

Meridian Public School District
Gifted Education Program Handbook



MERIDIAN
PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Revised 2022



Explore Program Description

The Explore Program is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of second through sixth grade intellectually gifted students. Each Explore student receives a **minimum of five hours of instruction per week** with a certified gifted education teacher.

Mission Statement

The Meridian Public School District offers qualitatively different educational experiences to gifted students that are not available in the regular classroom. The specific needs of gifted students are met through collaboration and flexible grouping of like-minded peers. These unique programs are required to enable gifted students to realize their abilities and potential contributions to self and society. (Regulations for the Gifted Education Programs in Mississippi, 2013)

Philosophy

Meridian Public School District's Gifted Education Program (GEP) believes gifted learners are identifiable within all ethnic, geographic, and socio-economic groups. Our GEP provides differentiated learning outcomes for all gifted students, recognizes individual strengths and needs, and prepares them to compete in a global community.

Explore Goals for Learning

The basic goals for the Explore program are to:

- Develop thinking skills, problem solving skills, and creative thinking skills
Enhance ability to apply process skills when engaged in educational opportunities in multiple settings
- Strengthen communication skills
- Utilize problem-based learning and research to expand areas of strength and interest
Provide an environment and guidance which promotes self-perception, self-direction, leadership skills and group dynamics
- Develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures, environments, values, thoughts and philosophies
- Increase knowledge and appreciation of great people, literature, and visual and performing arts
- Promote in-depth studies and guidance of career opportunities
- Initiate exploration of the worlds of science, futurism, and decision making
- Increase awareness of responsibility to one's self, school, community, nation, and the world
- Design exciting opportunities for independent study

Explore Scope and Sequence

The intellectually gifted curriculum is based on a comprehensive range of specific thinking skills, techniques, and processes essential to gifted education. Age-appropriate skills are introduced, practiced, and extended through units of study and special learning activities in grades 2-6. The following competencies will be taught in the gifted classroom: **thinking skills, creativity, information literacy, success skills, affective skills, and communication skills.**

Intellectually Gifted Characteristics

- Reasons well (good thinker)
- Learns rapidly
- Has extensive vocabulary
- Has an excellent memory
- Has a long attention span (if interested)
- Sensitive (feelings hurt easily)
- Shows compassion
- Perfectionism
- Intense
- Morally sensitive
- Has strong curiosity
- Persevering in their interests
- Has high degree of energy
- Prefers older companions or adults
- Has a wide range of interests
- Has a great sense of humor
- Early or avid reader
- Concerned with justice, fairness
- Judgment mature for age
- Is a keen observer
- Has a vivid imagination
- Is highly creative
- Tends to question authority
- Good at jigsaw puzzles

(Characteristics of Gifted, Silverman)

Critical Thinker Gifted Learner	Academic Thinker High Achiever	Creative Thinker Gifted Learner
Selects Focus	Attentive	Daydreams
Asks Unforeseen Questions	Understands	Overflows with Ideas
Knows	Works Hard	Creates
Seeks friends with similar ability; prefers adults	Seeks friends of same age	Enjoys creative peers; often works alone
Grasps lessons in 1 – 3 repetitions	Grasps lessons in 6 – 8 repetitions	Does not see the importance of grasping lessons
Manipulates	Absorbs	Improvises
Guesses well	Memorizes well	Brainstorms well
Chooses tasks	Completes tasks	Starts tasks, rarely finishes
Intense	Receptive	Unconventional
Highly Self Critical	Pleased with Accomplishments	Never finished
Executive	Expert	Inventor

District Policy for Testing

As stated in the Gifted Education policy for Meridian Public School District, students may be screened for the Explore (Intellectually Gifted Program) in the first and third grade and are limited to two additional opportunities to be tested for the Explore program in grades 2-6.

Who can refer a student to the program?

Students in grades 2-6 may be referred for the intellectually gifted program by submitting a letter to the principal or the student's classroom teacher. **A student may be referred by the principal, teacher, counselor, parent, self, peer, or anyone else that believes the student might be intellectually gifted.** The individual referral must be submitted by October 1st or February 1st of each school year.

Explore Referral Process

Stage 1-Referral

There are two types of gifted referral processes:

Type One - Mass Screening Referral Process addresses those students who are mass screened for gifted eligibility. This process requires all Mississippi districts to screen all students in at least one grade level each year. The MPSD screens all students at the end of first grade and the beginning of third grade. Districts should use a normed group measure of intelligence in the Mass Screening Referral Process. This process should assist in identifying students in underrepresented populations. Students who obtain a full-scale score at or above the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall move forward in the referral process. Students who scored at or above the 85th percentile but lower than the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall be subjected to an Emerging Potential for

Gifted Referral Checklist. If these students meet the criteria on the checklist, they shall move forward in the referral process.

The next step in the process will consist of the collection of substantiated student data obtained through the use of other objective and subjective measures.

A student **shall satisfy two** of the following additional criteria before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data Stage:

1. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
4. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
7. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

Type Two - Individual Referral Process addresses those students who are individually referred for gifted eligibility. The IRP is used to identify students in grades 2-6.

Students participating in the Individual Referral Process shall satisfy three of the following criteria before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data Stage:

1. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a group measure of intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months,
2. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist,
3. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity,
4. a score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership,
5. a score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test,
6. a score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability,
7. a score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months, and/or
8. other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students.

Stage 2 - School Site LSC Review

Once the referral data have been collected, the LSC shall review all data and make one of the following recommendations:

1. the student has satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and should move forward to the assessment stage, or
2. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures, however, the LSC feels strongly that additional data should be collected and the student reconsidered at that time, or
3. the student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and the identification process should stop.

Stage 3-Parental Permission for Testing

At this time, district personnel shall obtain written parental permission for testing. District personnel shall also notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA.

Stage 4-Individual Intelligence Assessment

The assessment stage is the individual test of intelligence, which shall be administered by a licensed examiner. In no case will the examiner be related to the student being tested. The examiner shall review all available data on the student, whether or not it satisfies minimal identification criteria, and use that information to select the most appropriate test of intelligence. Standard operating procedures should be followed during the selection and administration of all assessments as reflected in the examiner's manuals. The examiner shall provide a signed and dated report of the test administration to include testing conditions, scores on all sub tests or sub scales, and the strengths and weaknesses of the student. A student must score **at or above the 91st percentile composite/full scale or the 91st percentile on approved sub tests (as per publisher) in order to satisfy eligibility criteria.**

Stage 5-Assessment Report Completed

District personnel shall write an Assessment Report, which must contain the following components:

1. Student's name
2. Name of at least three measures from Stage 1: Referral that were used to determine the need to administer an individual test of intelligence
3. Results of each measure,
4. Name of individual who administered or completed each measure and the date administered or completed,
5. Test behaviors for any individually administered test(s),
6. Interpretation of the results of each individually administered test(s),
7. Name of the person who administered the individual test of intelligence and date test was administered,
8. Qualifications of the individual who administered the individual test of intelligence,
9. Results of the individual test of intelligence to include scores on all sub tests and,

- identified strengths and weaknesses,
10. Name of the person responsible for writing the Assessment Report, his/her signature, and position, and
 11. Date of the Assessment Report

Stage 6 - District Level LSC Eligibility Determination

Once the Assessment Report is finalized, the LSC shall meet to review all data and determine if eligibility criteria have or have not been satisfied. The LSC shall rule that the student is or is not eligible for the intellectually gifted program.

Parental Notification

District personnel shall notify in writing the parents of each student tested for the intellectually gifted program about the assessment results. District personnel shall offer to explain any of the results about which the parents have questions. District personnel shall also notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA.

A student may be referred by a teacher, parent, peer, self, or any person having reason to believe that the student may be intellectually gifted. Referral forms are available through the gifted teacher or counselor at each school.

Transfers

1. When a student transfers to our school district from a public school within the state, a copy of the eligibility ruling must be sent to the Gifted Education Department. After review, appropriate placement is made.
2. When a student moves from another state to Mississippi with a gifted eligibility ruling, the student must satisfy Mississippi eligibility criteria before being considered for placement in the gifted program. The eligibility ruling from another state may be used to initiate the referral process in Mississippi. There is no temporary placement while the student goes through the eligibility process with the local district.

Advanced Placement (AP) Program

The Advanced Placement curriculum at Meridian High offers students a chance to study beyond the traditional secondary classroom. Completing college-level coursework during the year enables AP students to take a national examination in May. Scoring a 3 or above on the 1-5 scale test administered by the College Board affords these AP students freshman-level credit at most colleges and universities

Progress Reports

Student progress reports are provided to parents each nine weeks. Parents also have the opportunity to participate in two formal conferences during the school year.

Performance in the Regular Classroom

In the event a student has difficulty keeping up with regular classroom work, a conference will be held with the parent, classroom teacher, teacher of the gifted, and the student, if appropriate, to discuss the problem and to determine an appropriate course of action. The conference and plan of action will be documented and follow-up conferences will be held as needed.

As the academic progress and welfare of the students are always of prime consideration, special situations will be handled on an individual basis.

As outlined in MDE Gifted Regulations, gifted students may not be required to make up class work missed when they are scheduled to be in the gifted classroom. Gifted students are responsible for homework assignments on the day(s) they attend. Gifted students shall be held accountable for demonstrating mastery of concepts and information on regularly scheduled tests.

Placement in the Gifted Program

Once a student is ruled eligible for placement in the gifted program, the parent has the right to agree to placement or withhold placement of the child in the program.

Once a student is determined eligible for a gifted program in Mississippi, no reevaluation testing is required to remain in the program. Although criteria may vary from district to district, an eligible determination is accepted by all school districts within the State of Mississippi.

Withdrawal from Program

If a student wants to withdraw from the gifted program or if a parent feels it is necessary for the student to withdraw, a Gifted Education Program Participation Withdrawal Form must be signed by the parent, the homeroom teacher, the GEP teacher, the principal, and the GEP director. A student who withdraws from a gifted education program may not return to that program for the remainder of the school year. The following year a parent may sign an MPSD form to give the student permission to participate in the gifted program.

Annual Reassessment for Continued Placement

A committee shall meet at least annually to reassess each student's continuation in the gifted program. The committee must include the student's teacher of the gifted and the Gifted School Site Local Survey Committee.

As stated in the MDE Gifted Education Regulations, "Since participation in the gifted program is an entitlement under the law, the student should remain in the gifted program as long as they are

being successful in the program. Grades and/or success in the regular education program are the responsibility of the regular classroom teachers and should not be considered as a reason for removal from the gifted program.”

In the event a student fails to make progress or exhibits unsatisfactory participation in the gifted program, a meeting of the reassessment committee will be held to consider the student’s performance. If the committee determines that the student is failing to make progress in the program, the student will be placed on probation in the gifted program for the next 9-week term. The parents will be notified and given an opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss the decision and develop an intensive plan of action. During this time, the student will continue to participate in the gifted program. The action plan will be reviewed by the reassessment committee and parents every 2 – 3 weeks. If at the end of the period of probation, the student’s performance improves to a satisfactory level, the student will be removed from probation and recommended for continued placement. If at the end of the 9-weeks term the student has failed to improve his/her performance to a satisfactory level, the reassessment committee can recommend the student be removed from the program. Documentation of all reassessment committee meetings must be maintained and approved by the district level gifted coordinator prior to the student’s removal from the program.

If the committee determines that the student should exit gifted education due to lack of progress and/or unsatisfactory participation in the program, the student’s parents will be notified and given the opportunity to discuss the decision with the committee before the student is removed. Should the parents not agree to the removal of the student from the program, the district shall grant the parents a hearing.

Hearing Process

If the parents are not satisfied with the action taken by the reassessment committee, the parents shall, within five (5) school days after the meeting with the LSC, put their concerns in writing and present them to the District Gifted Director. The District Gifted Director will meet with the parent and render a written decision based on information shared during the meeting

Procedural Safeguards/FERPA

All data collected as part of the identification process are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All information/data collected as part of the identification process shall be placed in an individual eligibility file for each student.

These files are not placed in the cumulative folder, but are kept separate in a locked storage facility. Access to this information is restricted to those personnel working directly with the process, in the gifted education program, or who have a documented need to know. Parents may have access to these records by contacting the District Gifted Director.

Gifted Gala

The “Gifted Gala” is hosted at the school sites each year to celebrate the accomplishments of the Explore students in the district. This event allows parents to:

- See your child’s work
- See what takes place in your child’s gifted classroom
- Meet your child’s gifted teacher
- Network with parents of other gifted students
- Participate in a survey which evaluates the Meridian Public School District’s Gifted Education Program

Parental Involvement Opportunities

Through the Meridian Public School District Gifted Education Parent Advisory Council, parents from all district elementary and middle schools collaborate on various needs and goals of the gifted education program. To find out more about these meetings and how you can help, please contact Steven D. Shadwick, Director of Assessment and Gifted Education at 601-482-8246.

The Mississippi Association for Gifted Children (MAGC) is a state organization for teachers, family members, and other advocates of gifted education. The annual conference offers many valuable opportunities for family members, including keynote speakers on gifted education issues, a wide range of workshops about gifted behaviors and education, and information about learning opportunities for gifted students. Membership in MAGC, of all stakeholders advocating for gifted education, provides important evidence to our state legislators that gifted education is important. Without the support of all stakeholders, “our gifted students may never reach their full potential, and our state’s greatest natural resource will never be fully realized.” (MAGC website) Please visit MAGC website, www.magcweb.org for membership, conference information, resources, websites, summer camps, and scholarships/awards available for gifted students.

The Meridian Public School District also offers informative books for family members of gifted students. Gifted Education issues of unique characteristics, social and emotional behaviors, parenting a gifted child, and understanding educational needs are addressed in these books. Each elementary and middle school and the district gifted office has a set of books that are available for you to check out.

Resources

Available for checkout in the gifted office.

- The Social & Emotional Lives of Gifted Children, 4th Ed
- 101 Success Secrets for Gifted Kids
- The Underachieving Gifted Child
- School Success for Kids With Emotional & Gifted Behavior Disorders
- Parenting Gifted Children 101
- I'm Not Just Gifted
- Real Life Mysteries
- The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids

Websites

Mississippi Association for Gifted Children

<https://www.magcgifted.org/parent-affiliates>

National Association for Gifted Children

<http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page: Resources for parents and educators of gifted children, including articles and research, books, organizations, on-line support groups, and academic programs at www.hoagiesgifted.org

<https://www.sengifted.org/>

SENG is a nonprofit organization that empowers families and communities to guide gifted and talented individuals to reach their goals

<https://www.davidsongifted.org/>

Davidson Institute: "Supporting our nation's brightest young minds with free support services."

<https://www.byrdseed.com/>

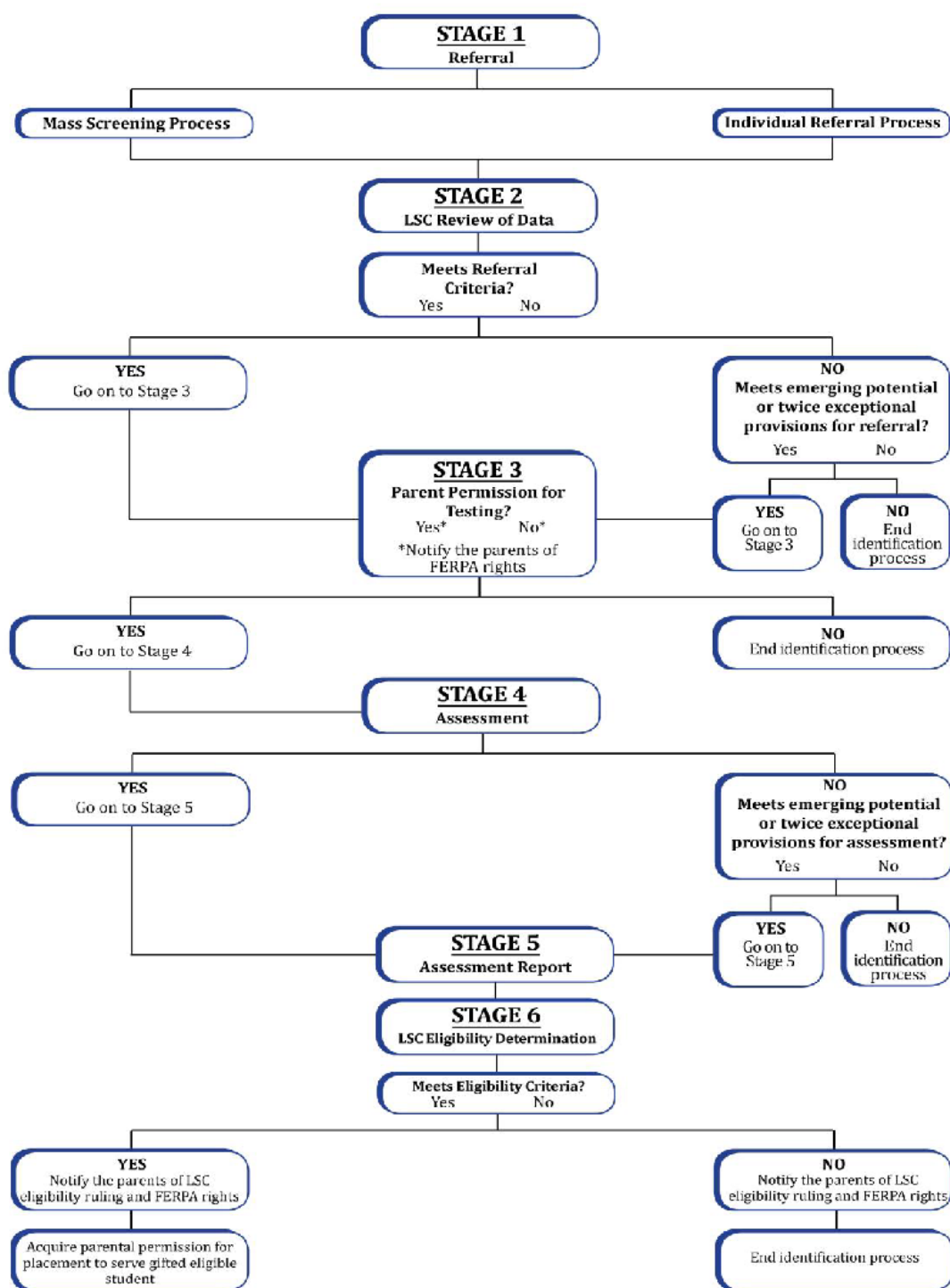
Byrdseed resources for the Gifted

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

Khan Academy

The Gifted Kid' Survival Guide, A Teen Handbook by Judy Galbraith, M.A. and Jim Delisle, Publishing, ISBN 1-57542-003-1 is a great read for students and parents. There is also a survival guide for parents. Free Press and Amazon.co

Schematic of Identification Process for Intellectually Gifted Students



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