

# **Gifted Education Identification**

Parent Part A of the  
Competencies  
Collaboration

*SEVA Council for Gifted Administrators  
Edited for Hampton City Schools*

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## *Virginia Regulations Regarding Identification of Gifted Students*

- Virginia law allows school divisions to establish gifted education policies and procedures according to the needs and interests of the local division. Divisions may choose to provide either General Intellectual Aptitude or Specific Academic Aptitude programs. Programs for students gifted in Visual and Performing Arts may also be provided.
- Per the *Regulations Governing Education Services for Gifted Students*, each school division in Virginia establishes procedures for the identification of gifted students and for the delivery of services to those students. Hampton's criteria for identification are different than those of the surrounding divisions.

# Identification of Gifted Students

- **Screening** is the process of reviewing current assessment data on K-12 grade students to determine whether a student should be referred for identification for gifted services.
- The screening process may include:
  - a review of standardized test scores
  - current classroom achievement
  - performance on complex thinking tasks
- In Hampton, ALL first grade students are screened using the NNAT and ALL second grade students are screened using the CogAT. Gifted School Level Advisors screen students at other grade levels through an analysis of other test scores and conversations with teachers.

# Identification of Gifted Students Referral Process

- **Referral** is a direct procedure that enters a student into a school division's identification process.
- Referral of a student requires the school division to administer all assessments and reach an eligibility decision as specified in the division's approved local plan for the education the gifted.
- Referrals may be offered by parents, teachers, community members, administrators, peers, or the student him or herself. Referral forms may be obtained from the school counselor or gifted resource teacher.

# Gifted Education Eligibility

- **Eligibility** decisions must be based on multiple criteria.
- Why should multiple criteria be utilized for determining eligibility?
  - Intelligence is multifaceted, developmental and dynamic
  - Intelligence can be inhibited or enhanced by experiences
  - Divisions need to look for students with outstanding potential in a variety of ways and at a variety of time periods to ensure that no child who needs services provided through gifted education is missed

## Gifted Education Eligibility, cont.

- Why should multiple criteria be utilized for determining eligibility?
  - Some gifted characteristics such as underachievement and perfectionism can impact teacher rating scales and academic grades
  - Factors such as limited English proficiency, low socio-economic status, or learning disabilities can impact ability test scores
  - Ability and achievement test scores may not be correlated
  - The *Regulations* state that no single criterion shall be used in determining students who qualify for, or are denied access to programs for the gifted.

# Typical Characteristics of Students Referred for Gifted Eligibility Testing

Students referred for gifted eligibility may:

- Be very observant
- Be extremely curious
- Have intense interests
- Have an excellent memory
- Have a long attention span
- Have excellent reasoning skills
- Have well-developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis
- Quickly and easily see relationships in ideas, objects, or facts



*Do you recognize any of these characteristics in your child?*

## Typical Characteristics of Students Referred for Gifted Eligibility Testing, cont.

- Have fluent and flexible thinking
- Have elaborate and original thinking
- Have excellent problem solving skills
- Have advanced critical thinking skills
- Learn quickly and with less practice and repetition
- Have an unusual or vivid imagination
- See patterns and connections easily
- Have excellent visual-spatial skills



*These may not always be “straight A” students!*

# Identification Criteria

- According to the *Regulations*, the **identification process** shall include at least three measures from the following categories:
  - Assessment of appropriate student products, performance or portfolio\*
  - Record of observation of in-classroom behavior\*
  - Appropriate rating scales\*, checklists, or questionnaires
  - Individual interview\*
  - Nationally norm-referenced aptitude test\*
  - Nationally norm-referenced achievement test
  - Record of previous accomplishments (such as awards, honors, grades\*, etc.)

\* Used in Hampton City Schools

## Identification Criteria, cont.

- For **general intellectual aptitude identification**, a nationally norm-referenced aptitude test shall be included.
- For **visual and performing arts**, a portfolio or other performance assessment measure shall be included.

# Ability Testing vs. Achievement Testing

## ■ **Achievement tests**

- Are heavily dependent on formal learning acquired in school or at home
- Measure what a student has learned over a certain period of time, particularly in math or reading
- Do not measure how a student thinks or a student's potential

# Ability Testing vs. Achievement Testing, cont.

## ■ **Ability tests:**

- Are tests of thinking and abstract reasoning ability
- May look at whether students can apply what they know in new and different ways
- Often work with designs, patterns, and pictures to be analyzed
- Usually challenge the test taker to mentally manipulate symbols, numbers, and written language
- Examine innate learning ability rather than school-based learning

# Aptitude/Ability Tests Utilized by Hampton Schools as part of the Eligibility Process

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)
- Otis Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT)
- Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI)
- Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test (K-BIT)

# Achievement Tests Utilized by School Districts During the Gifted Screening Process

Hampton does not use achievement tests for eligibility purposes for HCS students. However, for incoming transfer students from other divisions or from private schools, HCS may look at these norm-referenced achievement tests, if the scores are available. An ability test will also be administered. These are common achievement tests:

- Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
- Terra Nova
- Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement (WJ-III)
- Stanford 10
- Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)

# Reasons Why Achievement and Ability Scores May Not Correlate

Sometimes a student may have very high achievement test scores, or high SOL test scores, but not have high ability test scores. Sometimes the student may have high ability scores and much lower achievement scores. There are several reasons why this may occur:

- The student is highly motivated to succeed in school, and studies hard to increase achievement.
- Many ability and achievement tests are timed while classroom and state assessments such as the SOL are not timed.
- The student may have an enriched home and family environment.
- The student is underachieving in school but demonstrates high ability.

# Norm-referenced tests vs. Criterion-referenced tests used as Identification Criteria

- Many local school division gifted education programs use **norm-referenced tests** such as the CogAT, NNAT, and OLSAT rather than **criterion-referenced tests** to make eligibility decisions.
- **Norm-referenced tests** are made to compare test takers to a large group of others at the same age. On these tests, it is expected that some students will perform very well, most will perform at an average level, and a few will perform poorly.

# Norm-referenced tests vs. Criterion-referenced tests used as Identification Criteria, cont.

- **Criterion-referenced tests** are intended to measure how well a person has learned the material taught in a specific grade or course.
  - If the material is taught well, all test takers are expected to succeed.
  - The Virginia Standards of Learning tests are criterion-referenced tests, and are not used in making gifted eligibility decisions.
  - Both kinds of tests can provide helpful data for making instructional decisions to meet the needs of the students in the regular classroom.

# Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria

- **Percentile rank (PR):** A point (score) on a scale of 100 that indicates the percent of scores at or below that point.
  - A student's score at the 84th percentile is regarded as equaling or surpassing that of 84 percent of the students in the group being tested.
  - It does not mean that the student got 84 percent of the answers correct, but rather that the student performed better than 84 out of 100 students being tested.

# Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria

- **Percentile rank (PR):**

- Age-based and grade-based percentiles are often very similar, *except* if the student is significantly older or younger than other students in the same grade, as might be expected if the student either had been retained or skipped a grade.
- The average range on the percentile rank is between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles.

# Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria, cont.

- **Composite** score:
  - A composite score is a total or overall score. It is neither the sum nor the average of the subtest scores.
  - Students with high composite scores often seem to be the traditional “gifted” students, with excellent skills in most areas.
  - Students with high scores in one or two subtests may also be gifted, and may need differentiated instruction in their areas of strength.
  - Low composite scores may indicate that the student will need more structure, time, and practice for learning effectively.

## Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria, cont.

- Depending on the school division, students who score between the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile and 85<sup>th</sup> percentile on their composite scores are:
  - Very bright students with the capability of being very high achievers in a regular classroom
  - May need to be cluster grouped with other students who are also achieving at this level
  - May need enrichment, advanced or differentiated instruction, and other instructional modifications to keep them challenged and motivated
  - Critical thinkers who may become bored with work they have already mastered

## Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria, cont.

- Depending on the school division, students who score above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile on their composite scores:
  - May be identified as gifted and placed in the gifted resource or full-time gifted program, depending on the student's performance on the rest of the eligibility documents
  - Will need advanced or differentiated instruction to keep them challenged and motivated

## Interpreting Test Scores used as Identification Criteria, cont.

- Depending on the school division, students who score above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile:
  - Are generally very gifted students who are most frequently eligible for placement in the gifted resource or full-time gifted program depending on the student's performance on the rest of the eligibility documents
  - Are typically critical thinkers who demonstrate a very accelerated pace of learning
  - Need advanced or differentiated instruction, and instructional modifications to keep them challenged and motivated

# Testing Wrap-up

- School divisions strive to utilize non-biased, valid, non-discriminatory, and reliable testing measures to identify students for gifted education programs.
- Most school divisions utilize ability test scores within a three year range. Typically after three years, school divisions reserve the right to seek updated testing measures.
- Most school divisions use multiple time periods to ensure that students are not missed by "one shot" identification procedures that often take place at the end of second or third grade.

## Testing Wrap-up, cont.

- While students may change throughout a year, most school divisions do not retest a student within the same year.
- A child's maturity may play a role in a composite or subtest score. Some students need the gift of time to mature so many school divisions allow students to be referred for testing again the following year.
- Hampton believes in giving students second chances, so additional testing may be administered if needed.

# Identification and Placement Committee

- For each identified student, the identification/ placement committee shall determine which service option offered by the division most effectively meets the learning needs of the student.
- Parents and legal guardians must be notified of the committee's decision within 90 instructional days of the receipt of parental consent for assessment.

## Identification and Placement Committee, cont.

- Within 90 instructional days, beginning with the receipt of a parent's or legal guardian's consent for assessment, the identification and placement committee shall determine the eligibility status of each student referred for the division's gifted education program and notify the parent or guardian of its decision.
- The committee shall include classroom teachers, assessment specialists, gifted program staff, school administrators, or others with credentials or experience in gifted education.

## Identification and Placement Committee, cont.

- For referred students, an identification and placement committee shall:
  - Review data from multiple sources to assess students' aptitudes in the areas of giftedness the school division serves
  - Determine whether a student is eligible for the division's services
  - Determine which of the school division's service options match the learning needs of the eligible student.
- The committee may review data administered by another division for a transfer student who has been identified previously.

# Qualifying for Gifted Education Services

- Each school division determines the criteria utilized for identifying students for gifted education services.
- Identified gifted students shall be offered placement in an instructional setting that provides:
  - Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction provided by professional instructional personnel trained to work with gifted students
  - Monitored and assessed student outcomes that are reported to the parents and legal guardians

# Appealing the Gifted Identification and Placement Committee Decision

- Parents have the right to appeal any decision of the identification and placement committee.
- Parents/guardians have 10 instructional days of receipt of notification of the action by the division to appeal in writing. In Hampton, the appeals process is started by calling the director of gifted services.
- A parent or legal guardian of an identified student may appeal any action taken by the school division to change the student's identification for, placement in, or exit from the school division's gifted education program.

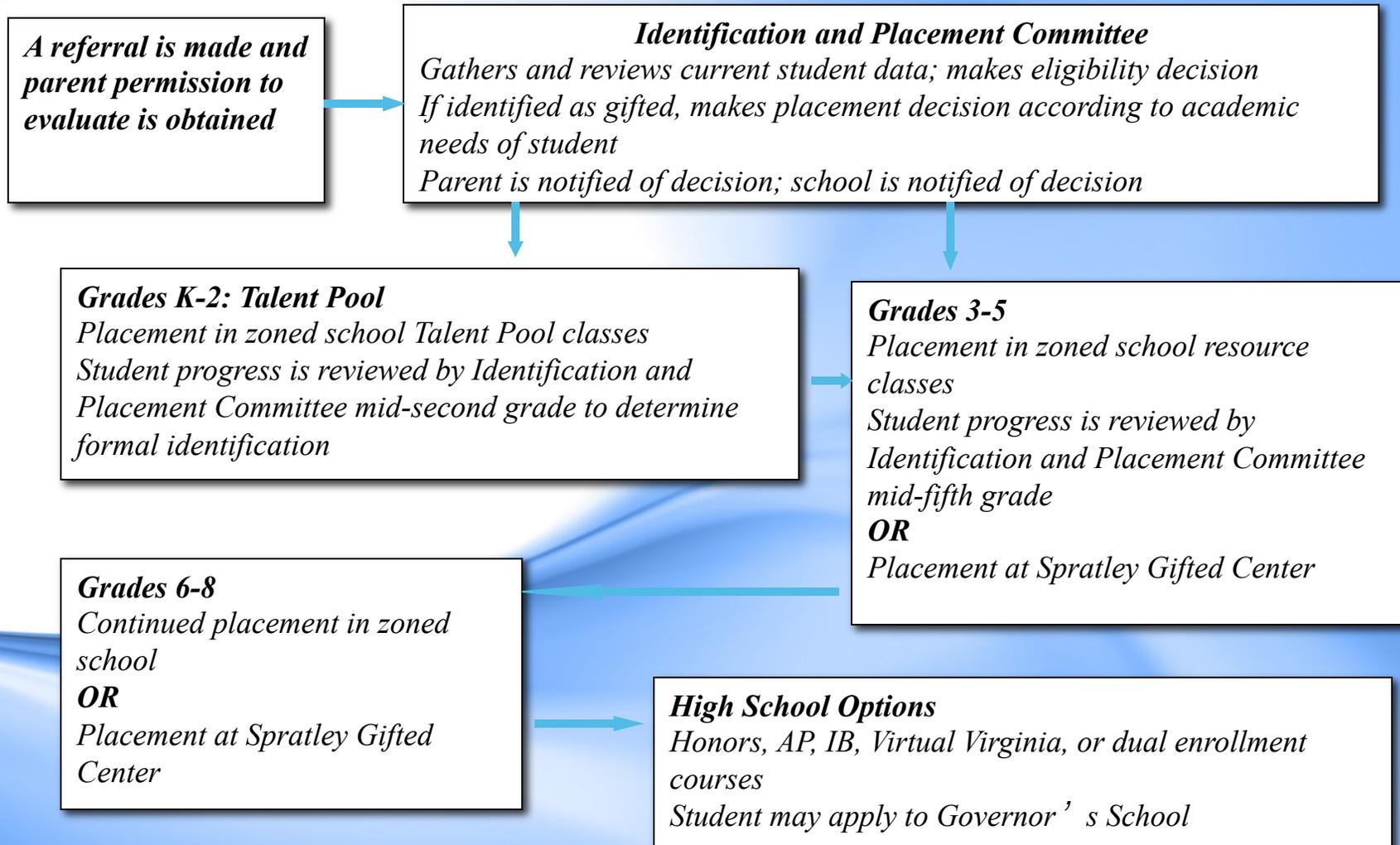
# Hampton City Schools Programs Supporting Gifted Students

- Talent Pool, grades K-2
- Gifted Resource Classes, grades 3-8
- Spratley Gifted Center, grades 3-8
- Excel Art, grades 3-8
- High School
  - International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement, Honors classes, Virtual Virginia classes, Governor's School for Science and Technology

## The Eligibility Process Summary

- Referrals may be made at any time, by any person who knows the capabilities of a student
- Multiple criteria are used for identification and placement
- The timeline can take up to 90 instructional days
- Eligibility decisions are made by the Identification and Placement Committee
- Appeals may be made by calling the director

# Flow Chart for Gifted Education Eligibility Process



## Talent Pool for Grades K-2

- Multiple criteria:
  - Ability test score (NOT achievement tests)
  - Teacher rating for evidence of gifted behaviors in the classroom
  - Parent rating for evidence of gifted behaviors at home
  - Interview and work sample
- Students must meet 3 of 4 criteria
- Talent Pool placement is not a formal identification as gifted; it is an evaluative process to help students develop their potential

# Grades 3-12 Formal Identification

- Multiple criteria:
  - Two norm-referenced ability tests
  - Classroom teacher rating of gifted behaviors
    - SIGS or 3-12 teacher rating scale
  - Parent rating of gifted behaviors
  - Grades in core content classes
  - Advocacy to ensure a level playing field for students who may be at a disadvantage (limited English proficiency, dual exceptionalities)

## Placement Transition Points

- Grade 2 Review - middle of grade 2 for all Talent Pool students
- Grade 5 Review - middle of grade 5 for all gifted resource (zoned school) students
- Students develop their abstract thinking and critical reasoning skills with trained gifted resource teachers, and then are evaluated to determine the appropriate educational placement for the next 3 years

## Grade 2 Review: Talent Pool students

- Multiple Criteria:
  - Two ability tests, including the CogAT
  - Gifted resource teacher rating
  - Parent rating
  - Grades in core content classes
  - Advocacy to ensure a level playing field for students who may be at a disadvantage (limited English proficiency, dual exceptionalities)
- Eligibility
  - Students may be found not eligible, or eligible for gifted resource services, or eligible for full-time services, depending on their overall matrix scores

# Grades 3-12 Formal Identification

## □ Eligibility and Placement

- Students may be found eligible for gifted services, not eligible, or the decision may be deferred to gather additional information
- Once the student is identified as gifted (eligible for gifted services), then a placement decision is made
- The placement decision may be for gifted resource classes at the zoned school, or for full-time services at Spratley Gifted Center
- The identification and placement decisions are based on the total number of points on a matrix

## Grades 3-12, cont.

- More information needed...



When a student has scores that are very close to meeting the points criteria, or if there are large discrepancies between test scores, grades, and/or teacher ratings, the committee may request and consider additional information. That information may include additional tests, ratings from another teacher, an alternate rating, or the decision may be deferred pending grades from the next grading period. We try to give the student the benefit of the doubt.

- “Just two more points” ...

- Remember that “two points” may mean very different things depending on whether they are matrix points, rating scale points, percentile points, or percentage points.

## Grade 5 Review: Identified Students in Zoned Schools

- Multiple criteria to determine middle school placement:
  - Ratings from two content area teachers (language arts and math/science)
  - Rating from gifted resource teacher
  - Highest ability test score (over 95th percentile)
  - Grades (no lower than a B in core content class)
  - Students must meet 3 of 4 criteria
- Placement, not identification
  - We want to make sure a gifted student will be as successful as possible in a full-time placement. Since the student is already identified as gifted, we do not use the original matrix again-- we are looking at four measures of performance to determine the most appropriate placement.

## Points to Remember

We use both subjective and objective data to get a comprehensive picture of the student:

- Objective nationally-normed ability tests (not criterion-referenced tests such as SOLs) to measure ability
- Subjective and objective ratings (3-12 rating scale or nationally normed SIGS) from the teacher for in-school gifted behaviors and performance
- Subjective ratings from the parent for non-school gifted behaviors
- Performance in core content classes from the student (grades)

# Ability tests

- Ability tests measure critical thinking skills, abstract reasoning skills, and problem-solving skills (including the ability to recognize patterns in abstract pictures, and often including verbal and pictorial analogies)
- We look at subtest scores in verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative areas
- We do not use achievement tests that measure reading and math skills
- We use norm-referenced tests, not criterion-referenced tests

## Two Paths to Spratley

- Formal identification in grades 3-7, with initial placement at Spratley, based on matrix criteria points
- Formal identification in grades 3-5, initial zoned school placement but placed at Spratley starting in grade 6 as a result of meeting the fifth grade review criteria

## More Points to Consider

- Current research on gifted students gives us a very different perspective now than when IQ scores were used many years ago
- Students may have very specific areas of giftedness rather than global giftedness
- Students may have factors that make identification more complex (dual exceptionalities, limited English proficiency, cultural differences, social/emotional considerations such as underachievement)
- Not all gifted students look gifted - that is why we have extensive criteria to consider

## Still more points to consider

- The “sibling rule” and “legacies” do not apply at Spratley Gifted Center
- Students may be re-evaluated no more than once a year, if the eligibility picture has changed
- Grades are only a part of the big picture
  - Students may get straight As and not be identified as gifted
  - Students may get poor grades and still be considered gifted
  - For Grade 5 Review and placement, we look at grades to understand more about the student’s motivation and probability of success in a highly rigorous class

## Final Points

- Students must always meet the criteria prior to placement in gifted services
- Once gifted, always gifted - we do not “ungift” students
- We give students second chances to meet the criteria, because students can change over time
- And because students change over time, *if a full-time placement is not accepted, the student must go through a placement review prior to full-time placement at a later time*

# Spratley Placements

- Why don't we send students back to zoned schools from Spratley?
  - Highly gifted students have just as many "issues" as any other students, if not more
  - Negative behavior may be a manifestation of dealing with various aspects of giftedness and should not be a cause for removing students from an appropriate placement
  - SGC is a huge adjustment for many students and the adjustment period may be prolonged
  - All classes are seeing more behavioral issues because of societal changes, not just at SGC
  - Students may not be globally gifted and may need intensive support in some areas

## Spratley Placements, cont.

- Why don't we send students back to zoned schools from Spratley?
  - SGC is not a reward or privilege - it is a placement based on demonstrated academic ability and the need for appropriately advanced instruction
  - Grades are only a part of the picture – gifted students are known to underachieve for a variety of well-researched reasons
  - Teachers sometimes contribute to students' lack of motivation. Just providing more work (or just more difficult work) is not sufficient to meet gifted students' needs and interests – they need to feel intrigued, not punished
  - Gifted students can be very intense, and may have intense conflicts with teachers, but they do need advanced expertise!

## New Regulations

- "Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction" means curriculum and instruction adapted or modified to accommodate the accelerated learning aptitudes of identified students in their areas of strength. Such curriculum and instructional strategies provide accelerated and enrichment opportunities that recognize gifted students' needs for **(i) advanced content and pacing of instruction; (ii) original research or production; (iii) problem finding and solving; (iv) higher level thinking that leads to the generation of products; and (v) a focus on issues, themes, and ideas within and across areas of study.** Such curriculum and instruction are offered continuously and sequentially to support the achievement of student outcomes, and provide support necessary for these students to work at increasing levels of complexity that differ significantly from those of their age-level peers.

## More from the regulations

- School divisions must provide evidence that gifted education service options ... [provide] instructional time during the school day and week to (i) work with their age-level peers, (ii) work with their intellectual and academic peers, (iii) work independently; and (iv) foster intellectual and academic growth of gifted students.

*Important regulations for classroom teachers who work with gifted students to remember!*

## What can teachers and parents do?

*If a parent asks a teacher what to do to help their student do well on the “gifted tests”...*

- Encourage students to keep their grades up
- Remind students that teachers are evaluating them-- things like repeatedly missing homework or having a negative attitude can sometimes make a big difference
- Ask students questions that make them think: Why? Why not? What would happen if...? What would you do if...?
- Encourage students to read-- fiction, non-fiction, magazines, newspapers (online or print)
- Don't be stressed-- your students are wonderful whether or not they are identified as gifted!

## Excel Art for Grades 3-8

- Multiple criteria:
  - Portfolio of five drawings (adjudicated by two professional artists and/or trained art teachers)
  - Art teacher rating scale
  - Parent rating scale for art
  - Student statement with evidence of high interest or passion in art
- Adjudications are held three times each year
- Student must have 4 of 5 criteria in the above average or superior range

## High School

- Admissions to the International Baccalaureate (IB) program are done by the IB coordinator. Students do not have to be identified as gifted.
- Admissions to the Governor's School for Science and Technology are done by the Governor's School. It is a HIGHLY competitive admissions process. Students should pay attention to prerequisites and take the most rigorous math courses!
- More information can be found in the College (Planning) Handbook on the gifted web site.

# Summary

- Each school division in Virginia establishes procedures for the identification of gifted students and for the delivery of services to those students.
- Students may be referred by any individual for gifted testing and identification consideration.
- Each school division determines the criteria utilized for identifying students for gifted education services.
- Multiple criteria must be utilized when gifted identification placement committees review the data for a referred student.

## Summary, cont.

- Gifted programming models may differ among the school divisions.
- Identified gifted students shall be offered placement in an instructional setting that provides:
  - Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction provided by professional instructional personnel trained to work with gifted students
  - Monitored and assessed student outcomes that are reported to the parents and legal guardians

- If you have questions or need a better understanding of the process, call the director at 727-2160 or email [gifted@hampton.k12.va.us](mailto:gifted@hampton.k12.va.us)
- If this presentation has been helpful to you, or if you have comments on how to make it better, please email us!