

# Superintendent Procedure 2190SP **Highly Capable Services & Advanced Learning Programs**



Approved by: s/Larry Nyland Date: 8/24/16

Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent

## **Highly Capable Services and Advanced Learning Programs**

School Board Policy No. 2190, Highly Capable Services & Advanced Learning Programs, outlines a framework of objectives for Seattle Public Schools' (SPS) Highly Capable Services and Advanced Learning Programs that meet the instructional needs of students identified by the district as "Highly Capable" and "Advanced Learners." The following procedures shall be employed to refer, evaluate, and select students to participate in the program.

### **Definitions**

Per state mandate, Highly Capable Services are designed for students identified as Highly Capable to provide one or more of the following: enhanced curricula, appropriately differentiated instruction, deeper learning opportunities, and/or accelerated pacing. To further the development of their potential, it is equally as important to recognize the unique needs of these students and to support their social and emotional needs from identification through graduation.

The Highly Capable Cohort (HCC) is available to all students identified as Highly Capable in grades K-8. This self-contained, K-8 program provides a rigorous curriculum in language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. The curriculum is presented at an accelerated learning pace and/or advanced level of complexity and depth, requiring students to perform significantly above grade level. Any Highly Capable student choosing not to enroll in the Highly Capable Cohort will receive services available at the school in which he or she is enrolled. Per state mandate, these services will be appropriately documented by school administration.

The District also supports Advanced Learning Programs (Spectrum and Advanced Learning Opportunities) designed for students identified as Advanced Learners to provide advanced curriculum in reading and mathematics. Advanced Learner eligibility is maintained through participation in an Advanced Learning Program. Spectrum and Advanced Learning Opportunities are open to students who have been identified as Advanced Learners, including Highly Capable. These programs are also open to individual students who have been identified as ready for a more rigorous curriculum.

### **Referral**

Anyone may refer a child for Highly Capable Services and Advanced Learning Programs, including teachers, other staff, parents/guardians, students, and community members. However, a student's parent or guardian must provide permission for the student to participate in the assessment process. All candidates must go through the assessment process and follow the established timelines and eligibility criteria in order to provide equal access for the thousands of candidates who are referred annually.

A Fall/Regular Assessment Cycle is SPS's standard process to determine Advanced Learning eligibility. For students to be considered, their referral forms must be submitted by the deadline published annually by SPS in multiple languages, places and media (e.g., website, calendar, and local print media).

Summer testing is available only for students who move to or return to Seattle after the Fall/Regular Assessment Cycle referral deadline. It is NOT available for students who wish to retest, private school students who lived in the city at the time of the deadline, or students in the system who missed the Fall deadline. These students must follow the Fall/Regular Assessment Cycle dates for placement consideration the next year.

The referral forms consist of a Parent/Guardian Permission Form and a Teacher/Educator Rating Scale, both of which are published and described on the SPS website (hard copies are available at the John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence and at all SPS elementary, middle, and K-8 school sites). Teachers and community members wishing to refer a student for evaluation must do BOTH of the following:

1. Give the student's parent or guardian a Parent/Guardian Permission Form to complete and submit by the established deadline AND
2. Request that a teacher familiar with that student submit a completed Teacher/Educator Rating Scale by the established deadline.

High school students can be referred for Highly Capable services through a similar (not identical) set of procedures. The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee will evaluate the application packet to determine eligibility. The student's application packet will include the following: the Parent/Guardian Permission Form; Teacher/Educator Rating Scale; current achievements, Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores (if taken); current overall Grade Point Average (GPA); current coursework; and grade reports from International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

### **Assessment**

Referred students are evaluated by the Advanced Learning Office using multiple criteria from a variety of sources including tests that measure cognitive ability, academic achievement in reading and mathematics, and the Teacher/Educator Rating Scale. Parent/guardian permission is required for all testing. Testing dates for both SPS and private school students are scheduled by the Advanced Learning Office.

Achievement tests will be administered to referred students whose cognitive test scores are at the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher (98<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher for eighth graders).

Kindergarten students with cognitive scores at the 90th percentile or higher do not require achievement testing to be eligible as Advanced Learners. Kindergarten students who achieve cognitive scores at or above the 98th percentile must have achievement scores at or above the 95th percentile to be identified as Highly Capable.

All test results are recorded by the Advanced Learning Office and are shared with the referred student's parent/guardian.

NOTE: If a student demonstrates cognitive ability in verbal, quantitative, or non-verbal reasoning AND qualifies for free or reduced lunch, English Language Learner services, and/or Special Education services, the student may warrant additional assessment if there is strong teacher/educator input to do so. The student may receive additional cognitive testing and may also receive additional reading and math achievement testing to determine specific areas of strength. [Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Section 392-170-060 focused on nondiscrimination in the use of tests.]

### **Identification**

A Multidisciplinary Selection Committee (MSC) reviews each candidate's test scores and Teacher/Educator Rating Scales to determine eligibility. SPS's established eligibility thresholds are not absolute qualifiers or disqualifiers; teacher input is also an important consideration. In order to provide equitable opportunities for all students and to uphold the intent of WAC language regarding protected classes [WAC 392-170-035], the MSC will give special consideration to, and assess the impact of, the following factors: cultural diversity, Supplemental Educational Services (SES), linguistic background, and identified disability.

Students may be tested in Grades K-8 during the Fall/Regular Assessment Cycle window for identification as Highly Capable, thus qualifying for Advanced Learning Programs and Services, including the Highly Capable Cohort. Students in Grades 9-12 not already identified will be offered a spring testing opportunity for identification as Highly Capable. Identification as Highly Capable requires:

- 98th-plus percentile in at least two areas on CogAT (e.g., verbal, quantitative, non-verbal, or composite scores)
- 95th-plus percentile in reading and math on district approved or other nationally normed achievement tests (self-contained elementary programs require BOTH reading AND math)

All Advanced Learning Programs are open to Highly Capable students; however, the Highly Capable Cohort program ends upon completion of grade 8.

Students may be tested in grades K-7 during the fall testing window for identification as Advanced Learners. Spectrum and Advanced Learning Opportunities (ALO) programs are open to these students. Identification as an Advanced Learner requires:

- 87th-plus percentile in at least two areas on CogAT (e.g., verbal, quantitative, non-verbal, or composite scores)

- 87th-plus percentile in reading and math on district approved or other nationally normed achievement tests (self-contained elementary programs require BOTH reading AND math)

There are two exceptions for Advanced Learner identification and eligibility:

1. Kindergarten students who receive a 90th-plus percentile on two areas of the CogAT do not need to take achievement tests for Spectrum eligibility in first grade; and
2. Middle school students who meet the advanced learning cognitive requirements and receive an 87th-plus percentile in reading achievement only will also be considered eligible for Spectrum Language Arts

Decision letters with all test results are mailed to the parent/guardian who signed the referral form as soon as possible and before the district's open enrollment period ends. Test scores and eligibilities are reported by mail ONLY. They are NOT reported early by phone, email or fax.

NOTE: SPS-administered cognitive testing is required for all students unless they have documentation from another public school verifying participation in a highly capable program in a public school with accompanying qualifying test results.

### **Appeals**

Parents/Guardians of students who participate in cognitive testing will receive results later in the Winter and prior to the SPS Open Enrollment period. If unsatisfied with the eligibility results, parents/guardians may appeal the decision. Appeals must be filed as soon as possible so that decisions can be made for enrollment purposes. Appeals should contain all of the information required by the Advanced Learning Office. Specific information on how to appeal is included in eligibility letters and is also available on the SPS website. Appeals will only be successful if compelling information provided during the appeals process demonstrates that the test scores in the student's eligibility letter are not representative of the child's abilities.

For families who qualify for the free or reduced lunch program, SPS will provide in-house testing during the appeals process. In order to assist these families in their appeal, the Advanced Learning Office must receive support letters and/or classroom work that demonstrate exceptional achievement by the date indicated in the eligibility letter.

Appeals decisions are final; there are no appeals of appeals.

### **Enrollment in Programs**

Once a student's eligibility has been determined as Highly Capable or Advanced Learner, he or she will not AUTOMATICALLY be enrolled in the Highly Capable Cohort or Spectrum Program. Even if the program is offered at the student's attendance area school, families must actively select the program and school for which the student is eligible and that best fits the student's needs. For more information about the programs and program sites for which the student is eligible and that best fit the student's needs, please consult the Advanced Learning page on the SPS website. All families must follow

the Enrollment Office's procedures and deadlines in order to participate in specific Advanced Learning Programs, including the HCC, at specific schools. The only exceptions to this are for Advanced Learning Opportunities (ALO) programs at elementary schools and Spectrum Programs at middle schools. Elementary schools use a student's identification as Highly Capable or Advanced Learner for placement in ALO programs; the same is true for middle school students' placements in Spectrum Programs.

For students who participate in the summer testing opportunity, the Advanced Learning Office will notify the parents/guardians of their students' results at the end of August. If a student is deemed eligible, the family must choose a program and/or school by September 30th. Placement in Highly Capable Cohort programs is guaranteed for Highly Capable students. Due to space limitations, placement in Spectrum Programs is not guaranteed at elementary schools. Any student identified as Highly Capable who is not enrolled in the Highly Capable Cohort or Spectrum programs will receive appropriate instructional services based on the student's strength areas at the student's attendance area school. Services may include deeper learning opportunities or accelerated pacing.

### **Program Design**

The district currently offers Highly Capable students the following programs:

**Highly Capable Cohort (HCC)** service model is self-contained in Grades 1-5, and self-contained in most core subjects in Grades 6-8. For Grades 9-12, HCC students may choose to attend an accelerated AP pathway at Garfield or an accelerated IB pathway at Ingraham. Students identified as Highly Capable may choose other paths offered through Advanced Learning such as Spectrum or Advanced Learning Opportunities at neighborhood schools.

**Spectrum** is a program designed for students identified as "Advanced Learners," but Highly Capable students are welcome to join. Spectrum is for students who perform well above average for their grade level and may require more advanced work to remain engaged. Spectrum is offered at all middle schools and several elementary schools and classes are either self-contained or students are grouped within classrooms that have multiple Highly Capable and/or Advanced Learners, depending on location.

**Advanced Learning Opportunities (ALOs)** are individual school-based programs for students identified as needing more academic challenges. All students who are District-identified for Highly Capable Services or Spectrum, as well as teacher-identified students at ALO schools, may participate. These students are typically grouped within classrooms that have multiple Highly Capable and/or Advanced Learners to provide appropriate differentiation and acceleration.

**Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program** are District-supported high-school based courses available at all SPS comprehensive high schools. All comprehensive high schools offer either AP or IB courses in multiple subject areas that allow Highly Capable students to accelerate and/or deepen their learning. The courses provide challenging academic material at the college-level for all students that have taken the prerequisite courses.

## **Other Services**

Other services for Highly Capable students are available for those Advanced Learners not enrolled in one of the program options above. From identification to graduation, these may include social and emotional counseling from a school counselor and other school staff, as well as support for twice exceptional students' other learning needs.

The Advanced Learning Office provides resources to District schools to support identified Highly Capable and Advanced Learners. These services include assistance in curriculum alignment and ongoing professional development opportunities for school staff working with Highly Capable and Advanced Learners.

In the field of gifted education, students who are both gifted and disabled are considered twice-exceptional learners. Seattle Public Schools' Advanced Learning Office recognizes the importance of identifying and serving these students both with specialized educational services and through 504 accommodations. Working in close collaboration with school and Special Education personnel, our staff supports these students in a number of important ways. Advanced Learning staff provides accommodations for students during intake assessments, observes students in classes to determine the best accommodations and specially designed instruction (including individual classes in a student's areas of strength), and participates in Student Intervention Team and Individual Education Plan meetings as needed to ensure students' needs for gifted services are recognized. Advanced Learning staff also collaborates with experts in the Special Education Department and from the community to provide ongoing professional development for teachers in advanced learning programs.

## **Exiting Programs**

Students may be exited from Highly Capable Services if the services are no longer appropriate. A meeting of the parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, a representative from the Advanced Learning Office, and the student (at parent/guardian's discretion) shall precede such an eligibility change.

## **Community and Family Engagement**

Individual student education plans for Highly Capable students are reviewed annually as part of a school's parent/teacher conference at elementary and middle schools. High school students create and review their four-year High School and Beyond Plan with a school's counselor.

The Advanced Learning Office works closely with the Highly Capable Services Advisory Committee (HCSAC) to share information and receive feedback from parents or guardians, students and teachers about the Highly Capable program. The HCSAC holds monthly meetings and is composed of parents or guardians, teachers, principals and Advanced Learning staff members.

## **Reporting**

The Superintendent or designee shall provide an end-of-the-year report to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Approved: January 2015

Revised: August 2016

Cross Reference: Policy No. 2190; RCW 28A.185.030 Programs — Authority of local school districts — Selection of students; WAC 392-170 Special service program — Highly Capable students