

## **Understanding the CES Selection Process: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Data/Criteria**

#### **1. What data was used to evaluate my child?**

The review process uses a multiple measures approach that includes both district-level and externally developed measures of students' abilities. The data that was considered included Grade 3 report card, percentile ranks for the Measures of Adequate Progress in Reading and Math, (MAP-R and MAP-M), student services<sup>^</sup>, a non-scored student questionnaire and an external assessment, the Cognitive Test of Abilities Test (CogAT®). The process for selection is race-neutral, name and school blind.

<sup>^</sup> services such as receiving special education services, ESOL- English for Speakers of Other Languages, Section 504 accommodations plan and Free and Reduced-priced Meals

#### **2. What do the CogAT® ® percentile scores mean?**

- The CogAT® Test measures the level and pattern of cognitive development of a student compared to age mates and grade mates. CogAT® measures students' learned reasoning abilities in the three areas most linked to academic success in school: Verbal, Quantitative and Nonverbal reasoning.
- All grade 3 students were given the Screening Form version of the CogAT® test

#### **3. What do the MCPS percentiles mean? How are MCPS percentiles determined?**

National norms are designed to compare and rank test takers in relation to one another based on those who took the test nationally. Local norms are designed to compare and rank test takers in relation to one another based on those who took the test locally – within MCPS. Local norming provides information about students in relation to their academic peer groups in MCPS. MCPS CogAT® percentiles are locally normed percentiles established based on the three sections of the CogAT®. Gifted and talented experts recommend the use of local norms as an equitable approach to ensure equity and access in identification of students for program access. Additionally, the current draft of Gifted and Talented Definitions from the Maryland State Department of Education includes the use of local norms as part of its gifted and talented identification process. The socioeconomic status of elementary schools was used to determine the locally normed score on the CogAT® (MCPS Percentiles). In establishing MCPS Percentiles, students in schools with minimal poverty were compared to one another, students in schools with moderate poverty were compared to each other, and students from schools highly impacted by poverty were compared to each other.

#### **4. Why did MCPS use local norms? How were local norms created?**

Based on guidance from the National Association for Gifted Children, the use of local norms was undertaken to ensure equity and access in identification of students for program access. The locally normed percentiles on the CogAT® assessment were created from the distribution of Standard Age Scores (SAS) for students based on the socioeconomic status of elementary schools. SAS are provided by the vendor for all students and allow for the comparison “of the rate and level of cognitive development of a particular student with others in the same age group.” This process of determining local norms based on the SAS follows the local norming approach implemented by CogAT® developers. As indicated in the CogAT® Score Guide, “Standard age scores use the power of national norms to control for the effects of age.” Additionally, given that students tested were in the same grade and tested around the same time, the effects of grade are also controlled with SAS. To determine the locally normed percentiles, students with the highest SAS in the group were assigned the highest percentile rank and those with the lowest SAS were assigned the lowest percentile rank. Information on how your student performed on each subtest is provided in the Student Profile Narrative which you may access on the Parent Portal.

#### **5. How did you use the CogAT® scores to evaluate my child for the CES program?**

National and MCPS percentiles were calculated for students who tested. The review used the MCPS percentiles. National and MCPS percentiles may look different because students are being compared to two different groups: a national group of students who tested to derive a national percentile, and MCPS students who tested to derive the MCPS percentile. For the CES selection review process, the MCPS percentiles were used. The selection committee reviewed for a pattern of performance and a demonstrated need for accelerated and enriched instruction using internal and external measures. This process considered the availability of an academic peer group at the local elementary school. Two percentiles are presented for your child. The MCPS percentile compares your child with other MCPS Grade 3 students who took the CogAT® and the national percentile compares your child with other Grade 3 students nationally who took the CogAT®. The Composite percentile<sup>^</sup> for the verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal batteries that you received indicates the percentage of students who are also the same age as the child whose scores fell at or below the score obtained by the child.

<sup>^</sup>Grade 3 students were given the Screening Form of the CogAT® which is a shortened version of the CogAT®, providing the same reliable information as the full version. Because MCPS uses the screening version, the composite score is used in the selection process and therefore provided to parents. Information on how your student performed on each subtest is provided in the Student Profile Narrative which you may access on the Parent Portal.

#### **6. Where can I get more information about my child’s performance on the CogAT®?**

A CogAT® student report will be available in your MyMCPS Parent Portal by mid-April.

## **7. What was involved on test day?**

On the day of testing, the students completed a wellness question, a non-scored brief essay prompt, and a three part CogAT® assessment. The full duration for this was about an hour.

Students who did not feel well enough to take the test were asked to alert the teacher and stop. Students were provided a make-up day. Students also completed a brief essay in response to a prompt. This is non-scored. Student had 10 minutes to complete this exercise.

The CogAT® assessment was completed online by the student, and each section was a series of multiple-choice reasoning ability questions. Each section was timed for 10 minutes each. During the 10 minutes students can advance or go back to questions in the section. Students were able to complete sample questions with the teacher prior to completing their own sections. The percentile provided is the result of the three assessments combined to reflect a composite percentile.

## **8. Why does my child have an “X” in their CogAT® percentile report?**

In order to receive a CogAT® percentile the student needs to complete a certain number of questions. If your student did not complete the minimum number of questions in a section, they will not receive a score to calculate a percentile score. Since CogAT® is a timed assessment, it is possible that some students did not finish enough of the questions in a given section of the test for a score.

## **9. Can you clarify what “availability of an academic peer group” means?**

One of the criteria considered was the availability of an academic peer group within the local school. This is demonstrated when there is a cohort of 20 or more students in the same elementary school with a similar academic profile and ability. Students who perform at high levels may or may not be invited to the program depending on the availability of a similar academic peer group at their elementary school.

## **10. My child’s scores for the various criteria are in the 90+ percentiles and/or higher levels, why did my child not get selected?**

This year, the process looked at all grade three students. This provided information about your student’s performance in addition to their academic peer group. This process considered over 6,900 Grade 3 students. Your child, while high performing, may have an academic peer group at the local school and may not have emerged an outlier within the group. You are encouraged to work with your local elementary school for programming options and grouping practices.

## **Wait Pool**

### **11. Are the students who are in the wait pool ranked?**

The students in the wait pool are not ranked. It is a collection of students who are qualified applicants, but due to limited space, are placed in a wait pool. The original screening committee establishes the wait pool at the time of screening. Though it varies from year to year, there are generally 20-35 students placed in the wait pool for each center. As openings occur at a Center, students are selected by random lottery to fill the vacancies. The wait pool remains active through the first semester of Grade 5.

### **12. How many students will be invited from the wait pool?**

Though it varies from year to year, spots are offered to wait pool students if spaces become available due to students not accepting the initial invitation or due to attrition. In August, we will do our final student counts before the new school year. At that time, additional seats are generally available. In addition, students may be pulled to fill vacancies throughout the year should a vacancy arise.

### **13. How will I know if my child is selected from the wait pool?**

If your student is pulled from the wait pool due to a vacancy at a center, you will receive a call or email from our office. Please make sure that we have up-to-date contact information for you, so that we are able to reach you.

## **Appeals**

### **14. What is the process for an appeal?**

If you wish to appeal the decision, submit an appeal letter addressing one or more of the following reasons for seeking review of the decision:

- There is new information that was not available at the time of initial review of student information that significantly changes the academic profile of the student.
- There is a hardship or unique circumstance.

Teacher recommendations, external tests and sample work will not be considered.

### **15. What information is useful for an appeal?**

The appeals committee is looking for information that shows a significant change in student performance or student services (IEP classification, 504 documentation, hardships, etc.) since the close of marking period one in Grade 3.

### **16. What information is not needed for an appeal?**

The appeals committee members are not qualified examiners and therefore will not interpret outside psychological assessments or external assessment reports (e.g. A+ learning or CTY). Additionally, advocacy letters submitted from MCPS staff will not be considered in the appeals process as they were not used a part of the original selection process. Please do not send student awards or samples of student class work.

### **17. Where do we send the appeal letter?**

Appeal letters should be sent to: DCCAPS, 11721 Kemp Mill Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20902 by date included in your letter.

### **18. Who reviews the Level I appeal?**

Members of the original selection committee do not participate on the appeals committee. A new appeals committee is assembled comprising staff members from different stakeholder groups.

### **19. What are the possible outcomes of an appeal?**

- An appeal may be denied. For a student in the wait pool or a student not selected for the program, this means that there is no change in his or her status.
- An appeal may be approved. For a student in the wait pool, this means the student would be invited to the program. For a student who was originally not selected, this means the student would be placed in the wait pool. The wait pool is a lottery.