

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter
GIFTED PROGRAM
Administrative Procedures Manual



Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School Mission Statement

The mission of the Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School is to foster in its students the passion and curiosity to become life-long learners. Students will develop the ability and motivation to think independently, communicate effectively, and excel academically.

GIFTED PROGRAM DEFINITIONS

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School defines a **gifted student** as: a student who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual, creative, and/or artistic ability (ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her abilities. Georgia Board of Education (GBOE) Rule 160-4-2-.38

A **differentiated curriculum**, as defined by the Georgia Board of Education, is comprised of courses of study in which the content, teaching strategies, and expectations of student mastery have been appropriately modified for gifted students.

An **Eligibility Team** reviews referrals, reviews assessment data to determine eligibility, and designs Plans of Improvement for gifted students who are not performing satisfactorily in the regular classroom or in the gifted class.

Membership of the Gifted Eligibility Team (GET)

The membership of the Gifted Eligibility Team (GET) is critical to the success of the multiple criteria screening and identification processes at the local school. The success is dependent on general education being in charge of the screening and identification. The process is successful and students are best served when all teachers are screening and referring students for gifted services rather than one teacher reviewing test scores. The following groups should be represented on the eligibility team.

- *Principal or assistant principal*
- *One special area teacher (PE, career technology, special education, etc.)*
- *One representative from each grade level or core department*
- *Gifted Teachers*

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Indirect Services Collaborative Teaching (K-8)

A maximum of eight identified gifted students are placed as a group into an otherwise heterogeneous classroom. Direct instruction is provided by the students' regular classroom teacher who collaborates with a designated gifted teacher. There must be substantial, regularly scheduled collaborative planning between the regular classroom teacher and the gifted teacher. The following requirements must be met to earn the gifted FTE weight:

1. The collaborating gifted teacher must have a clear renewable GaPSC approved gifted education endorsement.
2. The gifted teacher, the regular classroom teacher, and the gifted student(s) (when appropriate) collaborate and document the development of differentiated instructional strategies, Georgia standards based curriculum, and evaluation practices.
3. The collaborating regular classroom teacher and gifted teacher must be provided adequate planning time which must be documented and approved by the LEA. In certified personnel information, the regular education teacher is the teacher of record and the gifted program teacher is recorded in the consultative subject code (see table 1).

4. The gifted education teacher must be given one full period each week or its monthly equivalent during which he/she has only gifted education collaborative planning responsibilities (as determined by the local system) for every three classes in which he/she has collaborative teaching responsibilities.
5. The total number of gifted students whose instruction may be modified through this collaborative approach may not exceed eight per class. For example, if the gifted program teacher is working with three classroom teachers during the first period of the school day, there may be no more than 24 gifted students (for whom curriculum is being differentiated among the three classes).
6. Instructional segments that have been modified for gifted learners may be counted at the gifted FTE weight if the gifted education teacher, and regular education teacher document the curriculum modifications made for the gifted students in the following ways:
 - a. separate lesson plans which show the reason(s) why any student whose instruction is counted at the gifted FTE weight needs an advanced curriculum in that particular content area (e.g., national norm-referenced tests and/or benchmark tests);
 - b. a time and discussion log of the collaborative planning sessions between the teachers
 - c. individual or small group contracts indicating the differentiated learning standards for the gifted student(s) and the alternative instructional strategies in which the gifted student(s) will be engaged.

Table 1: Planning Time for Gifted Program Specialist in the Collaborative Teaching Model

Number of classes within which the gifted specialist collaborates	Number of segments counted at the gifted weight	Required collaborative planning time in minutes
1-3	1-24	45-60
4-6	25-48	90-120
7-9	49-72	135-180
10-12	73-96	180-240
13-15	97-120	225-300
16-18	121-144	270-360

PROGRAM GOALS

The goal of the SGSC Program is to provide students with the opportunity to enhance cognitive skills, learning skills, research and communication skills by extending learning experiences beyond the regular classroom. Students will be served utilizing the SBOE approved delivery models as defined in the Resource Manual for Gifted Education Services.

Additionally, careful attention will be paid to equity issues such as the number of nominations and/or referrals of minority students and the proportion of referrals for both genders. Program evaluation results will guide the development of the needed staff development and/or procedural modifications.

Gifted Education Services Information

Stakeholders in the counties served by SGSC are given information on the gifted services via the system web page, through each school's student handbook and through the System Code of Conduct. New

students are provided this information through an insert in the registration packet. School newsletters carry appropriate information during the school year. The local newspaper is also used to publicize activities.

Professional Development

General education and gifted education teachers are encouraged to attend professional learning opportunities designed to increase subject matter, knowledge of teaching Gifted Education, improve the use of curricula, instructional strategies and assessment measures appropriate for gifted students.

Each year new faculty members are added to the SGSC family. With this in mind, new faculty must be trained in the multiple screening and identification procedures. It is recommended that the eligibility team chair and/or gifted teacher conduct the training for new faculty. Training should be completed by the end of September.

Family/Community Involvement

The SGSC Gifted Program encourages the involvement of family and community members. Parents serve as chaperones for field trips. Parents and community members are brought in as guest speakers or presenters. A gifted survey is provided periodically to parents and students for input on program improvement. Opportunities are available throughout the year for students to showcase work and talents for parent and community viewing in the schools.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Eligibility

Current Georgia Board of Education Rules and Regulations for Gifted Programs permit school systems to identify students for gifted education services using the multiple criteria rule, GBOE Rule 160-4-2.38. Students are determined to be eligible for gifted education under this rule.

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

The Gifted Education Referral Process Flowchart located on page 13 indicates the steps that occur in the process from the referral phase to placement of a student in the program for gifted students and the subsequent annual review that occurs each school year.

The referral process has five basic steps:

1. referral of students as possible candidates for formal evaluation (any time during year),
2. review of referrals and available data to determine if the referral for formal assessment is warranted (any time during year),
3. collection of data and assessment of referred students (fall for “new to SGSC, spring of year for others),
4. examination by the Eligibility Team of assessment data for determination of eligibility, and
5. placement in the gifted program, or if found ineligible, curriculum adaptations in the regular education program as may be necessary and determined by assessment data.

Student Referral

The purpose of the referral phase is to gather existing information, including observation of student behaviors, about the student in order for the Eligibility Team to determine whether further consideration for the gifted program is warranted. Referrals to be considered by the Gifted Program Eligibility Team can come from automatic referrals generated from review of standardized achievement test scores and reported referrals from classroom teachers and other school based educators. However, any person who

has knowledge of a student's intellectual functioning can make a referral. A referral may be made by teachers, counselors, administrators, parents or guardians, student peers, or by the student himself/herself.

Reported Referral

Persons wishing to refer a student will complete a Gifted Program Referral Form. Gifted Program Referral forms are to be turned in to the gifted education teacher. Referrals may be turned in any time during the school year but will be reviewed by the Eligibility Team shortly after school opens in the fall for newly enrolled students and in the Spring for all other students.

Students who enroll in SGSC that were actively engaged in a gifted program in another Georgia public school district will be placed in the gifted program once documentation of service in the former Georgia school district has been received. Students who were actively engaged in a gifted program in a public school district outside the State of Georgia will be reviewed by the Eligibility Team to determine if any assessment is necessary before determining eligibility for gifted program services.

Automatic Referral

When a system-wide norm referenced test is administered, students who score at or above the 95th percentile on the total battery or total math or total reading will be referred to the Gifted Eligibility Team. When a student meets the criteria for automatic referral, the gifted education teacher gathers supporting evidence of academic and creative strengths to bring to the meeting of the Gifted Eligibility Team.

Review of Referrals

Please note: Referral does not mean evaluate. If evidence does not support evaluating, then the student referred will not be evaluated.

The Gifted Eligibility Team will meet to review referral information. This information should include the SGSC Reported Referral of Observed Gifted Behaviors Chart, the Classroom Talent Survey, products/projects completed by the student, and any other supporting documentation used in Tier II of the Response to Interventions Pyramid as developed by each school.

Parent/Guardian Notification

After a review of referral information, if the Eligibility Team recommends referring a student for further screening and/or assessments, the parent/guardian will receive a notification/permission letter. Once the school receives the signed notification letter, the assessment process will begin.

Assessment of Referred Students

Assessment of students referred for gifted services will be conducted at two separate times during a school year – first grading period for students newly enrolled and in the spring for students referred during the school year.

When the Eligibility Team refers a student for further assessment, the gifted education teacher will administer appropriate tests and/or gather necessary data in all four categories of eligibility. This process can vary from student to student depending primarily on grade level and assessment data already available. More testing may be needed for some students than for others based on available and current data.

- The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) will be used in K-12 to measure mental ability.
- For the category of achievement, a norm-referenced test such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills will be administered.

- An instrument which measures creative thinking, such as the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT), will be used to assess eligibility in the creativity category at all grade levels.
- For the category of motivation, assessment instruments that may be used include: the Gifted Evaluation Scale 4th Edition (GES 4) for Grades K-5 and GPA of academic content and grade point averages over a two-year period for students in grades 6-12.

SGSC will review GPA for students grades 9-12 in the content areas of mathematics, English, social studies, science, and foreign language (when it is a part of the transcript) to determine the upper 10% level of all students. This will determine the GPA that should be used as a criterion in the motivation category for high school students.

Determination of Eligibility

After data have been collected in all four eligibility categories, the Eligibility Team will carefully review all data to determine if sufficient information is available to make an eligibility decision. In keeping with GBOE Rule 160-4-2-.38, a student must meet eligibility criteria in one of two ways: a) score at the 99th percentile (for grades K-2) or the 96th percentile (for grades 3-12) on the composite or full scale score of a standardized test of mental ability and meet one of the achievement criteria, **or** b) qualify through a multiple-criteria assessment process by meeting criteria in any three of the four categories: mental ability, achievement, creativity and motivation. Any students test scores that are less than two years old can be considered for qualifying for gifted services.

Ineligible Students

If students do not meet eligibility criteria as per GBOE Rule 160-4-2.38, students at grades 3-12 will be eligible for re-screening in alternate year testing. If scores are older than two years, then the student will be re-screened in that particular area.

Use of Outside Data

Assessment data gathered and analyzed by a source outside the student's school must be considered as part of the referral and evaluation process. However, these outside data shall not be substituted for data the school generates during the testing/evaluation process and may never be the sole source of assessment data. The system shall never rely on this data exclusively for determination of eligibility for gifted program services. Outside test data may be used as part of a comprehensive profile of test and non-test evidence of advanced instructional needs.

Placement in Gifted Program

Based upon the data collected, the Eligibility Team will make one of the following decisions:

1. The student is eligible for gifted program services under the criteria established under Rule 160-42-.38.

OR

2. The student is not eligible for gifted program services because he/she has not met the criteria established by Rule 160-4-2-.38.

An Eligibility Report Form must be completed and a copy given or sent to the parent(s) or guardian(s). If the student is not eligible, a letter accompanies the Eligibility Report. If the student is eligible, consent for placement must be obtained prior to the student receiving gifted education services. A copy of the Eligibility Report Form should be placed in the student's cumulative folder.

Students can begin receiving gifted education services at one of two times during the school year. For elementary and middle school students, new placements can occur at the beginning of the school year or at the completion of the assessment process scheduled at the beginning of the school year. High school students can begin gifted program services at the beginning of a term/semester when a new schedule of classes begins.

Reciprocity

Students who have been in a gifted program in another state can begin receiving gifted education services as soon as the assessment process required in the State of Georgia is completed. Students who have been in a gifted program in another county in Georgia will automatically begin receiving gifted education services as soon as documentation of placement in the former school district is confirmed and parent permission is received.

Curriculum Adaptations for Ineligible Students

When a student is found to be ineligible for gifted program services, curriculum adaptations will be recommended by the Eligibility Team should the assessment information indicate curriculum adaptations are needed. The student's teacher(s) will be made aware of these recommendations so that implementation of the curricular adaptations can take place in the student's regular education classes.

Annual Review

The progress of each student receiving gifted education services shall be reviewed annually. Students performing satisfactorily in regular education and gifted education classes shall continue receiving gifted education services. The Continuation Policy for gifted education is part of this Administrative Procedures packet. Parent(s) or guardian(s) will be given a copy of the Continuation Policy the time of the student's placement for gifted education services.

Placement in Jeopardy – Probation

A student's continued participation in the gifted program is contingent upon satisfactory performance in the regular classroom and in the gifted program. Satisfactory performance in regular education classes shall be based on the student maintaining passing grades in academic subjects according to the regular standards of the system and an overall 3.0 average for the grading period. Should a student fail to maintain satisfactory performance in either, or both, of these locations, a Plan of Improvement will be developed for elementary students, while a conference will be held with the middle/high school students. This plan/conference will identify specific student goals that should lead to satisfactory performance once again. Parent/guardians of elementary students will receive a letter requesting a conference and a copy of the Plan of Improvement while the middle school/high school parents will receive the Notification of Placement Review letter that includes notification of the probationary period. The probationary period may include a full grading period but would be for a minimum of one grading period for students at all instructional levels. At the completion of the probationary period, the Plan of Improvement/Placement Review will be reviewed. Students who meet the terms of the Plan of Improvement/Placement Review will continue to receive gifted education services.

Students who do not meet the terms of the Plan of Improvement/Placement Review will no longer receive gifted education services. Parents/guardians will receive written notification following the Eligibility Team meeting when the Plan of Improvement/Placement Review information is reviewed. Parents who wish to schedule a conference concerning the student's continuation or exit from the program may do so.

Grading period = one semester for high school and middle school students and 9 weeks at elementary level.

Withdrawal from Gifted Education Services

A student shall not be withdrawn from the Program for the Gifted without written notification to the parent/guardian and offered the option of a conference. A student may be dismissed from the gifted education program by:

1. not meeting the terms of a Plan of Improvement,
2. parent request,
3. withdrawal from school (i.e., - moved),
4. graduation, or
5. the student's death

If for some reason a parent/guardian wishes voluntarily to withdraw their child from receiving gifted education services, they should inform the gifted education teacher in the local school. A conference will be scheduled to discuss the nature of the parental concern(s). The parents/guardians, a classroom teacher, a gifted education teacher, and an administrator will be invited to attend this conference.

Re-entry

If a student has withdrawn from the gifted program for any reason other than moving, and is considered for re-entry at a later time, the student will not be able to re-enter until the beginning of the next school year following the expiration of one calendar year. A student who was dismissed from the program following the development of a Plan of Improvement/Placement Review must meet the goals of the Plan of Improvement/Placement Review that were in place at the time of dismissal from the program. A student who exited the gifted program at the request of the parent/guardian must meet the eligibility criteria in place at the time of re-entry. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to request permission for the student to be considered for reinstatement into the program. This makes it possible for placement decisions to be made in time for planning for the next school year. Following the parents'/guardians' request, the school's Eligibility Team will review the student's gifted education file to make a decision regarding re-entry into the gifted program. For a student to re-enter the gifted program, an Eligibility-Placement form will be completed reflecting the change in the student's educational plan. Parents/guardians will receive written notification of the Eligibility Team's recommendation and will be offered the opportunity for a conference.

Transfer Students

Students who meet the state eligibility criteria for gifted education services shall be considered eligible to receive gifted education services in **any** school system in Georgia. Students who have been determined eligible for gifted education services in any public school system in Georgia will automatically be eligible for services in SGSC once documentation of service in the former school district has been received. Students transferring from out of state will need to be considered on an individual basis by the Eligibility Team and a determination made regarding whether sufficient information exists to establish eligibility based on state and local criteria or whether further testing is needed. Transfer students must meet continuation policy criteria established for SGSC in order to continue receiving gifted education services.

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School Gifted Program Eligibility Criteria Summary

To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must meet the criteria in three of the four categories summarized below. These criteria are in accordance with Rule 160-4-2-.38 of the Georgia Board of Education. Students are assessed in the categories of: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation. Assessment data for any of the four categories must be no more than two years old.

Standardized tests that are used must be nationally normed. SGSC may use the following instruments or any other assessment measure that meets state criteria when determining program eligibility.

Categories	Assessment Instruments	Grade Level	Criteria
Mental Abilities	Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) Verbal Component Quantitative Component Non-verbal Component Composite (V+Q+NV) <u>Either area or composite</u>	K-12 K-2 3-12	(1) Psychometric Composite Score =99 th percentile K-2 ≥96 th percentile <u>3-12</u> (For composite) 2) Multiple Criteria ≤96 th percentile K-12
Achievement	Norm-Referenced Test ITBS Total Reading Total Math Total Battery } Either/or of the 3	K-12	≥90 th percentile
Creativity	Torrance Test of Creative Thinking Figural or Verbal	K-12	≥90 th percentile
Motivation	Gifted Evaluation Scale (GES 4) OR GPA (1 st sem or 3rd 9 wks) Grade Point Average	K-5 6-8 9-12	≥90 th percentile at least ≥3.5

Initial Eligibility

To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must either:

- a. score at the 96th percentile (K-2) or the 96th percentile (3-12) on the composite or full scale score of a standardized test of mental ability **and** meet one of the achievement criteria

OR

- b. qualify through a multiple-criteria assessment process by meeting the criteria in any three of the following four areas: mental ability (intelligence), achievement, creativity and motivation. Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-38

CURRICULUM and SERVICES to be PROVIDED

Instructional Services-Materials

The mission of the Program for the Gifted of Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School is to provide for the extension of learning opportunities, development of individual potential, enhancement of the

student's self-concept and advancement toward becoming an independent learner beyond the opportunities and experiences of the regular classroom. The program will provide differentiated curricula offerings based on the assessed needs of the student while meeting Georgia Standards of Excellence and the state gifted standards. The curricula will focus on developing cognitive, learning, research and reference, and meta-cognitive skills at each grade level.

Differentiated Curricula

Students receiving gifted education services while in elementary school have *curriculum enrichment activities* that incorporate the four academic disciplines of: mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science.

At the middle school, academic classes may include any of the five disciplines: social studies, reading, science, language arts, and math. The course syllabus and academic content in each of these courses is differentiated in that it is faster paced and is more rigorous and challenging than what is found in a regular class at the same grade level.

In the high school, instructional services include an array of Gifted, Honors and Advanced Placement courses. Advanced content classes in science, English, mathematics and social studies are available for identified students. The syllabus and academic content in each of these courses is differentiated in that it is faster paced and is more rigorous and challenging than what is found in a regular class at the same grade level.

All gifted identified students are served at a minimum of 5 segments a week.

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter Schools Gifted Education Continuation Policy

According to Georgia Department of Education, Gifted Program Regulations and Procedures, the performance of students receiving gifted education services will be evaluated annually. This will include evaluation of performance in the regular classroom as well as in the gifted education program. When a student's performance is deemed unsatisfactory in the regular classroom or the gifted education classroom, a referral shall be made.

At the elementary level, intervention strategies will be used over a prescribed period of time by the classroom teacher and/or the gifted education teacher. Following the prescribed period of time, a second GET meeting will be scheduled to review the student's progress. If the problem(s) persists, a meeting of the Gifted Eligibility Team will be scheduled for the purpose of designing a Plan of Improvement for a prescribed period of time determined by the Eligibility Team. During this time, the student's placement for receiving gifted education services is in jeopardy and the student is on probation. The Plan of Improvement describes the goals that must be met in order for the student to continue to receive gifted education services. The student continues to receive gifted education services during the probationary period. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the Eligibility Team reviews the goals of the Plan of Improvement. If the student has been able to meet the prescribed goals, placement in the gifted education program will continue; if the goals are not met, gifted education services will be discontinued.

At middle school level, satisfactory performance in regular education shall be based on the student maintaining passing grades in all academic subjects according to the regular standards of the system and an overall 3.0 average for the grading period. Teachers will conference with students when student performance is deemed unsatisfactory. Students will be placed on probation for one entire grading period. At the end of the probationary period, the students' status regarding the continuation criteria will be reviewed by the GET.

High School students (2019-2020) failing or struggling in one or more classes may choose to remain in the class only after a conference has been held with the student, parent and teachers involved. A decision will be reached jointly by all parties and a plan of improvement developed if the student is to remain in the gifted program.

According to State of Georgia Rules and Regulations adopted in February 1998, “parents will be informed when a student’s placement is in jeopardy,” and “when it is determined that a student must be withdrawn from the gifted program, the parents shall be notified in writing prior to the dismissal.” A student who has been dismissed from gifted education services can be referred for re-entry after one calendar year. The student must: a) meet the goals of the Plan of Improvement if dismissal occurred as a result of unsatisfactory performance, and b) meet the eligibility criteria in place at the time of re-entry, and c) the assessment data on the student is not more than two years old.

Parents of students whose performance is deemed satisfactory will be notified of the Eligibility Team’s recommendation for continuation in the gifted program.

Suggestions to use when Designing a Plan of Improvement**

The classroom teacher and/or the gifted education teacher should document carefully the unsatisfactory performance of identified gifted students in either the regular classroom or the gifted education class. This documentation should be for a **minimum** of six weeks and should be used when discussing and designing intervention for the student. Some things that may be considered when designing a Plan of Improvement are:

For the unstructured student:

Set up a schedule that will help the student develop organization skills; break assignments down into smaller pieces; let the student know what is expected of him/her.

For the student with social and/or emotional problems:

Set up a counseling program with a counselor.

For the student who begins to make poor grades:

Prescribe specific study skills; formal or informal diagnostic evaluation may also be needed.

For the unmotivated student or poor academic performer:

Determine whether the curriculum being offered is sufficiently challenging or appropriate for the gifted student; formal or informal diagnostic tests may need to be administered.

For the student who does not turn in required assignments:

Determine whether required assignments are necessary for the student to demonstrate mastery of the objectives; may need to set up a plan for modifying the standard curriculum assignments to permit the student opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the standard curriculum objectives; work with the student to set up realistic workload expectations; determine if program placement is appropriate.

These are only suggested ideas. In some cases, standardized testing may need to be done or the most recent test results considered when determining program continuation. Students should not be dismissed from the gifted program for having a poor grade point average. An unsatisfactory grade point average is an indication of a problem-not the problem. The Gifted Eligibility Team should look at specific subject matter grades that may be in question. The Plan of Improvement should be targeted toward skills and/or behaviors that will result in improved performance in that subject area(s).

The individual needs of the student and available resources should all be considered when the Eligibility Team is designing the Plan of Improvement.

When possible, the student may be included when designing the Plan of Improvement.

** Elementary Schools only

Grade Acceleration Procedure:

In the event that a student's parents request that their child be considered for acceleration to the next grade, the request will be brought before an Acceleration Review Team. This team should include at least one of the student's regular education teachers, a gifted teacher, a counselor, a school system psychologist, a school administrator, a teacher for the grade to which the student may be advancing, a special needs teacher (if applicable), and the system Curriculum Director. These requests will be considered in the spring for the next school year. The review team will be established to evaluate all data. If additional information is needed, the team will request written parental consent to evaluate the student. For grade acceleration, the review team will consider student test scores and other standards of comparison suggested by the "Iowa Acceleration Scale" or its equivalent. The review team will provide decisions on such issues as grade level testing, transportation, (if applicable), extracurricular opportunities, class ranking, and transcript record keeping. Parents should be informed of the review team's decision on the acceleration request within ten school days following its decision. Parents may appeal the decision of the review team by sending a letter to the superintendent within ten days of the decision. The Superintendent's decision is final.

If the decision is made for grade acceleration, a written acceleration plan for the student will be provided by the review team. One of the review team members will serve as a monitor for the student's transition for a period of twenty days. During this time parents may request in writing to the school principal an alternative placement. If the acceleration plan is modified or discontinued, the written acceleration plan should be updated. A copy of the plan should be included in the student's permanent record.

