

COVINGTON CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



HANDBOOK for the GIFTED & TALENTED ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS, K-12

Revised Spring 2019

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COVINGTON CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DIVISION

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY FOR THE GIFTED

The purpose of Covington City Public Schools is to provide equal opportunity for **every student** to achieve maximum intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth, to insure that each individual be equipped to communicate effectively with other people, to be competent both in the work place and in higher education, and to feel confident of the ability to make creative and constructive decisions in his/her life.

The Covington City Public School system's basic educational philosophy states the "The purpose of the school is to provide opportunities and experiences which develop the full potential of each child enrolled." The Gifted and Talented Programs in the Covington City Schools is closely aligned with this general philosophical statement, since it is designed to provide an additional method of ensuring quality education appropriate to the uniquely different abilities, talents, and aptitudes that are innate within each child.

The regular classroom teacher is the key person in educating the gifted student. The classroom teacher is in the best position to guide the learning of gifted students directly. The Gifted and Talented Program build upon and enhances regular classroom instruction.

Gifted students are those whose abilities and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they are among those who may require special services. Programs for gifted students provide appropriate learning experiences and environments which meet the academic, creative, and social-emotional needs of these students and which develop their potential.

The basic goal of the Gifted and Talented Programs are to provide opportunities for appropriate intellectual, academic, and creative stimulation as well as social involvement so that Covington City's gifted and talented children will have an opportunity to develop their potential to the fullest extent possible. In the classroom, differentiation is provided through the modification of content, processes, strategies, evaluation, and learning environments that are appropriate in nurturing the characteristics of gifted students.

Covington City Public Schools provide a continuum of services in kindergarten through grade twelve for students gifted in general intellectual aptitude. The program is sequential and integrated into the basic curriculum.

NATIONAL DEFINITION of GIFTED STUDENTS

"Gifted and talented students are those identified by professionally qualified persons and, by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are students who require differentiated educational services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society."

STATE DEFINITION

(VA Dept. of Education 8VAC20-40-20. Definitions)

"Gifted students" means those students in public elementary, middle, and secondary schools beginning with kindergarten through twelfth grade who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or who show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs. These students will be identified by professionally qualified persons through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated aptitudes.

OVERVIEW OF THE COVINGTON GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMS

The Covington City Public Schools Gifted Program provides some special classes and/or services for students in grades kindergarten through twelve identified as having significantly advanced general intellectual ability. These programs take different forms depending on the grade level.

Students in kindergarten through grade two receive differentiated instruction from their regular classroom teacher. Parental involvement needs to be a part of this process. A Gifted Resource Teacher is available to screen potential students and offer assistance to classroom teachers through a couple mini-training sessions per year and personal assistance as needed.

In grades three through seven there is an **Enrichment Program**, where students leave their regular classes ('pull-out' program) for an average of 1.5 to 2 hours weekly, depending on grade level and school schedules. Students receive ongoing enrichment lessons in the four core subject areas. Parents receive an end-of-the-unit evaluation of their child's progress and behaviors. The Gifted Resource Teacher both creates and teaches these units which are evaluated each year at the student, peer, and administrative levels. Identified Gifted Students can remain in this program until they move out of the school. Two thematic program units are developed and taught each year by the Gifted Resource Teacher. Students meet weekly for depth/complexity in the curriculum.

Additionally, honor roll students, not identified as being gifted, have an opportunity to work together with the Identified Gifted Students in grades three through seven. This is called the *Revolving Door Enrichment Program* because, like the famous moving doors, students may be selected for one program and not another, thereby entering and exiting any particular unit in the Spring or Fall depending on various criteria. This unique program offers high achieving students who meet rigorous standards such as high grades, good test scores, teacher recommendations, and various other academic criteria, the opportunity to participate in units of study that are fun, motivating, challenging, and meet the Virginia Standards of Learning at or above the student's current grade level.

Covington City Public Schools developed an eligibility/identification process for these students that is similar to the identified gifted plan. Since there are a limited number of students selected for these programs, it is very competitive. Therefore, each student must qualify for each individual unit of study. However, students that have been in previous units of study and have been successful will be considered along with any new student recommendation coming from teachers for placement in the next unit.

At the secondary level gifted students are served through Honors/Advanced Placement courses in specific content areas, acceleration based on individual needs, guidance services addressing special needs of the gifted and mentorship programs. The Virginia Department of Education's *Virtual Virginia* program offers pre-Advanced Placement, honors and AP classes as well as academic electives and world languages.

The *Early College Scholars* program allows high school students to earn up to 15 hours of transferable college credit through Dabney Lancaster Community College while completing the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma. In addition, students may also participate in our Academic Year Jackson River Governor's School, the Summer Residential and Regional Governor's School programs, and other summer programs offered by surrounding colleges.

For more detailed information, contact the Virginia Department of Education website (www.doe.virginia.gov) and the Guidance Department of the Covington City High School. Not all program models are offered each year.

For all school levels, there are various summer camps offered by area colleges and universities ranging from one to two weeks in duration that offer thematic units in all subject areas. Information on these offerings usually comes in the late winter months. Parents are responsible for most costs, filling out and sending in the applications and seeking recommendations from teachers. Ask the Gifted Resource Teachers or the Guidance Department for more information.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO PARENTS

Being a parent or guardian of a gifted and talented student(s) can be quite a challenge, therefore parents are encouraged to contact the schools or the Gifted Resource Teacher if there are any questions regarding the Gifted and Talented Program. Parents' collaboration with the school is extremely important to help nurture and further the education for gifted students who often need more challenge that can be provided for in their regular classrooms. You are encouraged to attend parent conference days to speak to the classroom teachers and the Gifted Resource Teacher regarding your child's progress and challenges. This program is built on high expectations that provide depth and complexity to challenge gifted and talented students' vast abilities. Together, parents and the school can effectively achieve a quality education for these remarkable young people.

Some Characteristics of Gifted Students (from www.misd.net/gifted/giftedchildren.htm)

Many of these characteristics are exhibited at an early age, some are never observed, and some such as task commitment and creativity may be developed in later years.

Learning Characteristics

Learns rapidly and easily; may resist doing routine work or works in a careless manner
Prefers complex and challenging tasks rather than basic work; may resist challenging work for fear his/her struggle will be seen by others
Knows about many things of which other children are unaware, retains knowledge
Verbally proficient, exhibits advanced vocabulary for age or grade level
Reads with comprehension at an early age
Questions critically
Displays curiosity about many topics, keenly observant
Transfers learning to new situations

Motivational Characteristics

Has passionate interests, easily absorbed in activities and thoughts; may be unwilling to do other activities
Persistent in seeking task completion
Prefers to work independently, requires little direction
Assumes and discharges responsibility; may dominate others
Strong beliefs, opinionated

Creative Characteristics

Displays intellectual playfulness; asks many 'what if' questions; may be a nonconformist
Challenged by new ideas
Enjoys experimentation; may daydream, be absentminded, loose work
Keen sense of humor; may be the class clown, make jokes or comments at inappropriate times

Social-Emotional Characteristics

Has strong sense of justice; may assertively oppose injustices
Self-confident; may believe he/she is valued for what he/she can do rather than who he/she is; may fear loss of regard from others if exceptional ability is lost
Prefers older companions
Tends to be perfectionists; may be self-critical and critical of others; may work slowly, procrastinate
Bases friendships on similarity of interest rather than age

For more information, go to the [Frequently Asked Questions About Gifted Education in Virginia](#) at the end of this document.

STUDENT GOALS FOR GIFTED/TALENTED EDUCATION

SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Gifted/talented students will study advanced-level content and the major concepts, skills and processes of specific disciplines in which they demonstrate ability. Opportunities will be given for demonstrations of skills as evidenced by the development of innovative products and performances that are advanced in relation to students of similar age, experience, or environment and reflect individuality and creativity. Students will be able to work independently, with groups of other gifted students, and with groups of non-gifted peers.

THINKING SKILLS

Gifted and talented students will develop their abilities in higher level, more complex thinking skills that are extensions of regular curriculum. They will enhance and refine their abstract and complex thinking and reasoning processes through creative and critical thinking activities as they reflect on and refine their own thinking processes.

RESEARCH AND INDEPENDENT STUDY SKILLS

Gifted and talented students will develop the skills necessary for self-directed learning. With practice, students will learn to be confident in their abilities to conduct independent studies, process information and do research projects that extend the regular curriculum. They will have opportunities for sharing these projects, and have them evaluated by themselves and others.

SELF-CONCEPT / LEADERSHIP

Gifted and talented students will gain an understanding and respect for each person's abilities, recognizing the likenesses and differences between themselves and others, and will develop their own unique abilities for the betterment of both themselves and society. Opportunities will be given for improvement including communication and public speaking.

IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

PHASE I – SCREENING

A. GATHERING REFERRALS for the GIFTED IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Referrals to the Gifted Program may be made from August 1st through April 30th and are actively sought by the Gifted Resource Teacher throughout the year. Referral means the formal and direct process that secures nominations to start a gifted identification process. Special efforts will be made to secure referrals of students who are culturally different, economically disadvantaged, or who have special needs. Students must be referred by one or more of the following:

- Principal
- Teacher (s)
- Parent, guardian
- Students – self or peer(s)
- Counselors
- Community members

Once a referral is made, the enrichment resource teacher will send a letter to the referred student's parents telling them of the referral and asking permission to move forward with any needed testing.

B. GATHERING RECOMMENDATIONS for the REVOLVING DOOR PROGRAM

Teachers will make recommendations for a 'talent pool' of honor students for the Revolving Door Program two weeks before each separate unit of study. Each teacher is asked to submit names of students whose test scores and performance rank among the top in their class.

C. THE GIFTED CHILD STUDY IDENTIFICATION/PLACEMENT COMMITTEE

Referrals are given to the Gifted Resource Teacher who will begin gathering the data to present to the Gifted Child Study Identification/Placement Committee. The persons who comprise this committee are as follows:

- Classroom teacher(s) – one or two, typically the child's advocate, or a team of teachers
- Gifted Resource Teacher
- Principal
- Guidance Counselor

D. THE SCREENING DATA – GIFTED ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

After receiving a referral and parental permission to continue the identification process, a student profile is started by the Gifted Resource Teacher. All referrals that have been processed and placed on an identification matrix will remain in the Gifted Resource Teacher's files until the end of the year. Confidentiality will be assured regarding the rights of privacy of the individual. Information collected is available only to those who need to use it for educational purposes. The identification matrix will be placed in the student's cumulative folder at the end of the school year.

Multiple criteria are used to screen students for the Gifted Program and are collected from various sources and instruments. These may include, but are not limited to:

- IQ tests – OLSAT, SAGES-2
- SAT – Standardized Achievement Tests such as Stanford 10, Slosson
- PROFILES – such as Renzulli-Hartman Rating Scales, other appropriate rating scales, checklists and questionnaires, including parent surveys
- PERFORMANCES – Classroom work and behaviors, teacher assessments, records of previous achievements (awards, honors, grades, etc.), any relevant 'at-risk' information
- ADDITIONAL MEASURES – Standards of Learning test results, Benchmark tests

E. THE SCREENING DATA – REVOLVING DOOR ENRICHMENT PROGRAM OPTION

Recommendations of honor roll students for the Revolving Door Enrichment Option are also placed in separate files, and all data collected are placed on a matrix, although different from those used in the identification of Gifted Students.

- Student's magnified participation, work, attitude, and behavior in the regular classroom setting
- Student's advancement in a particular area/interests/willingness to do research work
- Test scores, including any previously given IQ tests, benchmark scores, etc. (definitely a factor, but not the determining issue)
- Classroom grades
- Any other information that might be pertinent for inclusion to work with identified Gifted Students

PHASE II - SELECTION

Consideration is given to each referred student by Gifted Child Study Identification/Placement Committee. The Covington City Public School Division does not allow any one single criterion to guarantee or deny access to the Gifted Program. Determination of eligibility is a committee process in which identification decisions are made. Based on the review of this information gathered during the screening process, students whose data reflect that gifted services will be the most effective way to meet their identified educational needs and their potential to benefit from the program, are recommended for services. Parents and teachers will be notified of each student's placement, and parents will be given opportunities to approve or deny such placement and to schedule conferences to discuss assessment data.

A. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT for GIFTED IDENTIFICATION

The top performing students in grades Kindergarten through grade 2 are put on a 'watch list' through teacher recommendations. In Kindergarten, teachers will recommend all children that come to school reading fluently. The Gifted Resource Teacher will keep these recommendations and add any classroom observations, surveys, etc., made of these students and other pertinent data. These files will be reviewed and added to each year. Third grade teachers will review these recommendations and by mid-year, refer them for the Gifted Identification process or recommend them for involvement in the Revolving Door Enrichment Program option with any other students they see may benefit from either option.

Students in grades 3-12, must demonstrate the need for gifted services through a cut-off score of 90% of the total available points for each individual student on the Gifted Eligibility Matrix Form. These are weighted points consisting of all the original screening data presented to the Gifted Child Study Identification/Placement Committee. Parents are notified by letter of the decision and appropriate placement for their child is recommended. Parental permission for placement is always required.

B. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT for the REVOLVING DOOR ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Consideration is also given to each recommendation given for the Revolving Door Enrichment Program option. Unlike the gifted identification process, the determination of eligibility is decided upon by both the classroom teacher and the Gifted Resource teacher, based on the criteria used for each unit of study. All criteria are put on the Revolving Door Matrix where scores are weighted similarly to the matrix for gifted identification. The cut-off score is 80% of the total available points for each individual student. This DOES NOT mean that they will be chosen to participate. All scores are ranked and students receiving the higher scores will be placed until the class is full. Candidacy is reviewed after each unit of study – not because they have participated in the past. Parents are then notified and given the chance to approve or deny the placement of their child in that particular unit of study.

TRANSFER STUDENT POLICY

Transfer students at the elementary school level who have been identified and served previously in a gifted program may enter the individual units of study in the 'pull-out' program for grades 3-7. In the meantime, each student will need to be re-evaluated for full inclusion in the Covington City Public Schools Gifted Program. This will involve the administration of the chosen testing instrument(s), gathering performance and behavior from the current classroom teachers, and meeting with the Gifted Child Study Identification/Placement Committee. This should all occur within one school year, depending on the transfer date. At the secondary level, a similar process of information gathering occurs.

Once identified as a Gifted Student, this student will retain that label throughout the years in the Covington City Public Schools. If it is determined that it would be in the best interest of the student and/or the individual unit of study to discontinue the student's participation, this would be accomplished through an exit procedure.

EXIT PROCEDURE

Students placed in the Covington City Public Schools Gifted and Talented Programs may be exited when it is determined that it would be in the best interest of the student and/or the program to discontinue the student's participation. HOWEVER, ONCE A STUDENT IS IDENTIFIED AS GIFTED AND PARENT PERMISSION IS OBTAINED, THE STUDENT WILL REMAIN IN THE GIFTED PROGRAM DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR. Sometimes a student may wish to not be included in a particular unit of study. One or more of the following conditions must be met:

A. An identified Gifted Student may, with parental permission, request to be removed from one particular unit of study. In such cases, a conference (in person or by phone) between the **parent(s), Gifted Resource Teacher and the student** (if appropriate) must be held before the student is exited. The principal will be notified when the request is made.

If a student requests to be removed from the Gifted Program entirely and not for a particular unit of study, the above mentioned conference will include the principal. The appropriate documentation, signed by the parent(s) and the principal will be placed in the student's gifted/talented records at the conclusion of this process. The student must remain out of the program for one school year and must be rescreened, tested, and re-qualify before re-entry into the program.

B. The parent(s) may request that the student be removed from the program or particular unit of study. In such cases, the procedure outlined in 'A' above is followed.

C. The Gifted Resource Teacher, principal, or counselor may recommend the exiting of a Gifted Student who, in their opinion, may suffer from undue emotional stress or anxiety by continued participation in the program or who may have extreme behavioral problems that distract from the education of others in the class. In such cases, a conference between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and Gifted Child Study Identification/Placement Committee will be held, and the student may be exited upon the recommendations of the majority.

D. If a Gifted Student is encountering temporary problems, the student may be 'furloughed' for a year or less. This decision will be made by the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Gifted Resource Teacher. The purpose of the furlough is to provide the student with an opportunity to attain performance goals in his/her own classroom. If a student is not ready to re-enter the program by the end of the school year, a conference must be held between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Gifted Child Study Committee for a decision to be reached about the need for further gifted services. Minutes with signatures of all in attendance are required.

E. Honor students (non-identified as Gifted) may be exited after a conference (in person or by phone) between the parent(s) and the Gifted Resource Teacher. Agreement to exit the student from any particular unit of study may be made verbally or in writing by either the Gifted Resource Teacher or a parent. A record of this decision will be placed in the student's record file at school.

APPEALS

Any decision may be appealed by following the process outlined in the Covington City Schools Local Plan for the Gifted. Contact the Gifted Enrichment Teacher for further information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT GIFTED EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

We are moving into Virginia. How will my child's previous identification as a gifted student be handled?

Each school division in Virginia establishes procedures for the identification of gifted students and for the delivery of services to those students, consistent with the Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students. In order to have your child assessed, you will need to complete a referral. It would be helpful if the information from the previous school was provided with the referral. Your child's strengths and abilities may be assessed by an

identification committee, according to the division's approved procedures. For further information, contact your child's principal, teacher, or guidance counselor.

Why don't gifted students have IEPs and other safeguards similar to special education students?

Federal law establishes policies and procedures for special education, but gifted education policies and procedures are established by state law.

What is the difference between screening and referral?

Screening is the annual process of reviewing existing, generally available, or specifically designated data for all students to determine whether students should be referred for identification for gifted services.

Referral is a direct procedure that enters a student into a school division's identification process. Referral of a student requires the school division to administer all assessments and reach an eligibility decision as specified in the division's approved local plan for the education the gifted. Referrals may be offered by parents, teachers, community members, administrators, peers, or the student him or herself.

Why are identification procedures and services different from division to division?

Virginia law allows school divisions to establish gifted education policies and procedures according to the needs and interests of the local division. Divisions may choose to provide either General Intellectual Aptitude or Specific Academic Aptitude programs. While these areas of giftedness are both academic, they serve different kinds of learners.

What do I do if I disagree with the decision of the identification committee?

Parents and school personnel may appeal the decision of the committee by following the procedure established by the division, usually by submitting a letter to the local gifted education coordinator or to the principal of the school.

Who can appeal an identification or placement decision?

An appeal may be made by parents or guardians, and school personnel, including guidance counselors, teachers, and principals.

What is a cut-off score? How are cut-off scores determined?

Eligibility decisions must be based on multiple criteria which may include scores on valid and reliable tests or assessments. Tests and other measures are ranked or scored according to the procedures established by the division and approved in the local plan. No single criterion shall be used in determining students who qualify for, or are denied access to, programs for the gifted.

What requires a division to have a gifted education program?

Gifted education programs are required by Virginia law, as specified in Virginia Administrative Code, 8VAC20-40-10 through 8VAC20-40-70.

How are gifted programs funded?

The Commonwealth of Virginia provides each locality with an apportioned share of funds to support local program services, based on that locality's total student enrollment.

How much additional money does my division receive for programs for the gifted?

The money is apportioned according to guidelines in the Standards of Quality, and must be matched with a prescribed amount of local funds.

How may those funds be spent?

State funds administered by the Department of Education and local matching funds may be used to support only those activities identified in the school division's approved local plan for the education of the gifted.

What is a "local match"?

School divisions are required to match state funds with local funds based on the composite index (ability to pay) formula.

What is a local advisory committee?

Each school board must appoint members to a local advisory committee. This committee is composed of parents, school personnel, and other community members. The purpose of this committee is to advise the school board and the division superintendent of the educational needs of all gifted students in the division, and to review the implementation of the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted.

What are the responsibilities of the local advisory committee?

The committee conducts an annual review of the local plan for the education of gifted students, including revisions, and determines the extent to which the plan was implemented for each school year. The recommendations of the advisory committee must be submitted in writing to the division superintendent and to the school board.

What is "appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction?"

"Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction" means curriculum and instruction adapted or modified to accommodate the accelerated learning aptitudes of identified students in their areas of strength. Such curriculum and instructional strategies provide accelerated and enrichment opportunities that recognize gifted students' needs for

- (i) advanced content and pacing of instruction;
- (ii) original research or production;
- (iii) problem finding and solving;
- (iv) higher level thinking that leads to the generation of products; and
- (v) a focus on issues, themes, and ideas within and across areas of study. Such curriculum and instruction are offered continuously and sequentially to support the achievement of student outcomes, and provide support necessary for these students to work at increasing levels of complexity that differ significantly from those of their age-level peers.

How are teachers selected for work with gifted students?

Localities develop specific procedures to select administrative and teaching staff to deliver services to gifted students. Teacher selection may be based on a demonstrated ability to create and carry out flexible, differentiated, and enriched curricular experiences which are suited to the gifted students' needs, or other criteria established by the school division.

What training is required for teachers?

The Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students (PDF) require that school divisions provide professional development based on the teacher competencies outlined in 8VAC20-542-310 related to gifted education. Each school division specifies the required annual training expected of personnel. This training or professional development should include, but not limited to, classes offered by the division, courses at a local university or college, conference attendance, and options tailored to meet the needs of the specific educator or group of educators. Teachers of the gifted may also choose to complete the coursework to obtain an add-on endorsement in gifted education.

How are high school students provided with differentiated instruction?

The delivery of services for high school students, as specified in the school division's local plan, may include options such as:

- Differentiation in the regular classroom
- Honors or advanced level courses, such as Advanced Placement, Cambridge, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, that are differentiated for gifted learners
- Seminars and special workshops
- Mentorship's
- Independent study
- Counseling sessions
- Access to secondary level specialized programs (i.e., Academic-Year Governor's School)
- Access to dual-enrolled classes with colleges and universities

How are students selected for participation in Governor's Schools?

Academic Year Governor's School

The Academic-Year Governor's Schools are established as "joint schools" by Virginia school law. As such, they are typically managed by a regional governing board of representatives from the school boards of each participating division. The regional governing board is charged with developing policies for the school including the school's admissions process. While these processes differ from school to school, all applicants are assessed using multiple criteria by trained evaluators who have experience in gifted education and the focus area of the specific Academic-Year Governor's School.

Summer Residential Governor's School

Any Virginia gifted tenth- or eleventh-grade student may apply for the Summer Residential Governor's Schools. Applications are made available in October through a Superintendent's Memo, and copies are sent to high school guidance departments of public and private schools, as well as each school division's gifted education coordinator. Each school division has a specific number of nominations it may send to the Virginia Department of Education. Nominations may be made by teachers, guidance counselors, peers, or by the students themselves. A school or

division selection committee chooses the nominees from each school or division and forwards the nominees to a state committee. Consideration is given to students' academic records, test scores, extra-curricular activities, honors, and awards, creativity, original essays, and teacher recommendations. Students applying for the Visual and Performing Arts Summer Residential Governor's School participate in a statewide adjudication where they audition or present portfolios for review before a pair of professionals in the specific arts field. Because of the limited number of residential placements available, not all students who are nominated by their schools can be accepted for participation.

Summer Regional Governor's School

Gifted students may apply for the regional summer school in their area. The Summer Regional Governor's School director and the local planning committee with representatives from the participating school divisions at each regional site establish nomination and selection procedures.