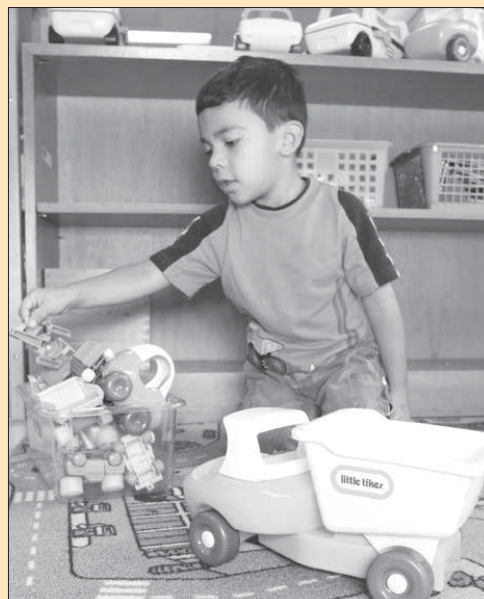


# Twice Exceptional Students

*At a Glance*



*Does your gifted student have learning challenges?*





## **VISION**

*We inspire learning by providing the greatest public education to each and every student.*

## **MISSION**

*Every student will have the academic, creative problem solving, and social emotional skills to be successful in college and career.*

## **CORE PURPOSE**

*Prepare all students to thrive in their future.*

## **CORE VALUES**

*Learning  
Relationships  
Respect  
Excellence  
Equity*

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## At a glance...

### *Supporting the Achievement of Gifted and Talented Students with Learning Disabilities (GT/LD)*

You may have a student who has strong thinking skills, vast background knowledge, a large vocabulary **and** has significant difficulty with writing.

Perhaps you have a student who has the ability to see and interpret the world in unique, creative ways **and** has difficulty following basic, multistep directions?

You may have a student who remembers everything he or she has ever learned about the Civil War (or hurricanes, or dinosaurs, or rockets) **and** consistently forgets new spelling rules and multiplication facts.

Perhaps you have a student who loves to be read to and shows depth of understanding verbally **and** reads below grade level despite efforts and interventions.

If you have a student with a profile of significant strengths and significant weaknesses, the information in this publication can help your school team to understand and program for this student.

The information is a guide to the characteristics and needs of GT/LD students. It informs Individualized Education Program (IEP), Collaborative Action Process (CAP), and Educational Management Team (EMT) teams as they make decisions for gifted students with educational disabilities.

The information in this publication is also designed to help parents and teachers understand and serve gifted students with specific learning and academic disabilities, however much of the information herein is relevant for meeting the academic needs of gifted students who are struggling in school, regardless of label.

Information for this publication is taken from *Twice Exceptional Students: A Guidebook for Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs*. It is available through MCPS and online at [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/gtld/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/gtld/).

#### **WHO ARE TWICE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS?**

*Twice exceptional* students are gifted learners who also have a documented disability. This includes gifted students with a wide range of disabilities—specific learning disability, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger's, emotional disturbance—who have an IEP, or a 504 plan.

#### **WHO ARE GT/LD STUDENTS?**

They are gifted learners with specific learning disabilities—GT/LD students possess outstanding abilities in the areas of general intellectual capabilities, specific academic aptitudes, or the arts.

—Jacob K. Javits *Gifted and Talented Students Education Act* (1988)

#### **WHAT IS A SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY?**

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

—*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, 2004

## STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

GT/LD students may be light years ahead in mathematics, but reading below grade level. Ask them about the Civil War, DNA cloning, lasers, or ancient civilizations and one might get bombarded with information, but ask them to write about the same topic and they may produce little or nothing. Often, they are creative problem solvers and analytical thinkers who may show strong commitment to tasks in which they are interested. Frustrated by their inability to demonstrate academic achievement commensurate with their ability, they often are at great risk of failing in school. These are often those students for whom the hard things are easy and the easy things are hard. This concept is illustrated by in the table on page 3.

### So What?

In addition to dealing with the coexistence of extreme strengths and significant weaknesses, these students must struggle with meeting the high expectations placed on them by their families, teachers, and most often, themselves. These performance expectations are often out of their reach without the appropriate supports and interventions. If both the strengths and the needs are not recognized and addressed, this repeated lack of success often leads to school frustration, lack of motivation for school tasks, and eventual school failure.

GT/LD students are gifted. Some may ask, “so doesn’t that lessen the impact of their disability?” The answer is surprising. Many students are able to compensate using their strengths in order to perform in the average range on many standardized assessments, but the giftedness does not make the disability any less pronounced and poor classroom performance is often the result. The giftedness may actually pose additional instructional hurdles for the student and for his/her teachers. Not only does the student require remediation and support, but he or she will also require acceleration and enrichment. The student possesses strengths and needs that must both be addressed within each subject or content area. The IEP or 504 team will determine the individual strengths and needs of the student and use this information to generate an appropriate educational plan for the student. Regardless of program or placement, all the experts (general educators, special educators, gifted specialists, parents, and administrators) must work together to coordinate an appropriate instructional day for the student that includes both acceleration/enrichment, remediation, and appropriate supports.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF GT/LD STUDENTS

### STRENGTHS

### NEEDS

#### COGNITIVE

GT/LD students are gifted learners who often display strengths in the following areas:

- Verbal and/or visual spatial abilities
- Problem-solving and reasoning abilities
- Background information and vocabulary
- Making connections between events, ideas, and situations
- Grasping abstract concepts—they are often “whole-to-part” learners who see the big picture
- High-level thinking tasks with complexity
- Creativity and imagination—they often share interesting or “out-of the box” ideas
- Curiosity—they ask a lot of questions, at times challenging information or authority

GT/LD students often display needs in the following areas:

- Memory—particularly rote or short-term memory
- Executive functioning—the ability to plan, initiate, organize, execute, and shift one’s own cognitive effort
- Processing speed—the ability to take in, process, and apply new information quickly
- Working memory—the ability to hold and use information in short term memory.
- Language—particularly word-retrieval, and organization of ideas.
- Auditory and sequential processing

#### MATHEMATICS

- Displaying strong grasp of concepts
- Thinking logically and symbolically at high levels
- Coming up with new or alternative solutions to problems
- Relating math concepts to novel situations

- Computing
- Retaining and recalling math facts
- Processing sequentially (following algorithms, showing your work, explaining how you got your answer)

#### READING

- Listening comprehension (deeper meaning, making connections, inferential thinking, insights)
- Using high-level vocabulary and sharing vast background knowledge
- Applying shared inquiry (high-level discussion and questioning)
- Grasping themes and getting the main ideas

- Phonemic awareness and decoding (phonics)
- Oral reading fluency (pace and smoothness)
- Memory, recalling accurate/adequate details

#### WRITING

- Being creative and showing originality of thought
- Coming up with content, ideas, information
- Elaborating verbally and providing unlimited description and detail
- Incorporating high-level vocabulary

- Representing ideas on paper
- Applying basic skills (handwriting, capitalization, punctuation and spelling)
- Organizing, sequencing, and elaborating on ideas (what is important, what is salient, what is first, what is next, etc.)

## RECOGNITION AND IDENTIFICATION

### How is a GT/LD student recognized as gifted?

- ◇ Global screening (for all MCPS students in spring of Grade 2)
- ◇ Standardized testing reveals superior or very superior IQ or achievement data \*\*
- ◇ Close observation and analysis of classroom data and performance or formal and informal measures of achievement

\*\* It is important to look at index or subtest scores when interpreting assessment measures such as IQ, achievement, or informal testing. Due to significant strengths and weaknesses within the individual, the averaging effect may take place when looking at the broad scores or full-scale IQ. A qualified examiner such as a school psychologist must be involved in the score analysis and interpretation process. Subtest scatter interpretation should be used cautiously.

### How is a GT/LD student identified as having a disability?

A student in Montgomery County is identified as disabled through special education evaluations, using multiple criteria. When the parents or the school team (or both) begin to suspect that the student has a disability that requires special education services, the team refers the student to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and the screening process begins.

Currently, when a student is evaluated for a suspected disability, information becomes available about the student's strengths and challenges through formal and informal assessments. The IEP team must determine the following:

1. Is there a presence of an educational disability?
2. Is there "educational impact" as a result of the disability?
3. Does the student need special education services in order to access the general education curriculum?

If the answer to all of these questions is yes, an IEP is developed. (See *Navigating the System*, page 17, for more information on the special education process.)

### What are the challenges to identifying a GT/LD student?

The following are three possible scenarios:

1. The gifts may mask the disability.
  - ◇ The student is identified as gifted yet is exhibiting difficulty in school and is considered to be underachieving.
  - ◇ The student is working at or near grade level.
  - ◇ The underachievement is attributed to poor self-concept, lack of motivation, or laziness.

RESULT: The disability may not be recognized or addressed.

2. The disability may mask the giftedness.
  - ◇ The student is identified as having learning problems.

- ◇ The student may have inadequate assessments or depressed IQ scores.

RESULT: The areas of giftedness may not be recognized or addressed.

3. The giftedness and the disability may mask each other.

- ◇ The student appears to possess average abilities and no disability.

RESULT: Both the areas of giftedness and the disability may not be recognized or addressed.

In order to recognize a GT/LD student, we must be on the look-out for students displaying the unique profile of strengths and needs (see chart). We must assess the significance of the concerns relative to the individual student and not allow our twice exceptional students to wear the mask of average, when they are, in fact, quite [or twice] exceptional.

## IDEA 2004

As the new Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 law comes into effect and new federal and state guidelines are introduced, states will no longer be required to use the discrepancy formula to identify students with learning disabilities. They may instead use a "response to intervention" (RtI) model. *RtI is the practice of (1) providing high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and level of performance to (3) make important educational decisions.* These decisions are based on student response to intervention across multiple "tiers" or levels of intervention. The purpose of the multi-tier intervention model is to provide early intervention to any student who needs it. In an RtI model, students are considered for special education services when the student demonstrates an ongoing need for intensive intervention beyond what can be provided in general education or if the intervention failed to result in appropriate rate of progress.

It is critical that school problem-solving teams recognize that students may be gifted or have far above average ability and may also have a specific learning disability. For these students, accommodations and/or interventions may be required if they cannot meet classroom standards commensurate for their intellectual ability. Often special education services are needed for these students to access appropriately challenging general education curriculum/instruction that is available to their high-ability, grade-level peers.

When state and local guidelines for identifying specific learning disabilities have been established, MCPS will continue to administer intelligence (IQ) tests and achievement tests to determine a student's cognitive and academic levels. Teams will continue to consider the discrepancy between a student's strengths and weaknesses as one consideration in determining eligibility. This, along with information from

curriculum-based assessments, state assessments, and other relevant information, will continue to be used. Discrepancies and processing deficits revealed by formal, norm-referenced assessments must be considered. This information will be used in addition to information from multiple measures of student performance to determine a student's eligibility for special education services. One of these measures may be how the student responds to scientifically-based interventions (particularly in the area of reading, an academic area where research-based interventions have been identified and are readily available).

In the meantime, MCPS will follow 2001 Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) guidelines for identifying students with specific learning disabilities.

## BEST PRACTICES

Research and classroom experience have shown that the following four components must be in place for a GT/LD student.

### 1. Accelerated and enriched instruction in and through the student's areas of strength

- ◇ Meet the students where they are and take them to the next level of skill and knowledge.
- ◇ Provide access to enrichment, challenge, and rigor.
- ◇ Consider including the following in accelerated and enriched instruction:
  - + Exposure to above-grade-level content in mathematics, reading/language arts, science, or social studies
  - + Placement in a highly gifted center or magnet program, as appropriate and if accepted to the program
  - + Inclusion in William and Mary and/or Junior Great Books groups
  - + Curriculum compacting, enrichment activities, or acceleration to the next grade level.

A GT/LD student has the right to access the same opportunities for acceleration and enrichment as his/her gifted peers, when appropriate. In order to access these opportunities, the student will require the accommodations and services indicated on his/her IEP.

### 2. Opportunities for instruction in skills and strategies in those academic areas where there is a lack of progress because of the student's disability(ies)

- ◇ IEP goals and objectives are based on the student's needs
- ◇ Remediation may include instruction in decoding/encoding, mathematics strategies, the writing process, organizational skills and strategies, self-advocacy, social and behavioral skills, and/or any other need area determined by the IEP team.

- ◇ These goals and objectives are considered necessary for the student to gain access to the general education curriculum and they must be academically relevant.
- ◇ While this "remedial" instruction is important, it should never replace the gifted components of instruction for the GT/LD student.
- ◇ Often, acceleration and enrichment opportunities are the vehicle for the student to learn, practice, and apply his/her newly learned skills and strategies. Skill and strategy instruction can be integrated and embedded into high-level instruction to provide a more comprehensive approach.

### 3. An appropriately differentiated program, including individualized instructional adaptations and accommodations

- ◇ Adaptations and modifications involve differentiated content, process, or product and describe multiple pathways to the same goals.
- ◇ Adaptations and modifications are not watered-down or "easier" tasks or busy work.
- ◇ Modified accommodations must meet the following criteria:
  - + Be individualized for each student
  - + Be used in instruction and assessment
  - + Be based on the student's strengths
  - + Provide equal opportunity for the student to demonstrate his/her knowledge
  - + Be evaluated and continued only if they are effective
  - + Empower (not enable) the student
  - + Move the student from dependence on adults to independence, when appropriate

It is important to note that, due to the lifelong nature of a disability, there are some accommodations that an individual with a disability may use as a lifelong tool.

(See *Twice Exceptional Students: A Guidebook for Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs*, page G-1, for a complete explanation of guiding principles for providing appropriate adaptations and accommodations.)

### 4. Comprehensive case management

A case manager who is knowledgeable and sensitive to the needs of a GT/LD learner is critical. He/she is responsible for —

- ◇ coordinating all aspects of the student's IEP
  - ◇ advocating for the student's needs,
  - ◇ communicating with teachers and parents,
  - ◇ promoting and fostering self-awareness and self-advocacy,
- and
- ◇ providing a safe haven for the student.

## INTERVENTIONS

GT/LD students often experience obstacles to accessing rigorous instruction. The obstacles most often are found in writing, organization, reading, and memory.

(For a detailed list of possible interventions and instructional strategies, see *Twice Exceptional Student, A Guidebook*, pages H–1 through H–4.)

## ALIGNING INTERVENTIONS WITH OBSTACLES

OBSTACLES	“Typical” GT/LD Characteristics	STRATEGIES/INTERVENTIONS
<b>Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ notes</li> <li>☐ BCR’s</li> <li>☐ ECR’s,</li> <li>☐ worksheets</li> <li>☐ charting, graphing and drawing</li> </ul>	<p>+ ideas, vocabulary, creativity, background knowledge, grasp of concepts</p> <p>- Handwriting (large, messy, effortful, slow), organizing and sequencing thoughts, spelling, mechanics, grammar, attention to detail, auditory processing weakness (notes), visual processing weakness (cluttered handouts)</p> <p>= minimal output, minimal effort, no/poor products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Notes/copying from board</i>: copies, supplemental copies, skinny notes, graphic organizers, outlines to complete, picture notes, 5 main ideas, verbal rehearsal, provide copies of OHs or warm-ups, pair visual/auditory (write down everything you say, for example when giving answers to a worksheet or homework).</li> <li>☐ <i>BCRs</i>: extra time, grade for content only, verbal elaboration, frames/outlines.</li> <li>☐ <i>ECRs</i>: graphic organizer/outline first, verbal prewriting conference, quiet area to work, frequent checks and “hurdle help”, task analysis, checklists, rubrics, examples of model papers.</li> <li>☐ <i>Worksheets</i>: ensure adequate space to write or attach paper, allow words and phrases instead of sentences, reduce visual clutter, fold in half, assign fewer problems/questions (circle or mark).</li> <li>☐ <i>Charting/graphing/drawing</i> (only a problem if there is fine motor difficulty): alternatives, partner or buddy, provide a template/outline, make it large enough.</li> <li>☐ Other: computer, electronic spellers, consider alternatives to writing for demonstrating content knowledge, reduced workload.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ homework/ assignments</li> <li>☐ binders/ materials</li> <li>☐ test prep</li> </ul>	<p>+ generally want to be successful and get good grades, problem solving</p> <p>- time management, categorizing, prioritizing, seeing the whole picture not component parts (visual-spatial), spatial awareness, attention</p> <p>= lost papers, late work, lack of materials, overwhelmed attitude</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Homework/assignments</i>: planbooks and calendars (monitored), homework Web sites, homework buddy, frequent progress reports, digital recorders, daily verbal check-in, ensure understanding, task analysis and mini-deadlines, label papers (HW, CW, notes) and have a place for each, prompt to submit work, routine for submitting work, reduced workload vs. extended time, keep assignments visible and accessible (out of sight, out of mind), ongoing list of assignments and due dates.</li> <li>☐ <i>Binders/materials</i>: color coding, accordion files, give a moment to file things, time to clean out, storage bin for “old stuff”, routines/systems, keep a stash of supplies, copies of texts for home/class.</li> <li>☐ <i>Test prep</i>: study guides/outlines, assign tasks (flashcards, write questions, practice problems...), preview test questions—type and length.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ worksheets, overheads</li> <li>☐ articles/short texts</li> <li>☐ textbooks/ novels</li> <li>☐ tests/quizzes</li> </ul>	<p>+ may be a superior reader, comprehension, vocabulary, background knowledge, use of context</p> <p>- decoding ability, fluency, memory</p> <p>= may fake reading in class, partial or limited understanding of material, misses content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Worksheets/overheads</i>: pair visual/auditory information, partner or groups, adequate time to finish, include visuals.</li> <li>☐ <i>Articles and other short texts</i>: highlight critical information, preview vocabulary, adequate time, provide in advance, read aloud software, partner reading.</li> <li>☐ <i>Textbooks/novels</i>: chunk assignments, provide titles in advance for recorded books, provide structure for note-taking, in-class read aloud, reduced workload, previewing content (activate prior knowledge, provide summaries/sparknotes. com/character and plot analyses/movie version...).</li> <li>☐ <i>Tests/quizzes</i>: extra time, quiet place, reading support, verbatim reading, read aloud software.</li> </ul>
<b>Memory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ acquisition</li> <li>☐ recall</li> <li>☐ retention</li> </ul>	<p>+ abstract, conceptual, long-term memory</p> <p>- rote memory, short-term memory, sequential memory, working memory</p> <p>= gets big ideas and concepts, difficulty with math facts/reading comprehension/spelling/mechanics of writing/formulas/procedures and sequences/nonmeaningful vocabulary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Acquisition</i>: multiple intelligences/multisensory approach to instruction, whole-to-part instruction, focus on concepts vs. facts, connect with prior knowledge, higher level application of information, real-world applications, advance organizers, preview instructional units, concept maps, teach details in context.</li> <li>☐ <i>Recall</i>: mnemonics, visual imagery, visual or verbal cues and prompts, notes, outlines, formula cards, “cheat sheets”, picture vocabulary, word banks.</li> <li>☐ <i>Retention</i>: reteach and review, have student apply the information, have student teach information, have student organize information, provide/develop resources (see recall), study guides, guided practice.</li> </ul>



**ALIGNING INTERVENTIONS WITH OBSTACLES, continued**

OBSTACLES	"Typical" GT/LD Characteristics	STRATEGIES/INTERVENTIONS
<p><b>Math</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ worksheets</li> <li>☐ calculations</li> <li>☐ vocabulary</li> <li>☐ formulas</li> <li>☐ geometric figures (drawing and "seeing")</li> <li>☐ BCRs</li> </ul>	<p>+ grasp of concepts, problem-solving ability</p> <p>- ability to show sequential thinking (show your work), recall of math facts, working memory, fine motor ability (math tools and manipulatives), written responses</p> <p>= lack of productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Worksheets</i>: Reduce quantity of problems, adequate space, graph paper, read aloud word problems.</li> <li>☐ <i>Calculations</i>: Calculator, charts.</li> <li>☐ <i>Vocabulary</i>: visuals, posted, reference sheets.</li> <li>☐ <i>Formulas</i>: formula cards.</li> <li>☐ <i>Geometric Figures</i>: 3D models, adaptive tools (see OT), scaffolded drawings or constructions.</li> <li>☐ <i>BCRs</i>: verbal elaboration, dictation, teach use of symbols/pictures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social/Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ motivation</li> <li>☐ sustaining effort</li> <li>☐ relationships</li> </ul>	<p>+ generally want to be successful and please others, positive effect about everything but school/work</p> <p>- may be passive aggressive, frustrated, fed-up, bad habits, enabled</p> <p>= "don't care" attitude, lack of relationships with teachers/peers, school failure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☐ <i>Motivation</i>: stimulating assignments, multisensory instruction, multiple intelligences incorporated into the classroom, flexibility, support, choices, communication, positive feedback, respect, encouragement</li> <li>☐ <i>Sustaining effort</i>: reasonable/reduced workload, feedback, success, fresh starts</li> <li>☐ <i>Relationships</i>: get to know the student (interests, hobbies), humor, awareness/acceptance of strengths and needs, positive feedback</li> </ul>

Key + strengths, -weaknesses, = what it may look like/what you might see

tion and create motivation and interest in school learning.

**MCPS GOALS FOR GT/LD PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND STUDENTS**

- ◆ To ensure that differentiated educational programs and/or services are systematically provided for gifted and talented students in Grades K–12, including gifted students with learning disabilities or other special needs.
- ◆ To provide instructional programs for GT/LD students that focus on developing their strengths, interests, and superior intellectual abilities, while accommodating their learning weakness (National Association for Gifted Children Position Paper, 1998).
- ◆ To provide accelerated and enriched instruction, including appropriate strategy and skill instruction, instructional adaptations, and accommodations, while implementing the student's IEP.
- ◆ To extend each child's intellectual boundaries and help all students achieve their highest potential.
- ◆ To provide opportunities for each student with the capability or motivation or potential to accept the challenge of Honors, AP, and advanced-level courses.
- ◆ To know and understand the social and emotional profiles of each student in order to provide strategies that alleviate frustra-

**AVAILABLE SERVICES FOR STAFF AND/OR STUDENTS IN ANY MCPS SCHOOL**

**Professional Development**

- ◆ Individualized training is provided when requested by school teams and/or parent groups
- ◆ Information is provided to key groups of school staff (general and special educators, principals, GT liaisons, school psychologists).

**The WINGS mentor program:**

- ◆ An adult mentor is assigned to an at-risk GT/LD or GT and under-achieving student.
- ◆ The mentor works with the student on an enrichment project in an area of passion or interest chosen by the student.
- ◆ The mentor and the student work through the student's strengths and gifts, and the mentor provides support for the student's areas of disability.
- ◆ Together they produce a project that capitalizes on the student's strengths, interests, and passions and share their results with an appropriate audience in the student's school.
- ◆ The student is invited to show off his/her hard work and dedication in a ceremony at the end of the eight-week session with all of the other mentors and mentees, families, and staff members.

**Consultation:**

The instructional specialist for GT/LD programs in the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction provides consultation to schools regarding appropriate programming options for individual students.

**Application & Choice Programs:**

Many GT/LD students have been successful in MCPS Application and Choice programs, which include the following:

- ◇ Elementary School: Centers for the Highly Gifted
- ◇ Middle School: Magnet programs, consortia schools
- ◇ High School: Magnet, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Signature programs, academies, consortia schools

(See MCPS publication *Options: Application and Choice* for detailed information on all available programs.)

**GT/LD PROGRAMS IN MCPS**

The majority of GT/LD students are served appropriately in their neighborhood schools. GT/LD students who are not able to access rigorous instruction in their home schools, despite ongoing interventions and support, may be referred for alternative placement consideration by their school IEP team. An IEP team meeting will be convened at the school to review all available information (including information from the parents) and make a final determination regarding appropriate special education services.

**Elementary School**

In the elementary GT/LD program classrooms, students typically spend the majority of their academic day in the self-contained GT/LD classrooms; each staffed with one special education teacher and one special education paraeducator. Class sizes vary but contain an average of 8–12 students.

The focus of the elementary program is to provide students with instruction in their areas of strength while simultaneously working to improve areas affected by the disability. Students become familiar with the accommodations, such as computer software programs, that can minimize the impact of their disabilities on their achievement. A multisensory approach allows students to use and recognize their strengths in different and varied ways.

Students typically participate with their nondisabled peers in physical education and the arts, as well as during lunch, recess, and other school activities. As students demonstrate proficiency in various subject areas, acquire compensatory strategies and learn how to use compensatory tools, and make progress to the point that they can be successful, they may be mainstreamed for additional parts of the academic day, with appropriate supports and accommodations. When mainstreamed, students are included with their nondisabled

peers for the appropriate rigor and challenge.

**Middle School**

Each of three regionally located middle schools serves as home to GT/LD students who need special education support for the majority of their academic day. Students may be placed in a special education classroom for instruction in their area of disability. Most often, this includes classes in English and reading.

Students typically are placed in the mainstream with their non-disabled gifted peers for social studies, science, and math. A special educator (either a paraeducator or a special education co-teacher) often provides direct support in these classes. An additional period for providing special education instruction may be offered through the secondary resource room. The resource room may provide instruction in areas addressed in the individual student's IEP, including reading, writing, and organization.

Case managers in these GT/LD settings may have a smaller-than-typical staff-student ratio, allowing for more intensive communication with other school staff as well as with parents. Case managers work with students to help them understand their unique strengths and needs and advocate for the accommodations that will allow them access to rigorous instruction. Students typically spend more and more of their time in the mainstream over the course of their middle school years, as they learn how to use compensatory tools and strategies and how to self-advocate.

**High School**

Most students who have participated in the elementary and/or middle school special GT/LD settings are ready to return to their home high schools. There, they will receive special education services as they take on the challenge of high school offerings, including Honors and/or Advanced Placement courses, the Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet program, or the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. (See *Options* brochure.)

Students who need more intensive support may be served in a special GT/LD high school program where GT/LD students typically are in the mainstream for the majority of their day.

A designated teacher model is in place at the high school setting. At each grade level, in the core content areas (English, world studies, and science) an Honors-level teacher is designated to be the teacher for GT/LD students who select a course in that content area at the Honors level. The teacher is one who has shown exemplary skills in utilizing adaptations and accommodations and nurturing students. The teacher agrees to participate in professional development opportunities and team meetings.

Via professional development and consultation, the student is provided the specialized instruction he/she requires to be successful. Many GT/LD students will also take a period of resource to support their academic success and progress on IEP goals.

(See *Twice Exceptional Student: A Guidebook*, pages K–1 and K–2, for information on GT/LD programs.)

## RESOURCES

- ◆ GT/LD Information (MCPS Web site)  
*Twice Exceptional Students: Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs (MCPS publication)*  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/gtld/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/gtld/)
  
- ◆ *Navigating the System* (MCPS publication)  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/parents/guide/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/parents/guide/)
  
- ◆ *Options: An Introduction to Application and Choice Programs* (MCPS publication)  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/enrichedinnovative/options.shtm](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/enrichedinnovative/options.shtm)
  
- ◆ *Identifying Specific Learning Disabilities* (MSDE manual)  
[www.msde.state.md.us/SpecialEducation](http://www.msde.state.md.us/SpecialEducation)
  
- ◆ *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation* (2006) (NASDSE manual)  
[www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org)
  
- ◆ Wings mentor program information (MCPS Web site)  
[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/wings/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/wings/)

Parents are encouraged to contact school-based staff to answer initial questions.

Contact the MCPS, GT/LD Instructional Specialist  
Accelerated and Enriched Instruction  
301-309-6272  
[Marisa\\_R\\_Stemple@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Marisa_R_Stemple@mcpsmd.org)

This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the Public Information Office, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 112, Rockville, MD 20850, 301-279-3391 or 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay).

Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration in communicating with the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) may contact Interpreting Services in Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 301-517-5539.

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

*Published by the Department of Materials Management for the  
Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction*

