

## **Highly Capable Programs**

### **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. Highly capable students exhibit outstanding abilities within their general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present both in the general populace and 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 other 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 district will employ the following procedures to find students who may qualify for potential placement in the program:

### **Referral**

The district will conduct universal screenings at two elementary grade levels to find students who may qualify for potential highly capable program placement. Referrals must be available for all grade levels not being universally screened, and may be submitted by teachers, other staff, parents, students, and members of the community.

### **Screening**

The district will select a grade level to implement universal screening procedures for each student. Universal screening must occur once in or before second grade, and again in sixth grade. The purpose of universal screening is to include students who traditionally are not referred for highly capable programs and services. Students discovered during universal screening may need further assessment to determine whether the student is eligible for placement in a program for highly capable students. The district will consider at least two student data points during universal screening, which may include previously administered objective standardized, classroom-based performance, cognitive, or achievement assessments, or research-based behavior ratings scales.

---

### **Assessment**

The district will obtain written or electronic parental permission prior to conducting assessments to determine eligibility for participation in its Highly Capable Program (HCP).

District practices for identifying highly capable students must prioritize equitable identification of low-income students.

The district will assess students identified for further consideration through the universal screening process using multiple objective criteria. The district must base the assessment process upon a review of each student's capability as shown by multiple criteria, from a wide variety of sources and data, intended to reveal each student's unique needs and capabilities. The assessment criterion consists of both qualitative and quantitative instruments and may include: CogAT results; scores on state assessments; WIDA scores; STAR benchmark assessment scores; and results on educator observational screener (primary grades).

The district must have identification procedures for their highly capable programs that are clearly stated and implemented by the district using the following criteria:

- a) Districts must use multiple objective criteria to identify students who are determined to need services. Multiple pathways for qualifications must be available and no single criterion may disqualify a student from identification.
- (b) The district must base highly capable placement decisions on consideration of criteria benchmarked on local norms, but the district will not use local norms as a more restrictive criterion than national norms at the same percentile.
- (c) The district will not use subjective measures, such as teacher recommendations or report card grades to screen out a student from assessment or to disqualify a student from identification. However, the district may use these data points alongside other criteria during selection to support identification; and
- (d) To the extent practicable, the district must give screening and assessments in the native language of the student. If native language screening and assessments are not available, the district must use a nonverbal screening and assessment.

The district will record test results in the student's cumulative file.

Any screenings or additional assessments will be conducted within the school day and at the school the student attends. On a case-by-case basis and with the consent of the parent or guardian, the district may offer student screenings or additional assessment opportunities during the summer, outside of school hours, or at an alternative site.

### **Placement**

A multi-disciplinary placement committee composed of a district administrator, school psychologist (or other individual who can interpret cognitive and achievement test results), and a classroom teacher will review data that has been collected for each of the referred students.

Lynden School District No. 504  
BOARD POLICY

No. 2190P

---

The Multi-Disciplinary Placement Committee (MPC) is composed of a certified coordinator or administrator with the responsibility for the supervision of the district's highly capable program, a psychologist or other qualified practitioner with the training to interpret cognitive and achievement test results; a classroom teacher, and additional professionals, if any, that the district deems appropriate.

The MPC will evaluate the results of the universal screening, any further individual student assessment, and any available district data and make the placement decision based on:

1. A preponderance of evidence from the profile data demonstrating that a student requires accelerated learning and enhanced instruction; and
2. Evidence of clear need for highly capable services

A single assessment score or indicator will not prevent a student's placement for the HCP; however, individual pieces of evidence, if strong enough, can indicate that the student would benefit from these services. If properly validated tests are not available, the professional judgment of the qualified district personnel shall determine eligibility of the student based upon evidence of cognitive and/or academic achievement.

The district will:

1. Notify parents of the student's placement. Parents will receive a full explanation of the procedures for identification, an explanation of the process to exit a student from the program, the information on the district's program, and the options that are available to identified students.
2. Obtain parental permission to place identified students in the program before any special services and programs are provided to the student.

### **Process for Appeal**

Parents/legal guardians have the right to appeal the MPC's decision. Individuals appealing the selection committee's decision must submit a completed appeals form or letter requesting review of 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.

Parents/ legal guardians must submit the appeal request and supporting evidence to the District's Coordinator of Highly Capable Programs or the Director of Teaching and learning within 10

school days of the MPC's decision notification. The District's MPC will review the student's file, assessment profile data, and additional evidence provided in the request for appeal.

The decision of the MPC may include:

- Upholding the original decision of the MPC;
- Reversing the decision of the MPC

The MPC will make a decision within 10 school days after receipt of the written request for reconsideration and will notify the parent/legal guardian of the decision in writing. The decision of the MPC is the final decision.

### **Exit Process**

Upon the request of a teacher or a highly capable program administrator, the district may initiate the exit process for students who no longer demonstrate a need for highly capable program services. The MPC will convene a meeting and invite parent/guardian to review the student's profile to determine if the student qualifies for program services based on assessment data and selection criteria. The MPC may request additional evidence of student capabilities. If the committee determines that the student no longer qualifies for highly capable program services, it may recommend that the student be exited from the program. The district will notify the parent/guardian in writing of the committee's decision and of the appeal process.

A parent/legal guardian may request to withdraw the student from the program. A meeting will be convened by the Highly Capable Program Coordinator/Director with the parent/guardian to discuss the request. If the parent/legal guardian desires to withdraw the student from the program, the district will exit the student from the program. The MPC will determine if identification procedures are necessary for students wishing to reenter the program in the future.

### **Program Design**

The district will make a variety of appropriate program services to students who participate in the program. Once services are started, the district will provide a continuum of services 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 each fall for each student to ensure that the services are appropriate.

The district will offer highly capable students the following programs: accelerated learning opportunities; academic grouping arrangements that provide intellectual and interest peer-group interactions; access to electives that accelerate learning in STEM; access to courses to provide university credit in the high school or via optional assessment, such as College Board Advanced Placement; and additional extracurricular activities, such as interest-area clubs, competitions, and performances as available.

### **Reporting**

Identified students will be assigned the appropriate CEDARS Gifted value(s) in the district's student information system for the end-of-year reporting activities.

The superintendent or designee will provide an end-of-the-year report to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that includes:

Lynden School District No. 504  
BOARD POLICY

No. 2190P

- 
- 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; and
  - Program evaluation data and, if needed, program changes that will be made based upon this information.