

HANDBOOK OF  
**GIFTED SERVICES**  
A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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The information in this handbook is intended to be a general overview of gifted services offered in WJCC. For additional details, please refer to the **Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted** and other resources listed in the back of this handbook.

Compiled by the 2007-08 Gifted Education Advisory Committee

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**Information provided by:**  
**The Office of the Executive Director for**  
**Secondary Instruction and Staff Development**

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### **What is the Visions Program?**

Visions is the name given to the WJCC program offering gifted services for students in grades K-12.

### **Who is eligible for gifted services?**

A student eligible for gifted services is a student in elementary, middle, or high school (grades K-12) who demonstrates high levels of accomplishment - or who shows the potential for higher levels of accomplishment - when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment.

Gifted students' abilities and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs.



**My child is bright and makes good grades. Does this mean my child is gifted?**

Gifted learners share many common traits that distinguish them from other learners. Listed below are a few of the most common and easily detected characteristics of a gifted learner.

Gifted learners are:

- Highly curious
- Extremely observant



Gifted learners can:

- Connect ideas and make inferences easily
- Comprehend complex ideas in-depth
- Elaborate ideas and discuss them in detail

Gifted learners usually:

- Enjoy learning
- Require only 1-2 repetitions to master a concept
- Work beyond the level of their peer group
- Prefer the company of their intellectual peers

For a more comprehensive list of the differences between bright and gifted learners, go to <http://pages.framingham.k12.ma.us/sage/brightchild.htm>

**How are students in WJCC identified for the Visions Program? \***

The identification process in WJCC School Division has three parts: *screening, referral, and determination of eligibility.*

**Screening**

The screening process is used to actively search for students requiring gifted services. Annually, in kindergarten through grade 12, all students are continuously screened through teacher assessment and nationally recognized achievement tests.

**Referrals**

Referrals for gifted services for students in grades K – 12 are accepted on an on-going basis from faculty, administrators, parents, guardians, peers, mentors, and/or members of the community. Self-nomination is also encouraged.

Nomination forms are located online in the appendix to the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted at <http://www.wjcc.k12.va.us/content/programs/gifteded/Local%20Plan%20for%20the%20Gifted.pdf>.

Once a child is referred to the Visions Program, that child's parent(s) or guardian(s) must complete a permission form, a sample of which is also found in the appendix of the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted. This step is required before evaluation can begin. The school division then has 60 days to make an initial determination using the below described criteria.

**Determination of Eligibility**

Once referred, an identification and placement committee in each school determines a student's eligibility for gifted services. No single factor determines eligibility. In order to qualify for gifted services, a student must demonstrate exceptional results in at least three of the following measures:

- Scores on nationally normed ability tests
- Scores on nationally normed achievement tests
- Class participation and teacher observations
- Student work including student portfolios, products, and performances.

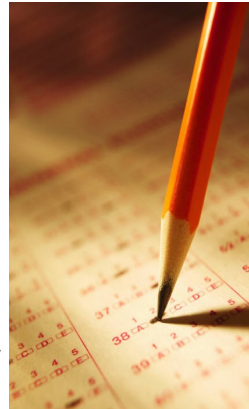
**\*NOTE:**

Previous achievements such as honors or awards received are considered when more information is needed in order to make a placement decision.

Although identification for gifted services is an ongoing process in grades K-12, *formal* identification of gifted learners does not usually occur until the 2nd semester of fourth grade or beyond.

**Are classroom grades and SOL scores used in the identification process?**

The Standards of Learning (SOL) tests and classroom grades only assess grade – level work. Gifted services are designed for students who demonstrate exceptional achievement beyond the regular classroom benchmarks, therefore SOL test scores and classroom grades are not considered when determining student eligibility for gifted services.



**Does participation in the Visions Program mean that a child has been identified as a gifted learner?**

No, participation in the Visions Program does not equate to gifted identification. The Visions program offers enrichment activities for a variety of students who have not been formally identified for gifted services. Because formal identification for gifted services does not usually occur until the 2nd semester of fourth grade, there are some students who may have worked with the Visions teacher in the lower elementary grades, but who are not found eligible for gifted services beginning in fifth grade.

**What is the Emerging Scholars Program?**

The Emerging Scholars Program was developed to increase the proportion of historically underrepresented students enrolled in gifted programs. The goal of this program is to identify and nurture students with high academic potential who may lack advocates and access and are therefore less likely to pursue advanced levels of learning on their own.

School administrators and teachers work together to find and promote gifted potential in young learners. Students enrolled in the Emerging Scholars Program will be nurtured, guided, and supported through accelerated and challenging curriculum, in-school and after-school activities, parent/guardian involvement and support, and ongoing staff development pertaining to culturally responsive teaching.

**What are the benefits of gifted services for eligible students?**

Many students who qualify for gifted services will benefit from greater academic challenges, and interaction with their intellectual peers. Furthermore, students challenged by appropriate coursework are less likely to be under achievers.

**What gifted services are offered in WJCC elementary schools?** Four levels of gifted services are offered in grades K-5.

**Level One**

Critical and creative thinking skills are encouraged in all learners, regardless of identification.

**Level Two**

Cluster Grouping allows teachers to place students with similar abilities into groups which will then receive appropriate additional challenges and extended learning experiences for each cluster.

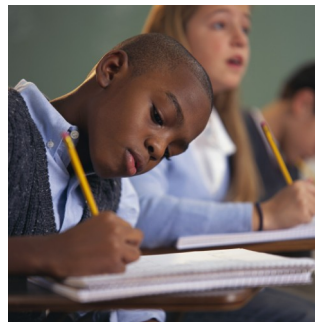
Emerging Scholars are also identified at this level of service.

**Level Three**

Students in K-4 found eligible for gifted services at this level will benefit from enrichment activities offered by the Visions teacher in collaboration with the regular classroom teacher.

**Level Four**

In grade 5, students identified for this level of service will receive math and language arts instruction from the gifted resource teacher on a daily basis, in lieu of regular classroom instruction. These students will also be automatically scheduled for the humanities English course in grade 6.



**What gifted services are offered in WJCC middle schools?** Three levels of gifted service are offered in grades 6-8.

**Level One**

Critical and creative thinking skills are encouraged in all learners, regardless of identification.

**Level Two**

Cluster Grouping allows teachers to offer additional challenges and extended learning experiences to students who would benefit from these services. The services include differentiated lessons, Intensified English, and advanced math courses. Emerging Scholars are also identified at this level of service.

**Level Three**

Students in middle school are not identified for Level Three services.

**Level Four**

At this level of service, advanced level courses are offered in math and language arts. In addition, during the 2007-08 academic year, a gifted Humanities curriculum is being developed for middle school students.

**What gifted services are offered in WJCC high schools?**

In high school, gifted services are available through a number of different options including Advance Placement (AP) courses, dual enrollment courses with Thomas Nelson Community College, Governor's School, and mentorships.

**What are the state regulations affecting gifted services?**

Every school-age child in Virginia deserves a free *appropriate* public education. State law requires that all Virginia school districts identify and meet the educational needs of gifted children, regardless of economic, English language, or physical ability.

Gifted services encompass a wide range of programs which may include advanced content or pacing of instruction; original research or production; problem finding and solving; higher level thinking; or the opportunity to focus on issues, themes, or ideas within or across an area of study. The gifted resource specialist in your child's school will help determine what the most appropriate instructional environment is for your child.

**What is a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)?**

Students eligible for gifted services at Level Three require a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP), which provides appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction necessary to meet the learning needs of that individual student. Individualized DEPs are written by the classroom teacher in collaboration with the Visions teacher, and shared with the parents or guardians.

**What rights do parents and guardians have concerning gifted services?**

As the parent or guardian of a child eligible for gifted services, you have certain legal rights.

First, students with exceptional ability or potential may be referred for gifted services by parents, students, faculty, administrators, and community members. Referral forms are available from the school gifted resource specialists and from the Supervisor of Gifted Education. When a child is found eligible for gifted services, the school will notify the child's parents or legal guardians in writing. Before a child can participate in gifted services, written consent must be obtained from the parent or guardian.

Parents or guardians may appeal the decision of their child's identification and placement committee.

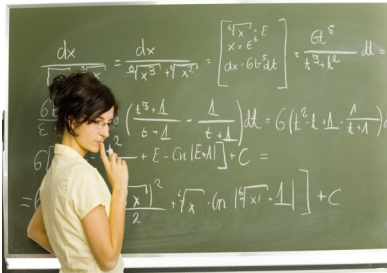
### **Whom can I talk to about gifted services in WJCC?**

#### **Visions Teachers**

Each school in WJCC has a full-time gifted resource specialist on staff. These Visions teachers are excellent sources of information for questions concerning gifted learners, gifted curriculum, and gifted services.

#### **Supervisor of Gifted Education**

The Supervisor of Gifted and Fine Arts Program oversees the development and implementation of gifted services throughout WJCC.



In addition, the Supervisor works closely with members of the WJCC School Board, as well as administrators in the State Department of Education.



### **What is the Gifted Advisory Committee?**

Members of the WJCC Gifted Advisory Committee include parents, teachers, the Supervisor of Gifted Education, and community members. The Advisory Committee serves as an advocate voice for the education of gifted students, advises the School Board and the Superintendent of the educational needs of gifted students, and annually reviews the Local Plan for Gifted Education and the extent to which it was implemented during the previous academic year. Interested individuals may apply to serve a three-year term on the WJCC Gifted Advisory Committee. Applications for advisory committees, including the WJCC Gifted Advisory Committee, can be found at <http://www.wjcc.k12.va.us/content/admin/schoolboard/pdf-files/ApplicationAdvisoryCommittees.pdf>

**What gifted education programs are offered outside the WJCC school system?**

A variety of gifted education programs exist throughout the United States. Two nationally known programs are highlighted below.

**Center for Gifted Education (CFGE) at the College of William & Mary**

The Center for Gifted Education at the College of William & Mary offers a variety of enrichment classes on Saturdays and in the summer for students in kindergarten through ninth grade. The Center is also an excellent resource for curriculum materials pertaining to gifted education. For more information regarding classes, programs, eligibility, and fees, go to <http://cfge.wm.edu/>

**Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University**

The Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University focuses on the needs of students with exceptionally high academic abilities. CTY offers gifted students and their families a wide range of programs and services to nurture intellectual abilities, enhance personal development, and foster better understanding of the needs of talented youth. For more information regarding classes, programs, eligibility, and fees, go to <http://cty.jhu.edu/>



## List of Resources

**Bright Child vs. Gifted Learner**

<http://pages.framingham.k12.ma.us/sage/brightchild.htm>

**Center for Gifted Education (CFGE) at the College of William & Mary**

<http://cfge.wm.edu/>

**Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University**

<http://cty.jhu.edu/>

**Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted** <http://www.wjcc.k12.va.us/content/programs/gifteded/Local%20Plan%20for%20the%20Gifted.pdf>

**National Association for Gifted Children**

<http://www.nagc.org/>

**State Board of Education: Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students** <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Gifted/gftregs.pdf>

**Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted**

[www.sengifted.org](http://www.sengifted.org)

**Virginia Association for the Gifted**

[www.vagifted.org](http://www.vagifted.org)