Gifted and talented identification: the definition and the steps

Federal law, 20 U.S.C. 7801(27): students who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. The law defines; states and districts identify.

How a district identifies

Step	What happens
1. Screening	Every child in one grade (universal) or nominated children take a 30-to-45-minute group ability test
2. The screener	CogAT, NNAT3 or OLSAT 8: standard scores with mean 100 and SD 16 by age, with percentiles
3. Second step	Achievement scores (state test, MAP, i-Ready, Iowa), teacher or parent rating scales, a portfolio, sometimes an individual IQ test (WISC-V)
4. Decision and service	A cut-off, a points matrix or local norms; then a pull-out hour, a full-time programme or a different school

The three screeners

	CogAT	NNAT3	OLSAT 8
Publisher	Riverside Insights	Pearson	Pearson
Covers	Verbal, quantitative, nonverbal batteries	Nonverbal only	Verbal and nonverbal in one test
Length	About 30-45 min per battery	48 questions in 30 min	Untimed, up to 75 min
Score	Standard Age Score per battery and composite	Naglieri Ability Index	School Ability Index
Chosen when	A profile across three areas is wanted	Many English learners; a fast universal screen	One test, one score, with a verbal part

What percentile is gifted (the district's line)

Line	Standard score (mean 100, SD 16)	Share of children above it
90th percentile	about 120	10%
95th percentile	about 126	5%
97th percentile	about 130	3%
98th percentile	about 133	2%
99th percentile	about 137	1%

From sciencewithshobha.com/blog/gifted-and-talented-testing-explained-the-federal-definition-how-districts-identify-the-cogat-nnat-and-olsat-californias-gate-categories-new-york-citys-process-and-what-to-ask/ · 1-on-1 online tutoring for US families, Grade 1 to AP, free 30-minute first class.

California, New York City, and the questions to ask

California: GATE (Education Code 52200 to 52212)

Districts identify in the categories the code lists: intellectual, creative, specific academic or leadership ability, high achievement, talent in the performing and visual arts, and other areas the board approves. The state fixes no test or score except for the highly gifted; each district's GATE page sets its own, often the CogAT or NNAT in grade 2 or 3 with a line in the 90s. Separate state GATE funding was folded into general district funding in 2013, so programmes vary by district.

New York City: no test (2027 admissions)

The OLSAT-and-NNAT test for four-year-olds ended after 2021. Kindergarten: children are considered on behaviours indicating readiness for accelerated learning, nominated by pre-K teachers or Department of Education early childhood experts after interviews. Grades 1 to 4: eligible with report-card grades of 3 or 4 (or the equivalent) in math, reading and writing; no ranking among eligible children; offers by lottery.

What to ask the district

[ ] Which test, which grade, and is every child tested or only nominated children?
[ ] The cut-off, on which score (composite, any battery, two of three), and are local norms used?
[ ] The second step, and can a private evaluation (a WISC-V report) be submitted?
[ ] Can a child be re-tested, and when?
[ ] What does the programme do differently, how many hours a week, from which grade?

Our district's answers

Test and grade; universal or nominated: _____

Cut-off and score used; local norms: _____

Second step; private reports: _____

Re-test rules: _____

Programme hours and content: _____

Decision: pursue identification, or ask the classroom for harder work now: _____