

# NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Gifted and Talented Education Comprehensive Plan

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# Gifted & Talented Education Policy ([District](#) & [State](#))

## District Policy

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to identify gifted and talented students within the school district and to provide these students with appropriate instructional adaptations and services. To that end, the Board directs each such student in the school district to be identified and offered an appropriate educational program and services.

For purposes of this Policy, “gifted and talented students” means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

For the purpose of this Policy, “instructional adaptation” means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling a student who is gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and demonstrate knowledge and application of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in one or more content areas at the instructional level of the student, not just the student’s grade level.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall ensure that the appropriate instructional adaptations are designed for students who are gifted and talented.

The Superintendent or designee will develop procedures for an ongoing Kindergarten through grade twelve identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity, or a specific academic area. The district shall ensure equal access to a continuum of gifted and talented education services. The identification process shall include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans.

The Superintendent or designee will develop and document appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students, indicating content, process, products, and learning environments, and including, but not limited to, additional education activities such as academic competitions, guest speakers, and lessons with a specialist.

The Superintendent or designee will take into consideration the Gifted Programming Standards, Position Statements, and White Papers of the National Association for Gifted Children in identifying and serving gifted and talented students.

The district will provide the time and resources to develop, review, and enhance instructional tools with modifications for helping gifted and talented students acquire and

demonstrate mastery of the required knowledge and skills specified by the standards at the instructional level of the student.

The district will actively assist and support professional development for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders in the area of gifted and talented instruction.

The district shall file with the New Jersey Department of Education Coordinator for Gifted and Talented Services a report by October 1, 2020, and thereafter on a schedule that coincides with the school district's New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) review pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7A-11. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the gifted and talented continuum of services, policies, and procedures implemented in the school district; the total number of students receiving gifted and talented services in each grade level Kindergarten through grade twelve disaggregated by race, gender, special education designation, and English language learner designation; the professional development opportunities provided for teachers, educational services staff, and school leaders about gifted and talented students, their needs, and educational development; and the number of staff employed by the school district whose job responsibilities include identification of and providing services to gifted and talented students. Programs for gifted and talented students will be periodically evaluated for their continuing efficacy and adjusted accordingly.

The parent of any student identified as gifted or talented shall be consulted regarding any program designed to address the student's particular needs.

An individual who believes the district has not complied with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-34 et seq. may file a request for review with the Board of Education. This policy for filing a review request shall be linked to the homepage of the Board's Internet website. The Board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the district's action in the matter. The individual may then file a petition for appeal of the Board's written decision to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.

The district shall make detailed information available on its website regarding the policies and procedures used to identify students as gifted and talented and the continuum of services offered to gifted and talented students. The information shall include the criteria used for consideration for eligibility for the gifted and talented services, including the multiple measures used in the identification process to match a student's needs with services, and any applicable timelines in the identification process.

## **New Jersey Statutes and Regulations**

### **N.J.A.C. 6A:8-1.3**

"Gifted and talented students" means students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

"Instructional adaptation" means an adjustment or modification to instruction enabling students with disabilities, ELLs, or students in alternative education programs or who are gifted and talented to participate in, benefit from, and/or demonstrate knowledge and application of the NJSLS.

#### **6A:8-3.1(a) Curriculum and instruction**

District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the NJSLS and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for ELLs, for students enrolled in alternative education programs, and for students who are gifted and talented.

#### **6A:8-3.1(a)(5)**

District boards of education shall be responsible for identifying gifted and talented students and shall provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.

1. District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures.
2. District boards of education shall provide appropriate kindergarten through grade-12 (K-12) educational services for gifted and talented students.
3. District boards of education shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students, indicating content, process, products, and learning environment.
4. District boards of education shall take into consideration the Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students.

#### **6A:8-3.1(c)**

District boards of education shall be responsible for the review and continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction based upon changes in knowledge, technology, assessment results, and modifications to the NJSLS, according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8-2.

1. District boards of education shall include interdisciplinary connections throughout the K-12 curriculum.
2. District boards of education shall integrate into the curriculum 21st-century themes and skills.
3. District boards of education shall provide the time and resources to develop, review, and enhance interdisciplinary connections, supportive curricula, and instructional tools for helping students acquire the required knowledge and skills.

The tools include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. A pacing guide;
- b. A list of core instructional materials, including various levels of texts at each grade level;
- c. Benchmark assessments, and

- d. Modifications for special education students, for ELLs in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15, for students at risk of school failure, and for gifted students.

#### **6A:13-2.1(a) Standards-based instruction**

All school districts shall implement a coherent curriculum for all students, including English language learners (ELLs), gifted and talented students, and students with disabilities, that is content-rich and aligned to the most recent revision of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS). The curriculum shall guide instruction to ensure that every student masters the NJSLS. Instruction shall be designed to engage all students and modified based on student performance. Such a curriculum shall include:

1. Interdisciplinary connections throughout;
2. Integration of 21st century skills;
3. A pacing guide;
4. A list of instructional materials, including various levels of text at each grade;
5. Benchmark assessments, and
6. Modifications for special education students, for ELLs in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15, and for gifted students.

**Definition/Position Statement:** Giftedness is characterized by exceptional abilities, creativity, and task commitment in one or more domains. A gifted student demonstrates outstanding aptitude or competence in one or more areas, not necessarily across all subjects. This definition aligns with current research and moves beyond the outdated requirement of superior performance across all academic areas. The following position statement, adapted from the 2019 National Association for Gifted Children guidelines, serves as the foundation for our Gifted and Talented Education Program:

#### [2019 Position Statement Authored by the National Association for Gifted Children](#)

Gifted and talented students exhibit a unique set of characteristics that may include:

- Advanced language skills and vocabulary
- Rapid learning and information processing abilities
- Heightened critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Intense curiosity and passion for learning
- Creativity and innovative thinking

The district recognizes that giftedness is present in all student groups, including multilingual learners (MLs). Identification and programming are designed to be culturally and linguistically responsive to ensure equitable access, as recommended by the NJDOE. These students require differentiated educational services beyond those typically provided in the regular classroom to fully develop their potential. Gifted education programs are designed to provide challenging and appropriate instruction tailored to students' unique abilities, foster intellectual growth and creative expression, support social-emotional development, develop leadership skills and ethical decision-making, and encourage lifelong learning and pursuit of excellence. Our commitment is to identify and nurture gifted and talented students from all backgrounds, ensuring equitable access to appropriate educational opportunities that allow them to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

**Learning and Development:** Educators create learning environments for gifted students that encourage awareness and understanding of interests, strengths, and needs. Students' cognitive growth and social-emotional skill development in school are actively developed.

**Assessment:** Students with gifts and talents are identified using multiple measures, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. In accordance with NJDOE recommendations, the district uses universal screening measures, such as the nonverbal sections of the CogAT, to ensure equitable identification of MLs. Consistent with NJDOE recommendations, the district uses multiple measures for identification and does not require MLs to meet standardized test thresholds if other evidence of giftedness is present. Ability tests focus on measuring cognitive processes and potential rather than academic knowledge. The identification process considers:

- High cognitive ability and overall student potential
- Academic achievement within school norms
- Potential for excellence in vocational areas
- Psychosocial and leadership abilities
- Psychomotor skills
- Visual and performing arts talents

Data collection includes diagnostic and ability assessments, multiple measures, and teacher referrals. This comprehensive approach ensures a holistic view of each student's strengths, interests, and needs, allowing for tailored instruction and appropriate program placement. The identification process is ongoing and flexible, recognizing that giftedness can manifest at different times and in various domains throughout a student's educational journey.

**Curriculum Planning and Instruction:** Educators ensure that students with gifts and talents demonstrate academic growth commensurate with their abilities each school year; students with gifts and talents are given opportunities to demonstrate their potential or level of achievement in their areas of talent and/or areas of interest; students with gifts and talents are given opportunities to become independent investigators; students with gifts and talents develop knowledge and skills for living in and contributing to a diverse and global society. (See [Curricular Adaptations](#) section for specific examples.)

**Learning Environments:** Learning environments foster a love for learning, personal and social responsibility, multicultural competence, and interpersonal and technical communication skills for leadership to ensure specific student outcomes.

**Programming:** Educators use evidence-based practices to promote cognitive, social-emotional, and psychosocial skill development of students with gifts and talents. Programming meets students' interests, strengths, and needs.

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## Characteristics for G&T Teacher Referrals

The following characteristics, aligned with NAGC criteria and reflecting our district's values for gifted and talented education, are used to strengthen our identification process. All students,

including those with limited English proficiency, are considered for G&T services. Referrals may come from any staff member, including ESL/bilingual teachers, and from families. Staff members should consider these traits when referring students for G&T services:

- Exceptional Memory: Shows exceptional memory and recall of academic content.
- Quick Grasp of Concepts: Grasps new concepts quickly and easily.
- Curiosity: Exhibits high levels of curiosity and asks probing questions.
- Problem-Solving Skills: Demonstrates advanced problem-solving skills.
- Abstract Thinking: Shows ability to think abstractly and make connections across subjects.
- Creativity: Displays creativity and originality in academic work.
- Academic Performance: Performs significantly above grade level in one or more academic areas.
- Subject Interest: Shows intense interest and in-depth knowledge in specific subject areas.
- Critical Thinking: Demonstrates exceptional critical thinking and analytical abilities.
- Reasoning Skills: Exhibits advanced reasoning skills (e.g., logical, spatial, numerical).
- Solution Generation: Shows the ability to generate multiple solutions to problems.
- Leadership: Demonstrates exceptional leadership abilities in academic settings.
- Independent Work: Displays advanced ability to work independently on academic tasks.
- Application of Knowledge: Shows exceptional ability to apply knowledge to novel situations.

## Student Identification Process & Criteria

At Merriam Avenue Elementary School and Halsted Middle School, the initial selection of students for the Gifted & Talented program begins with the i-Ready Math and ELA diagnostics, supplemented by multiple measures and teacher referrals. Following this, the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is administered as a secondary screening tool. All gathered data is then thoroughly reviewed by the Gifted & Talented Advisory Committee at each respective school to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process.

For eligible students, parents/guardians are notified of both consideration and acceptance into the program. Parents/Guardians do not need to consent to participation; however, they can request to opt out of the program if they do not wish their child to participate.

*\*Students can only be evaluated for the program once per academic year.*

## Grades K-4

### SCREENING/IDENTIFICATION:

#### First Cut:

- Students are identified based on i-Ready results for ELA and/or Math (top 10%) or through a completed [teacher referral](#). Multiple measures are considered.

#### Second Cut:



- Referred students in Grades K take the CogAT as an ability measure. The CogAT is administered once every three years as part of the identification process.

### **Program Inclusion**

- The Merriam Avenue Elementary School Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee, functioning as an extension of the MTSS Intervention Team, and administrators will:
  - Analyze results from all provided criteria
  - Assess eligibility using scores and multiple measures
  - Evaluate students' readiness for accelerated learning
  - Admit qualifying students into the program
- A panel of trained educators will comprehensively review all data to determine each student's eligibility and need for G&T services.

### **Assessment Process**

- The i-Ready assessments are given online by classroom teachers and graded by the computer. Students are selected based on their results and administrative oversight.
- The CogAT test is administered online, with results calculated based on the CogAT Assessment Manual. Students receive matrix points based on their results.
- Since cognitive abilities can change over time, the CogAT test will be administered to all current and potentially eligible Gifted and Talented students. Retesting every three years captures these changes (Hodges et al., 2018) and ensures assessments reflect current abilities (National Association for Gifted Children, 2010).

### **Twice Exceptional Students (IEP/504 Plans)**

In addition to the multiple measures already used, the child study team will refer to the Gifted & Talented District Advisory Committee any student they individually assess who has a composite IQ score in the very high/gifted range (128-150+) or stanine score of 9 on any one of the subtests of the intelligence testing performed. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

### **ML Students**

Classroom teachers will work closely with the school's ESL teacher to develop ways to identify gifted English language learners. Teachers will look at growth and behaviors as well as achievement and aptitude scores when considering ESL students for gifted services. To accurately assess a student's cognitive abilities despite a language barrier, the verbal component of the CogAT may be turned off.

### **Incoming Kindergarten**

- Referred cases will be reviewed, and Gifted & Talented eligibility will be determined by review on a case-by-case basis.

## **GRADES 5 - 8**

SCREENING/IDENTIFICATION:

**First Cut:**

- Students are identified using i-Ready results for ELA and/or Math (top 10%) or a completed [teacher referral](#). Multiple measures are considered.

### **Second Cut:**

- Referred students in Grades 5-7 take the CogAT every three years as an ability measure for potential inclusion. Eighth graders are not tested, as they are evaluated at the end of seventh grade for program inclusion or exit.

### **Program Inclusion**

- The Halsted Middle School Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee, functioning as an extension of the MTSS Intervention Team, and administrators will:
  - Analyze results from all provided criteria
  - Assess eligibility using scores and multiple measures
  - Evaluate students' readiness for accelerated learning
  - Admit qualifying students into the program
- A panel of trained educators will comprehensively review all data to determine each student's eligibility and need for G&T services.

### Assessment Process

- The i-Ready assessment is given online by classroom teachers and graded by the computer. Students are ranked based on their results, and matrix points are given accordingly.
- The CogAT test is administered online, with results calculated based on the CogAT Assessment Manual. Students receive matrix points based on their results.
- Since cognitive abilities can change over time, the CogAT test will be administered to all current and potentially eligible Gifted and Talented students. Retesting every three years captures these changes (Hodges et al., 2018) and ensures assessments reflect current abilities (National Association for Gifted Children, 2010).

### Twice Exceptional Students(IEP/504 Plans)

In addition to the multiple measures already used, the child study team will refer to the Gifted & Talented District Advisory Committee any student they individually assess who has a composite IQ score in the very high/gifted range (128-150+) or stanine score of 9 on any one of the subtests of the intelligence testing performed. Both parent and teacher referrals are considered.

### ML Students

Classroom teachers will work closely with the school's ESL teacher to develop ways to identify gifted English language learners. Teachers look at growth and behaviors as well as achievement and aptitude scores when considering ML students for gifted services. To accurately assess a student's cognitive abilities despite a language barrier, the verbal component of the CogAT may be turned off.

### Incoming Fifth Graders

- These students are evaluated at the end of fourth grade for program inclusion or exit.

## **GRADES 9 - 12**

### **SCREENING/IDENTIFICATION:**

- Review records of incoming students to identify those previously eligible for gifted programs in sending districts.
- Counselors collaborate with students to develop schedules tailored to their strengths and interests:
  - Plans may include advanced coursework, independent studies, mentorships, or early college options
  - Teachers receive guidance on differentiation strategies to challenge gifted learners within regular classes
  - Students are connected to relevant extracurricular activities and competitions

### **Individualized Pupil Learning Opportunities**

According to N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-5.1 a (2) ii, district boards of education must establish a process for granting of credits through successful completion of assessments that verify student achievement in meeting or exceeding the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) at the high school level. Such programs or assessments may occur all or in part prior to a student's high school enrollment. Please contact the Newton High School Guidance Department for additional information.

### **Identification Procedures**

Gifted & Talented students from previous grade levels must still meet the criteria for high school Honors courses. Prior inclusion in the Gifted & Talented program does not guarantee automatic enrollment in advanced high school courses.

Honors and/or Advanced Placement courses are designed to provide you with an academic challenge beyond what is provided in other college preparatory courses and the opportunity to complete college-level courses in high school. The curriculum is designed to move students to think and write more critically and at a more rigorous pace. In order to enroll in an Honors and/or Advanced Placement course, students must:

1. Be selected on the basis of academic record, teacher recommendations, standardized test scores, or other placement criteria.
2. Have a high level of interest in the subject and be motivated to work hard.
3. Demonstrate strong reading, analytical, critical thinking, and writing skills.
4. Demonstrate excellent attendance, self-discipline, independent work habits, and maturity to succeed in the course.

**Services Provided** (For more information, click on the [Program of Studies](#))

Advanced College Prep, Honors, and Advanced Placement level courses are offered in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language, 21st Century Life & Careers, and Visual & Performing Arts.

Students are offered high school and college credit in courses through the Concurrent/Dual Enrollment Program.

For students with more specialized interests, there are opportunities for unique elective offerings in Agriculture, Video Production, Computer Programming, and Photography, as just a few examples.

There is also a vast selection of clubs and activities for students to explore personal areas of interest and strength. Participation in clubs and activities is voluntary and all students may join.

For example, students who excel in math and science may be encouraged to join the Math League or Science League. Participation is based on teacher recommendation and student grades.

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## **Service Plan**

Service plans are developed based on the individual needs of students in the Gifted and Talented Education Program. Each student will have an individualized plan created by the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee in consultation with counselors, teachers, and parents. This plan is reviewed annually and modified as needed.

### **Grades K-4**

Gifted students are pre-tested for proficiency, placed in cluster groups for collaboration on standards-based enrichment activities, and those demonstrating mastery will receive appropriate differentiated instruction from their classroom teacher. Integration of advanced instruction into the regular curriculum is a primary goal, emphasizing differentiation as an intervention strategy aligned with New Jersey's Tiered System of Supports. The Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee recommends guidelines for classroom teachers to support this process. Multiple staff, including intervention and digital learning teachers, contribute during grade-level meetings to enhance the curricular program.

Additionally, students admitted to Gifted & Talented through the Advisory Committee will receive Tier 3 group extension and enrichment weekly during the digital learning period.

### **Grades 5-8**

#### **Pullout Support Class**

Students are monitored throughout the year. Extraordinary cases are reviewed, and pull-out opportunities are determined on a case-by-case basis. Students identified for Gifted and Talented services are provided with Tier 3 group extension and enrichment opportunities coordinated by the designated staff member(s).

At the start of each school year, students complete interest surveys and have their CogAT individual profiles reviewed when applicable. This information guides the development of personalized learning plans and informs the variety of course choices offered in pullout gifted programs. Students have the opportunity to adjust their course selections each marking period, ensuring ongoing alignment with their evolving interests, talents, and cognitive strengths.

**Differentiated instruction** is provided by the classroom teacher, ensuring that gifted and talented services are directly delivered to students in grades 5-8. Through core classroom instruction, gifted students are identified and placed in cluster groups, allowing them to collaborate on standards-based enrichment activities. Students are pre-tested for proficiency in the skills and concepts being presented. Those who demonstrate mastery will receive appropriate differentiated instruction. The Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee will recommend guidelines to classroom teachers to support this process. Multiple staff, such as the reading specialist, teacher-coach, and library media specialist, provide support during grade-level meetings to enhance the curricular program.

#### **Advanced Courses:**

Criteria for the following courses include standardized scores on state, local, and ability testing, classroom performance, teacher recommendations, and previous inclusion in G&T services.

- Participation in Chorale and Jazz Club
- Grade 8: Algebra I
- Grade 8: Advanced Art - students must obtain weekly high school Art 1 concepts to join Art 2 as a freshman.

#### **Additional Considerations:**

Recommendations to go beyond the traditional grade level placements for individual subjects, or to skip an entire grade level, may be made on an individual basis to address the needs of students. These decisions are not specific to the gifted and talented department. They are made by committee in collaboration with academic departments, involving parents, teachers, supervisors, and building administrators.

### **Grades 9-12**

Students identified as gifted and talented learners in secondary grades will receive academic instruction at the *honors and/or advanced placement* level in all major content areas and in specialized courses as identified in the [Newton High School Course Catalog](#). Advanced coursework affords students the opportunity to master the accelerated curriculum as well as earn college credits through concurrent enrollment. Students at the secondary level also have access to a wide variety of [co-curricular clubs](#) designed to meet the needs of specific interests and talents.

#### **Honors Courses**

Newton High School offers honors courses in the Sciences, Social Studies, English, Art, Music, World Languages, Agriculture, Business, and Technology.

#### **College Board Advanced Placement Courses**

Newton offers the following Advanced Placement Courses: English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Pre-Calculus, Calculus AB, Statistics, Economics, Biology II, Chemistry, Physics I, Physics II, World History, United States History I, United History II, U.S.

## **Curricular Adaptations**

The following strategies guide educators to make adjustments and modifications to the content, process, products, and learning environment to enable gifted students to participate at their instructional level, not just their grade level. Consequently, the student may achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

### **Content Adaptations**

- Providing more challenging reading materials that focus on overall trends, patterns, and themes rather than small details and facts
- Studying problems that do not have a clear solution
- Using topics of interest to the student that are relevant, complex, and worthwhile
- Allowing students to skim material they already know well and move on to new content
- Allowing students to take "side trips" when a topic captures their imagination
- Enabling students to work several grades ahead in their areas of expertise

### **Process Adaptations**

- Allowing flexible groupings of students (individual, pairs, small groups)
- Creating specialized learning centers for skill work
- Encouraging creativity and rewarding risk-taking
- Providing opportunities for divergent (many answers) and convergent (best answer) thinking
- Explicitly teaching skills needed to learn independently (research, organization, etc.)
- Allowing students to categorize, chart, or graph related information
- Giving students time, materials, and permission to follow lines of inquiry through independent projects

### **Product Adaptations**

- Allowing a variety of acceptable products utilizing multiple intelligences
- Offering leveled projects with different expectations (e.g., for an A grade, B grade, etc.)
- Involving students in creating scoring rubrics
- Assigning authentic tasks for a real audience
- Matching the product to the learning outcomes being met

### **Learning Environment Adaptations**

- Providing a flexible physical space where students can move freely
- Creating a welcoming atmosphere that appreciates humor, creativity, and encourages discovery
- Allowing gifted students to work with intellectual peers, even across grade levels
- Using pre-tests to allow students to demonstrate mastery and move ahead
- Providing self-checking materials

- Arranging for a mentor to work with the student in their area of interest

#### **K-4 Curricular Adaptations**

Participation in gifted and talented programs exposes students to an interdisciplinary curriculum that allows them advanced opportunities based on their interests. Students participate in a process that is research/product-driven and encourages in-depth and independent learning. The program allows students to broaden their knowledge through hands-on, research-based cooperative learning experiences. Many of the activities allow students to readily see complexities and connections to the real world. The activities and projects completed during pullout sessions promote complex and abstract thinking.

*Examples of current areas of focus can be found here. These activities change yearly based on student interest and the newest technology available:*

- **Varsity Tutors-** (Grades 3 & 4 only) For independent students seeking acceleration, Varsity Tutors offers a comprehensive suite of services tailored to their age group. The platform provides 24/7 On-Demand Chat Tutoring, allowing students to receive immediate assistance with their questions and homework at any time. Live Group Classes offer structured learning experiences in various subjects, while the On-Demand Essay Review service helps young writers improve their skills with professional feedback. Additionally, Varsity Tutors' Enrichment Classes provide opportunities for students to explore new interests and expand their knowledge beyond the standard curriculum, fostering a love for learning and personal growth.
- [code.org](#)- Students have accounts and work through a variety of programs offered.
- [WeDo 2.0 Lego Coding](#) - WeDo 2.0 strengthens students' understanding of science and computing practices, including asking questions and solving problems; modeling; prototyping; investigating; analyzing and interpreting data; computational thinking; creating evidence-based arguments; and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information.
- [Wonder Workshop Dash and Dot Robot](#) - Dash is a real robot that responds to voice commands or any of our five free downloadable apps to sing, draw, and move around. It's more than learning to code. Dash lets kids explore loops, events, conditions, and sequences and see how they result in Dash's real-life movements.
- [Educating Young Engineers \(EYE\) LEGO Program](#) - Educating Young Engineers seeks to provide every child with access to hands-on/minds-on engineering education.
- [Trout in the Classroom](#) - Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is a science-based program that teaches children about the importance of coldwater conservation through a hands-on approach to learning. Through the process of raising rainbow trout from eggs to fingerlings, the size they are at release time, students learn about the importance of

clean, cold water, not only for the rainbow trout we are raising but also for other organisms, including people. The TIC program is cross-curricular and can encompass many subject areas, such as science, math, art, language arts, reading, technology, music, and more.

- **[Google Classroom](#)** - Students learn to locate assignments, post, and communicate with peers through Google Classroom.
- **[Google Drive](#)** - Students learn how to navigate and use Google Drive to create, save, and share documents.
- **Countywide Math Competitions** - Students can create accounts on [www.sumdog.com](http://www.sumdog.com) and compete at least once a year in a countywide Sumdog math contest.
- **[Stop Motion Animation](#)** - Students use the app to learn the basics of stop motion animation. Students create a video to help educate their peers about one character education trait. Students use stop motion animation to be introduced to green screen technology using Stik Bots.
- **Commercial Design and Filming** - Students create commercials to promote Alpine Elementary School. They write the narrative piece, take pictures around the building of the specific areas being discussed in their narrative, and finally use iMovie to merge the pictures, voice recording, and music to create a commercial.
- **Countywide Field Trip** - This event invites 2nd-4th graders to participate in a countywide field trip based on coding and technology.
- **Create Bravely**  
Students will participate in activities that require them to actively seek out new ideas and experiences, to see familiar things in new and different ways, to use both analytic and holistic thinking, and to make, think, or do things that haven't been made, thought or done before.
- **World Explorers - Developing Global Connections**  
In this course, students will explore the 5 themes of geography through connections with classrooms around the world, activities within their own classroom, and virtual field trips. This class will focus on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and how students can make an impact locally and globally.
- **WordMasters**  
In this course, students will prepare for the [WordMasters](#) contest which addresses higher-level word comprehension and verbal reasoning in two ways:



- It bases the analogies on special vocabulary lists, developed for each grade and difficulty level by experienced teachers, which participants study before each meet.
  - It challenges students to complete analogies based on relationships among words they have learned.
- Math Olympiad**  
 In this course, students explore higher-level math concepts in preparation for the [Math Olympiad](#) contests. These contests are dedicated to stimulating enthusiasm, fostering creativity, and strengthening intuition in mathematical problem-solving.
- Number Ninjas**  
 This class is similar to the Math Olympiad course without the competition aspect.
- Philosophy for Kids**  
 In this course, students will discuss philosophical ideas through literature. Students participate in the [Philosophy Slam](#) in March.
- Engineering is Elementary**  
[EiE engineering design challenges](#) show students how what they learn in school connects with the world around them. Most EiE activities involve small-group work that encourages students to consider more than one solution or idea and work collaboratively. All EiE curricula develop students' communication skills and encourage them to share ideas in several ways: speaking, writing, drawing, and building. EiE's engineering design challenges engage students in inquiry. As they analyze their own data and make decisions about their design, students engage with content, hone their critical-thinking skills, and take ownership of their learning.
- Independent Study/WIN (What I Need)/Genius Hour**  
 In this framework, students will develop their own plan for learning.
- Neuroscience for Kids**  
 In this course, students will explore the world of neuroscience through experiments, models, simulations, & dissections. They will meet with visiting scientists and prepare [Brain Awareness Week](#) lessons for the greater school population.
- Creative Writing**  
 In this course, students will explore creative techniques modeled by acclaimed writers. Students will write for pleasure, experimentation, and publication.
- Computer Science Fundamentals**  
 In this class, students learn how the Internet works, basic computer programming, and navigate through activities that require logic, problem-solving, and creativity. Students will apply what they learn in the Computer Science Fundamentals Course to various

robotics projects in the school. Students in this course will organize the [Hour of Code](#) for the school and act as coding ambassadors for the greater school population.

- **App Lab**

In this course, students will create simple apps using App Lab, a programming environment in which students code with blocks or JavaScript.

## **GRADES 5-8**

Sample of interest-based choice courses available to gifted students:

- [Typing](#) -is introduced to students during Student Skills class. Students continue their program in their general education.
- **Varsity Tutors-** (Grades 5 & 6 only) For independent students seeking acceleration, Varsity Tutors offers a comprehensive suite of services tailored to their age group. The platform provides 24/7 On-Demand Chat Tutoring, allowing students to receive immediate assistance with their questions and homework at any time. Live Group Classes offer structured learning experiences in various subjects, while the On-Demand Essay Review service helps young writers improve their skills with professional feedback. Additionally, Varsity Tutors' Enrichment Classes provide opportunities for students to explore new interests and expand their knowledge beyond the standard curriculum, fostering a love for learning and personal growth. As students in these grades begin to develop more autonomy in their learning, they can also take advantage of Self-Study resources and Practice Problems available through Varsity Tutors, allowing them to reinforce their understanding and challenge themselves at their own pace.
- [Financial Literacy](#) and [Stock Market Game](#)-  
This course will focus on important concepts in personal finance, such as checking/savings accounts, types of credit, interest rates, taxes, insurance, budgeting, and college/careers. It will also focus on different investment types and strategies. Students will work together to research a variety of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Then they will use a hypothetical \$100,000 to build, trade, and manage their own investment portfolios.
- **Middle School FBLA Chapter**  
The Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter at Halsted Middle School provides an exceptional co-curricular opportunity that fosters leadership, entrepreneurial skills, and academic excellence through competitive events, workshops, and state/national conferences. FBLA members showcase their talents, hone their business acumen, and represent the school with distinction. By participating in FBLA, gifted students gain invaluable experiences, develop essential skills, and cultivate a strong educational foundation for future endeavors.
- **Current Events, Cultural Awareness and Geography Bee Preparation**

Each year, our school participates in [The National Geographic Geography Bee](#), which begins at the local level and works up to a final competition in Washington D.C. This course helps students prepare for the Geography Bee beginning with background knowledge on continents, countries, states, provinces, islands, and the major physical features of our planet. They will also brainstorm ways to educate their peers about important events and look for ways to make positive change. Most importantly, this course builds cultural awareness and global citizenship.

- **Spelling Bee Preparation**

Each year, fifth-grade students participate in a Spelling Bee. This participation not only serves to prepare students for a Scripps-Howard style Spelling Bee but also to foster a love for language, enhance vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills. By mastering spelling techniques and exploring word origins, students will improve their overall literacy and communication abilities. Most importantly, this course builds linguistic awareness, enhances cognitive skills, and promotes academic excellence among gifted and talented 5th-grade students.

- **Great Debaters**

Students in this course will analyze different debate formats and participate in debates with classmates.

- **Advanced math concepts, problem-solving and [Math Olympiad](#) competition.**

This course is designed to nurture enthusiasm and love for mathematics. It introduces important and challenging math concepts, teaches major strategies for problem-solving, and fosters mathematical creativity and ingenuity. Students in this course will develop mathematical flexibility and strengthen their mathematical intuition. They will also participate in 5 international mathematical competitions.

- **Creative Writing**

Students in this course will analyze and discuss famous short stories and poems. They will identify the components of well-written pieces, and they will go through a writer's workshop approach to composing original pieces. They will also be encouraged to enter a variety of writing contests and endeavor to get their original work published.

- **The Stock Market Game**

[The Stock Market Game](#) is an online simulation game where students are given \$100,000 to invest over a period of 5 months. In this course, students will build a fundamental understanding of investing while learning with real-world skills and practice in math, English language arts, economics, social studies, and other subjects. Students will have the opportunity to meet with a professional stock analyst for advice and inspiration.

- **[Engineering](#)**

In this course, students will learn about the many different types of engineers, focusing heavily on the Biomedical, Engineering/Design, and Computer Science strands. They will use the design process to solve real-world problems, and they will collaborate on many hands-on activities that require them to explore biological systems, safe materials for human interaction, mechanical advantage, potential/kinetic energy, physics, and programming languages. This course will provide background knowledge for future STEM academy applicants, as well as help students decide which strand most interests them.

- **[Scratch Programming](#)**

Scratch is a creative tool that was developed by the MIT Media Lab. In this course, students learn the Scratch programming language and design and build original video games. Scratch has the important features of many programming languages, like loops (repeat blocks) and conditionals (if-then blocks). With these features, Scratchers can create algorithms to complete specific tasks. Other programming language courses will be offered in future marking periods.

- **Video Game and App Design Using JavaScript**

Students will use [Code.org's](#) Game Lab and App Lab to master the JavaScript language and learn all of the concepts needed to build a video game and/or app that showcases a personal interest. The concepts they will learn and apply include Booleans and Comparison Operators, If Statements, If-Else Statements, For Loops, Timed Loop, Timed For Loop, Variables, Naming Variables, Arrays, Modifying Arrays, Random Numbers, Functions, and Patterns.

- **[Pixar In A Box Animation Curriculum-](#)**

Pixar and Khan Academy have collaborated to create, develop, and promote a series of learning tutorials that demonstrate how traditional school subjects such as math, science, and the arts are a vital part of the everyday work put into Pixar's filmmaking process. In this learning sequence, students will focus on Sets and Staging, Patterns, Rigging (coding a character), Mathematics of Subdivision (character modeling), and Mathematics of Depth of Field (virtual cameras).

- **[Rubik's Cube](#)**

Students will learn how to solve the 3x3 cube and complete STEM activities related to the cube. They will have Google Meet and or in-person competitions, and those who have mastered the 3x3 will have the opportunity to move on to the 4x4 cube.

## **GRADES 9-12**

Newton High School offers a wide range of AP courses, Honors courses, and co-curricular courses that gifted and talented students can access based on the course criteria.

Below is the link to the course catalog:

## Exit Procedures

Aforementioned, each student identified as gifted and talented will be assessed annually for the continuing appropriateness of their enriched program. Assessment by the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee may include:

1. Interviews with the student, the student's parent/guardian(s), and teaching staff members educationally responsible for the student.
2. Review of the student's file, including relevant test results, and
3. Review of the student's work in the preceding school year.

The program will be revised as required to meet the students' needs and interests.

The student may be withdrawn from the gifted and talented program when:

1. The student's academic record indicates a decline in performance,
2. The student wishes to withdraw, and their parent/guardian(s) consent to withdrawal, or
3. The student's parent/guardian(s) request withdrawal.

A decision to withdraw a student from the gifted and talented program may also derive from the student's classroom teacher, the Principal or designee, a guidance counselor, the student's parent/guardian(s), and, where appropriate, the student. Each year, the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee will meet to review any exit requests.

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## Appeal & Program Opt-Out Process

### District Appeal

A parent/guardian can request an appeal if they disagree with the decision regarding student eligibility for the program. A parent/guardian must request an appeal in writing to their child's building principal. The principal will provide the parent/guardian with the Gifted and Talented Parent/Guardian Rating Scale Form to complete. Upon submission of the form, the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee will meet to review all documents and provide an opinion in writing regarding student eligibility based on the program criteria within 10 school days of the principal's referral to the committee.

If a parent/guardian disagrees with the opinion of the Gifted and Talented District Advisory Committee, they can appeal in writing to the Superintendent of Schools within 5 school days of the Committee's notification. All parent/guardian forms, including the rating scale for appeals, are available in English and Spanish, with additional languages provided upon request to ensure accessibility for all families.

- [Parent/Guardian Rating Scale Form–Gifted Appeal Process](#) (English)
- [Parent/Guardian Rating Scale Form–Gifted Appeal Process](#) (Spanish)

**\*All decisions regarding eligibility are made by the school's Gifted & Talented Advisory Committee in collaboration with the Board of Education.**

## **Request for Review of Noncompliance**

An individual who believes that a school district has not complied with the provisions of Chapter 35, Title 18A (18A:35-8) may file a request for review with the Board of Education. The board shall issue a decision, in writing, to affirm, reject, or modify the district's action in the matter.

The individual may then file a petition for appeal of the board's written decision to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in the State Board of Education regulation.

## **Program Opt Out**

For eligible students, a parent/guardian may request in writing to their child's building principal to opt out of the gifted and talented education program at any time.

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## **Professional Development**

Job-embedded professional development on the needs of Gifted and Talented students is offered through professional organizations such as the [National Association for Gifted Children](#), the [New Jersey Association for Gifted Children](#), and the [New Jersey Consortium for Gifted and Talented Programs](#). Advanced Placement teachers are afforded opportunities for professional development through the College Board. Honors Program teachers are afforded a variety of opportunities to attend workshops online and off-site for honors programs.

The district offers an optional course, "Gifted Learners & Differentiated Instruction," to all staff on its Vector Solutions training platform.

The district will collaborate with its Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) external partners to provide staff professional development aimed at enriching instruction for Gifted & Talented learners. Professional development includes training on equitable identification and support for gifted MLs, using the NJDOE 'Strengthening Gifted & Talented Multilingual Learner Identification' manual as a core resource.

Annually, the Supervisor of Personnel & Instruction/Gifted & Talented Coordinator, Joe Bolen, will present to each school a review of giftedness regarding the [Chapter 338 legislation](#), identification processes, applicable instructional tools, curricular adaptations, and the manual herein.

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## **Program Review Cycle**

- At least once per year, teachers of gifted and talented students across the district will meet to discuss program progress and recommend enhancements to the Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee to better meet the learning goals of the gifted student population. Each annual meeting of teachers will be documented with detailed minutes, capturing discussions, recommendations, and action items.

Every three years, a program review will assess the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of gifted students based on state/national programming standards. This review will include data analysis, stakeholder feedback, and an assessment of the program's alignment with state/national standards. The findings will be compiled into a detailed report, which will be presented to the Advisory Committee, district administration, and Board of Education.

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## **District Advisory Committee Information**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the District Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee is to advise the school district on the educational needs of all gifted learners. The committee members serve as advocates committed to ensuring that the district program and policies meet all gifted learners' needs.

The duties and responsibilities of the advisory committee are to:

- Develop annual goals and priorities for the gifted and talented education program;
- Review the program manual containing the plan for the gifted and talented education program, including revisions;
- Review data to determine the extent to which the program is implemented with consistency across the district to provide equitable support to meet the needs of all gifted learners;
- Serve as advocates who represent the needs of gifted learners and their families;
- Serve as the appeal board;
- Become knowledgeable about current programs, research, and best practices in gifted education and serve as a resource to the school community;
- Focus attention on issues relative to improving the educational services and supports provided for gifted learners; and
- Provide policy and program recommendations to the Superintendent and the district's Board of Education.

### **Committee Members**

The committee consists of diverse stakeholders in administrative and instructional roles within the district. Members include the Gifted & Talented Coordinator and the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Teams from each building, with representatives from various grade levels, departments, and content areas.

### **Administrative Staff**

Dr. Joseph S. Piccirillo, Superintendent

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Joe Bolen, Supervisor of Personnel & Instruction

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Jessica Kucz, Director of Student Services  
[jkucz@newtonnj.org](mailto:jkucz@newtonnj.org)

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## References and Resources

### Resources used to help develop this manual

- [2019 Position Statement by the National Association for Gifted Children](#)
- [The Whole Gifted Child Task Force](#) (a white paper exploring the multi-dimensional needs of gifted individuals and providing recommendations for serving their needs)
- [Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children](#) (a program districts must consider when developing gifted programs according to N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and Assessment)
- [NJDOE Gifted & Talented Homepage](#)
- [NJDOE Strengthening Gifted & Talented Multilingual Identification Manual](#)
- [Gifted Education Padlet](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Education Gifted and Talented Program](#)
- [Building Multiple Pathways Towards Gifted Identification: Gathering Data to Support Gifted Identification](#)
- [New Jersey Association for Gifted Children](#)
- [Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children](#)
- [The Association for the Gifted](#)
- [World Council for Gifted and Talented Children](#)
- [A meta-analysis of gifted and talented identification practices](#) (Hodges et. al, 2018)
- [Why should we measure how a child thinks rather than what they know? - YouTube](#)

### Resources for Educators and Parents/Guardians

- [National Association for Gifted Children - Family Tip Sheets](#)
- [SENG - Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted](#)
- [Center for Education Gifted Policy](#)
- [Davidson Institute for Talent Development](#)
- [Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development](#)

### District Website

The information is available in a condensed format through the district homepage linked below:

- [Gifted & Talented Education](#)