



AFC'S GUIDE TO

Gifted & Talented Programs for Students with Disabilities

March 2015



Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

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Special education should not be a bar to admission or participation in a gifted and talented program. A student can have special education needs and be gifted and talented at the same time. This guide has been written to help you work your way through the system if that's the case for your child.

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This guide does not constitute legal advice. It attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.

WHAT ARE THE GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAMS?

Gifted & Talented (G&T) programs are designed for children who are ready to benefit from a more challenging academic program than some of their other peers in New York City Department of Education (DOE) schools. Students entering kindergarten through 3rd grade are eligible for G&T admissions, and all students who meet cut-off scores on the assessment exam can apply to G&T programs. Not all schools offer G&T programs, and those that do can be different from one another.

District vs. Citywide Programs

District G&T programs are offered at some of the elementary schools in the DOE geographic school districts in New York City. Programs begin in kindergarten and end at the last grade offered by the school. For example, if the school is a kindergarten through 5th grade school, the G&T program will be offered through 5th grade. G&T students in District G&T programs learn all academic subjects in separate G&T classes.

Citywide G&T schools accept students from all boroughs, and have a higher cut-off score for admissions than District G&T programs.

For the eligibility requirements for District G&T programs and Citywide G&T schools, see the section on “Applying to G&T Programs” on page 9 of this guide.



Accelerated vs. Enriched Curriculum

Each school differs in how it educates students in the G&T program based on the school’s philosophy and curriculum.

- Some schools teach an accelerated curriculum pushing students to learn at higher grade levels.
- Other schools enrich the general education curriculum by adding more to round out the students’ learning and make the lessons more engaging for students ready for the challenge.
- If your child is eligible to apply to a G&T program, contact schools you’re interested in so you understand how their G&T curriculum is taught and find programs that are the best match for your child.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE G&T ADMISSIONS PROCESS?

All NYC children who will be entering kindergarten through 3rd grade the following fall are eligible to take the G&T assessment exam.

- Students must score at least in the 90th percentile to apply for District G&T programs. In other words, their scores must be in the top 10% of all test scores to apply for the District programs.
- Students must score at least in the 97th percentile to apply for Citywide G&T schools. That means, they must score in the top 3% of all test scores to apply for the Citywide programs.

For more information on applying for admission, see “Applying to G&T Programs” on page 9 of this guide.

The DOE does make changes to this process occasionally, so be sure to check with the DOE by calling 718-935-2009 or by visiting <http://schools.nyc.gov/GT> for updates.

HOW DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS WORK?

Step 1: File a Request for Testing

Register your child to take the assessment exam by filing a Request for Testing (RFT) form. You can get a copy of the form and file it online at <https://prod.semsnycdoe.com/parentsite/>, or you can go in-person to your zoned school or Family Welcome Center (formerly called an Enrollment Office) for a copy of the form. **The deadline to submit the RFT form is early November.**

TIP

Be sure to keep your receipt! You may need it to prove you submitted the RFT in time.

If you think your child needs accommodations when taking the exam as a result of a disability, request those accommodations before the deadline to submit the RFT form. For more information on testing accommodations, see page 6 of this guide.

NOTE: If your child is entering kindergarten the following fall, you should also apply for non-G&T programs to make sure he or she has a school placement for the fall. For more information about that process, visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/kindergarten>. If you believe your child needs special education services in kindergarten, you will also need to participate in the process for students with disabilities transitioning into kindergarten. For more information, see information provided by the DOE at <http://schools.nyc.gov/kindergartenspecialeducation>.

Step 2: Take the G&T Assessment

Next, after the deadline to submit the RFT form, you will receive a date and location for your child to take the G&T assessment exam from the DOE. On the assessment date, your child will take the assessment with any accommodations agreed on before the assessment date. **Testing takes place in January and early February.**

Step 3: Research & Rank Schools

After the assessment, you will receive notice from the DOE of whether your child qualified for a G&T program and the list of schools with G&T programs that your child may be eligible to attend. You'll have the next couple of weeks to research and visit the list of schools you've been provided.

After considering your options, you will need to submit to the DOE the list of schools with G&T programs that you would like your child to attend. Make sure to list the schools in your actual order of preference. **The list is typically due in late April.**



TIP

If you really want your child to attend a G&T program, we recommend that you list every school for which your child qualifies. If you do not, the chances are higher that your child may not receive a seat in a G&T class.

Step 4: Receive an Offer & Decide

In late May, the DOE will send a letter notifying you whether your child has been placed in one of the G&T programs you listed in the previous step. The final choice is yours. You can accept or decline the G&T placement offered. **The deadline to accept is in mid-June.**

If you accept a G&T placement at a school that is not the general education school where your child has been placed, we recommend that you notify that general education school so that the seat can be made available to other students.

WHAT WILL YOUR CHILD BE TESTED ON?

The G&T admissions assessment has two parts: nonverbal and verbal. Children entering kindergarten and first grade do not need to know how to read to take the assessment.

The **nonverbal assessment** measures reasoning skills and problem solving ability without using language. Students are asked to complete patterns and order materials to determine their nonverbal abilities. The **verbal assessment** measures verbal reasoning and comprehension skills. Students will be asked to recall words and numbers and follow instructions.

After you register for the assessment, you will get a practice test so you can get a sense of what your child will experience on the day of his or her assessment. You can also get sample questions from the assessment in the G&T handbooks by year at <http://schools.nyc.gov/GT>.

HOW DO YOU REQUEST TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS?

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan, and that plan calls for testing accommodations, you should ask that your child receive those same accommodations for the G&T assessment.

Because standardized testing does not begin for most students until 3rd grade, many IEPs do not specify testing accommodations for children entering kindergarten, first grade, or second grade. If this is the case for your child and you believe that your child needs testing accommodations for his or her disability, you should ask the DOE for the accommodation.

Be as specific as possible about what testing accommodations you think your child needs and explain why you believe those accommodations are necessary. You should give the DOE any evaluations—formal or informal—that support your request.

To request special testing accommodations:

If you believe your child needs large print exam materials for visual impairments, or Frequency Modulation (FM) units for hearing impairments, you must select these options on the RFT form.

If your child's IEP or 504 Plan specifies any testing accommodations other than large print or FM units, or if your child's IEP or 504 Plan does not specify testing accommodations but you feel that your child's disability requires them, submit the RFT form and then ask for the accommodation(s) by emailing ServiceCenter@schools.nyc.gov or calling the Office of Assessment at 212-374-6646.

NOTE: You must email your request for accommodations before the deadline to submit the RFT form!

The following testing accommodations are never provided on the G&T assessment:

- Extended time
- Assessment questions or directions read more than the standard number of times
- Exam questions or directions explained

When requesting accommodations, **make sure your request includes:**

- The receipt number of the RFT form submission
- Your child's name and date of birth
- Your name and contact information
- The testing accommodation(s) that your child needs. If the testing accommodations are not in your child's IEP or 504 Plan, explain why you believe the accommodations are needed.

After the deadline to submit RFT forms, someone from the DOE should contact you to let you know if the DOE has approved the accommodation(s). If you hear nothing from the DOE, reach out again to the Office of Assessment.



TIP

To make your case stronger, be sure to submit a letter from your child's doctor or any evaluations of your child that show your child's need for the accommodation.

WHAT IF THE TESTING ACCOMMODATIONS YOU REQUESTED ARE DENIED?

If the DOE denies the testing accommodations you requested, those accommodations are not on the list of prohibited accommodations on page 7, and you want to appeal that decision, contact the **Office of Assessment** by email or letter before the assessment date. We recommend doing so as soon as your request for accommodations is denied.

Contact Information

Office of Assessment
G&T Assessment Administration
52 Chambers Street, Room 309
New York, NY 10007
ServiceCenter@schools.nyc.gov

You may also reach out to the Office of Specialized Instruction by email: specialeducationreform@schools.nyc.gov or by phone: 718-935-2007.

CAN YOU REQUEST THAT THE ASSESSMENT BE PROVIDED IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH?

On the RFT form, you can request to have your child tested in one of ten languages other than English* if:

- Your child is in grades K-2, goes to a public school and is identified as an English Language Learner (ELL), or
- Your child is in pre-K, or
- Your child goes to a non-public school.

**Languages currently available for the assessment include: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu.*

TIP

If you would like to communicate in a language other than English, ask when you reach out to the DOE for someone to contact you in your preferred language.

NOTE: If you want to request alternate language assessment, you must provide this information on the RFT form. Once you have selected an alternate language for the G&T assessment, you cannot switch to another language. Also, you cannot request re-testing in English for the assessment if you've already asked that the assessment be done in another language.

HOW CAN YOU REPORT A PROBLEM WITH THE EXAM ADMINISTRATION?

If you wish to report a problem with the way your child was given the assessment, you must do so **in writing within 48 hours after the assessment** to the Office of Assessment by email or by letter (see contact information on page 8 of this guide).

HOW WILL YOU APPLY TO SPECIFIC G&T PROGRAMS?

Your child may apply to a **District G&T program** if he or she scores at least in the 90th percentile on the G&T assessment. That means, his or her score must be in the top 10% of all test scores. Once he or she has taken the assessment and you have received scores, it's still not over. Next, you'll need to apply to specific programs. Whether your child receives a placement at a particular District program will depend on a number of factors, including:

- Does he or she have a sibling already attending the G&T program at the school?
- Once the siblings have been placed at the school, are there seats available in the program after students who scored higher have been placed?
- Is he or she zoned to attend the school?

A Note about Siblings

Siblings to students already in a G&T program at a school have a "preference."

If a sibling scores the lowest qualifying score for that program (90% for district programs and 97% for citywide programs), the sibling will be admitted first, even before children with higher scores, so that all siblings can be at the same school.

Your child can apply to a **Citywide G&T program** if he or she scores at least in the 97th percentile on the assessment. In other words, if he or she scores in the top 3% of all test scores, he or she can apply to a Citywide program. If your child is eligible to apply for Citywide G&T programs, then your child is also eligible to apply for District G&T programs. Most years, more students qualify for the Citywide G&T schools than there are available seats. As a result, even students who scored in the 99th percentile are not guaranteed placement in a Citywide school. Priority for placement depends on:

- What is his or her score on the G&T assessment?
- Does he or she have a sibling currently attending the school?
- Are there seats available after students who scored higher have been placed?

WHAT IF YOUR CHILD NEEDS IEP/ SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES WHILE IN A G&T PROGRAM?

A child cannot be excluded from a G&T program on the basis of disability, and your child does not have to go to General Education just to receive IEP services!

If you have concerns about the way your child's G&T program is providing IEP services, you should contact the Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support at 212-374-6085 or specialeducationreform@schools.nyc.gov. You can also contact the Advocates for Children Helpline at (866) 427-6033.

If your child is attending a G&T program and you suspect that he or she has a disability and may need special education services, you can ask that the school evaluate your child for special education services. If the evaluation shows that your child has a disability and needs special education services to make progress, the school must prepare an IEP that identifies the special education services your child needs, and the school must provide those services in the G&T program as long as that remains appropriate. **The school cannot exclude your child from the G&T program simply because your child is suspected of having a disability, is classified or diagnosed with a disability, or needs special education services.** You can also request that the school prepare a 504 Plan for your child to provide any accommodations.



WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

There are plenty of places to learn more about G&T programs and about special education!

We urge you to attend one of the **DOE's Community Information Sessions**, usually held in mid-October, to get more information on G&T programs. For dates and locations, or to learn more about G&T admissions from the DOE, call 718-935-2009 or visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/GT>.

To get a **handbook** on G&T programs and admissions published by the DOE, visit your child's zoned school or a DOE Family Welcome Center (formerly called an Enrollment Office), or go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/GT>. The handbook is available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, French, Urdu, Russian, Arabic, Bengali, Korean, and Haitian Creole.

For more information on IEPs and 504 Plans, check out the following guidebooks and other resources by Advocates for Children at www.advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources.

- AFC's Turning 5: A Guide to the Transition from Preschool Special Education to Kindergarten
- AFC's Guide to Special Education
- AFC's Guide to Section 504

You can also call our **Helpline** at (866) 427-6033 to speak with us and ask more questions about the G&T process and/or special education services.





Our Mission

AFC promotes access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. We use uniquely integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

Still have more questions?

Please Call

The Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline

Monday through Thursday

10 AM to 4 PM

866-427-6033 (toll free)

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