Gifted Program Eligibility Testing Guidelines

The Rockford Public School District's Eligibility Testing Guidelines were developed in accordance with Illinois State Gifted and Talented requirements and based on research and common understandings about gifted programming. Any district student is eligible to participate. Eligibility for participation in the program is solely determined through identification of a child as gifted or talented, not upon culture, economic status, race, religion, gender or disability.

Eligible students are identified through a comprehensive testing matrix. No single assessment or its results denies student eligibility. The matrix includes a writing sample and abilities assessments in three areas: verbal, quantitative and nonverbal. The Gifted Program selection committee reviews all results and makes their determination based on their professional judgment as to whether the student has demonstrated an ability to be successful in our program. The selection committee is comprised of the Gifted Program Administrator and district administrators as well as teachers support staff in the Gifted Program. To ensure impartiality, throughout the entire selection committee process, students are identified by number, not name.

The main eligibility testing is conducted in the winter for program placement in the following school year. Any student wishing to apply for the program must participate in a scheduled testing session and supply, upon request, other information pertinent to the applicant's grade level.

Waiting List
Should there be more qualified students than there are available seats in the Gifted Program, the Student Assignment Center will maintain a rank-ordered waiting list of students. Should a seat become available at any point during the school year, the next student in line on the waiting list will be offered that seat.

Ongoing Eligibility Testing
If there is a need, additional eligibility testing will be conducted throughout the year. If the tested student meets the entrance criteria and there is a seat available, the student will be offered that seat at any point during the school year. If there is not a seat available, that student's name will be put on the ranked waiting list.

Gifted Eligibility Testing Matrix

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)

The Cognitive Abilities Test appraises the level and pattern of cognitive development of students from kindergarten through grade 2. The test measures both general and specific reasoning abilities. The general reasoning abilities reflect the overall efficiency of cognitive processes and strategies that enable individuals to learn new tasks and solve problems, especially in the absence of direct instruction. These abilities are assessed in three CogAT batteries: the Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal batteries. Each is represented by two or three different reasoning tasks. Having multiple measures in each domain greatly increases the dependability of the score profile that is reported for each student.

The use of an abilities test, such as the CogAT, is to provide a measure of each student's level of cognitive development that captures important information not represented in school grades or in other measures of school achievement. Often, low-achieving students are able to reason at higher levels than their academic performance suggests. Minority students and English language learners are especially likely to show a significant strength in nonverbal reasoning, particularly on the Primary Edition of the CogAT.

After testing, parents receive a report of their student's raw scores (age percentile and age stanine), a comparison of these scores to those of other students of the same age, and a comparison to other students in the same grade (grade percentile and grade stanine). Percentiles range from a low of 1 to a high of 99. As an example, for a current third-grader, a reported NP (national percentile) range of 60 to 69 means the child's composite score fell within a performance range that was as good as or better than 60 to 69 percent of the
students taking the test. The stanine scale consists of 9 broad levels 1-9. Stanines are provided for both age and grade groups. More information about interpreting the scores is available at the CogAT website listed on the score report.

Writing Sample

After completing the CogAT, during the testing session, students in all grades are asked to produce a writing sample from a prompt. For the purposes of scoring, writing samples are also identified with the student’s testing number, not name. The writing prompts were developed by Gifted Program staff and are developmentally appropriate for each grade level. Writing samples are scored by multiple assessors using a common scoring rubric. The rubric analyzes criteria in the areas of: focus, support, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, integration and writing conventions.

Selection Committee Procedures

The Rockford Public School District selects students based on total rank order, isolated from the student’s name, beginning with the highest score yielded by the testing matrix.

CogAT

The Selection Committee looks at each student’s score profile, which includes Standard Age Score (SAS), Percentile Rank (PR) and Stanine (S). Each battery is considered individually along with a composite. Students whose composite SAS is above 120 (top 10%), as well as students with an individual battery SAS above 125 (top 4%), will be offered a seat in the Gifted Program.

Writing Sample

The Rockford Public School District recognizes that some gifted students may have circumstances that make it difficult to identify them using standardized tests, particularly in situations of dual exceptionalities or limited English proficiency. Because of this, a writing sample is also considered for inclusion in the program. The results of these measures are compared with the student’s relative strengths and weaknesses of CogAT battery scores.

Selection Committee Review Process

Should a family find that their child’s scores are significantly lower than expected, based on prior observations of the child’s school success, the family can request a Selection Committee review. The Gifted Office will provide them with a review application packet. This application outlines the additional information that the family can compile and present to the Selection Committee. Additional information can include, but is not limited to, standardized ability test results, individual psychological testing reports, standardized achievement test scores, school criterion-based test results, report cards, reading level, progress reports, ISAT scores, portfolio of student accomplishments or student performance, etc. Upon receipt of the packet and supplemental resources, the committee will review the child’s application, identified by testing number, looking for compelling evidence of potential for success in the Gifted Program. The selection committee applies consistent assessment criteria to the applicants. The review process does not guarantee a child’s placement in the program.