

Assessments Used in Gifted Eligibility Testing Frequently Asked Questions (2025-26)

Gifted and Talented Education in Atlanta Public Schools (APS) provides differentiated instruction for intellectually advanced and gifted students. Gifted services are available in all traditional APS schools for students in grades 1-12. For any child referred for gifted testing, APS is required by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to gather information in the following areas: Mental Ability, Achievement, Creativity, and Motivation. The instruments used for each area are detailed below; all are GaDOE-approved through Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2.38.

How does the process work, from a high-level overview perspective?

Students referred for gifted eligibility testing (see previous FAQs on “Screening and Referral”), where the parent/guardian has provided consent for testing, will be given the opportunity to receive multiple assessments to gather data used to determine eligibility for gifted services in the state of Georgia. All referred students receive a full battery of GATE-administered initial assessments addressing the four state-mandated areas of mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation. As needed, a student will continue to receive additional assessments in our protocol: 1) until he or she becomes eligible for services, or 2) until he or she has exhausted all helpful GATE-administered assessments in our battery.

MENTAL ABILITY ASSESSMENTS

What is the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)?

The CogAT is the initial mental ability assessment, given to all referred students. Assessing students’ cognitive development in K-10, the assessment measures reasoning abilities in three batteries: verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal. These abilities reflect the cognitive processes that enable individuals to learn new tasks and solve problems. Nationally normed and research-proven to be reliable and valid, it is computer-administered through three testing sessions, each approximately thirty minutes in length; younger students typically spread these sessions over three days. The score for each battery is reported to parents as a national percentile rank in the mental ability section on the gifted eligibility report. The 96th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility.

What is the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test (NNAT)?

The NNAT is the secondary mental ability assessment, only given to students after completion of the initial CogAT who still need a qualifying mental ability score and where an eligible NNAT score will make the child eligible for services. It provides a non-verbal, culturally neutral assessment of general mental ability. It is designed to assess mental reasoning ability of students in kindergarten through grade 10. Nationally normed and research-proven to be reliable and valid, the NNAT is administered to students in one session using the computer. The resulting score is reported as a national percentile rank in the mental ability section on the gifted eligibility report. The national percentile rank allows you to compare your child's results to others of the same age across the nation. The 96th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility.

ACHIEVEMENT ASSESSMENT

What is the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP Growth)?

The NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP Growth) is a district-administered achievement test given to students on computer in grades K-12 three times per year. Achievement tests assess how well a student has learned objectives in academic areas. MAP is a nationally normed assessment research-proven to be reliable and valid. Both the reading and math sections are administered in approximately a one-hour session each. The highest Reading and Math national percentiles from the previous 24 months are reported in the achievement section of the gifted eligibility report. The 90th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility. **NOTE:** Scores from the “Spanish MAP Growth Reading” assessment (given in DLI classes) are not valid for gifted eligibility. Scores from the “MAP Growth Reading” assessment administered with initial instructions in Spanish are acceptable. The 90th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility.

MOTIVATION AND CREATIVITY ASSESSMENTS

What are Gifted Evaluation Scales (GES)?

The GES is the initial assessment given to all referred students to assess both Creativity and Motivation. Gifted evaluation scales are reliable and valid, nationally-normed rating scales used in grades K-10. Two certified teachers are invited to rate students on motivation and creativity behaviors exhibited in class. The highest score in each area will be reported as a national percentile rank in the motivation AND/OR* creativity section of the state gifted eligibility report. The 90th percentile is the minimum qualifying score. ***NOTE: The GaDOE rule only permits one score from any teacher rating scale to be utilized for gifted eligibility. Therefore, if needed to become eligible for gifted services, only one eligible score from the GES, *motivation OR creativity*, will be reported on the gifted eligibility report.** The 90th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility.

What is the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT)?

The TTCT is a secondary creativity assessment, only given to students after completion of the initial GES who still need a qualifying Creativity score and where an eligible TTCT score will make the child eligible for services. The Figural TTCT is a nationally normed, research-proven reliable and valid assessment requiring pictorial responses. It requires students to use imagination, solve problems, think of new ideas, and elaborate on ideas. This assessment does not score drawing skills but rather the ideas and thinking that go into the figural responses. The TTCT is administered in one test session, lasting approximately one hour. If administered, the resulting score is reported as a national percentile rank in the creativity section of the gifted eligibility report (instead of the GES creativity score). The 90th percentile is the minimum qualifying score for gifted eligibility.

What is a Two-Year Core Cumulative Average?

For grades 6-10, this cumulative average is a secondary motivation measure, used after completion of the initial GES where a qualifying cumulative average for the Motivation score will make the child eligible for services. This is a unique average combining only core course grades over the past four completed semesters to derive a “two-year core cumulative average.” This numeric cumulative average of 90 or higher, based on a 100-point grading scale, is a qualifying score for eligibility.

What is an Academic Product?

For grades K-5, the Academic Product is a secondary assessment, given only where an eligible Academic Product score will make the child eligible for services. This product is a planned experience completed by students in a classroom setting within one class period. Products are designed as high-level, open-ended activities explicitly designed to elicit and identify advanced abilities and do not have a time limit. Products are evaluated, independently, by at least three trained evaluators using a common rubric. Products may be used for the creativity, motivation, or achievement section of the eligibility report. Students may not “feel” like they were “tested” after completing a product. The 90th percentile is the minimum score for gifted eligibility.

How can I help my child prepare for these instruments?

Knowledge or skills needed are developed through all school and life experiences. These are not “tests” you can, or should, prepare for as they are assessments of innate abilities or school instruction absorbed to date. Do not overemphasize the importance of these tests or act in a way to add any test anxiety. Ensure your child gets a good night's sleep before testing and has a nutritious breakfast each morning before testing.

Why is my child only being recommended for some instruments and not all of them?

The Gifted Eligibility Team will use one or more instrument(s) for each category: Mental Ability, Creativity, Achievement, and Motivation; see the assessment descriptions above where there are “initial” and “secondary” assessments. Some students may also have prior test data in their permanent record that can be used in one or more categories. Children will not be tested unnecessarily. The team will use all valid and relevant data about the student to select the most effective and only needed instruments at the time.

For additional information, contact your local school's Gifted Contact Teacher

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