and enriched as appropriate to a range of high ability student interests, capabilities, and needs. Self-directed, inquiry-based learning focused on critical thinking and creative problem solving will continue to be embedded in the daily experiences of high ability learners. The Total School Cluster Grouping Model will further enhance students' educational experiences with a focus on social emotional well-being and expanded curricular opportunities made possible through flexible grouping within a grade level.

***How will the needs of high ability students be addressed at the middle school level (English/Language Arts)?***

Students who have been identified as high ability in English Language Arts will be recommended for Honors English placement. Additionally, students not previously identified will be considered for placement in Honors English according to achievement and/or ability criteria, as described above.

***How will the needs of high ability students be addressed at the middle school level (Math)?***

Students who have been identified as high ability in math at the elementary level will be recommended for Advanced Math placement in Middle School. Based on performance on the NWEA Math assessment, students enrolled in grade level math will be given the opportunity to take an End of Course Assessment for placement in Advanced Math. In addition, students who are already in advanced math and show exceptional achievement or ability in math will be given the opportunity to test for Honors Math.

***What are the available learning paths in the middle school mathematics program?***

The Carmel Clay middle schools offer three levels of mathematics at each grade level.

- On-grade level instruction prepares students for an opportunity to earn a Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma as they continue their math coursework in high school. While grade level instruction meets the needs of most students, advanced and honors math levels are designed for those students who have demonstrated high ability and/or high achievement in the area of mathematics.
- At the Advanced level, students are instructed in standards one year above grade level. Successful completion of the advanced sequence of study allows students to take five years of high school mathematics (10 credits) and earn a Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma. In the Advanced Math program, students who have already mastered sixth grade mathematics standards are instructed in seventh grade standards during their sixth grade year, pre-algebra in their seventh grade year, and algebra in their eighth grade year. All Advanced Math students automatically continue in the Advanced Math course sequence during the transition from elementary to middle school and throughout their secondary school years, pending adequate progress.
- At the Honors level, students engage in an accelerated and enriched curriculum, including the study of standards two years above grade level. In addition to the accelerated content, Honors curricula focuses on application of concepts in new and unique situations as well as complex problem solving with an emphasis on abstract reasoning and critical thinking skills. This rigorous sequence of study allows students to complete six years of mathematics courses (12 credits) before graduation and earn a Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma. Placement in a middle school Honors Math course requires students to complete a battery of tests to determine their individual level of mathematics ability.

For a visual outline of our Secondary Mathematics Course Sequence and more information, please see page 6 in the CCS High Ability Handbook.