

# **Early Identification of the Gifted and Talented K-2 Parent Handbook 2011-2012**



***“If we were TV sets, some of us would only get five channels. Others are wired for cable (the general population), and some of us (the gifted) are hooked up to a satellite dish. That makes these gifted children capable of making connections that others don’t even know exist! Teaching those types of voracious minds in a regular classroom without enhancement is like feeding an elephant one blade of grass at a time. You’ll starve them.”***  
***- Elizabeth Meckstroth***

This handbook is intended to provide parents with an overview of Clifton Public School District TAG Program for talented and gifted students. This document is designed to answer many of your questions and help you understand the procedures our district employs to meet the needs of our talented and gifted students. This document is also available online at [http://clifton.k12.nj.us/pdf/tag/tagK2\\_10\\_11\\_handbook.pdf](http://clifton.k12.nj.us/pdf/tag/tagK2_10_11_handbook.pdf)

All children have unique strengths and talents. However some children have particularly advanced or well developed skills and abilities in one or more areas. Such children may be referred to as gifted and talented. 'Gifted' refers to children with high potential while 'talented' means that they display skills which are advanced when compared to other children of their age.

Gifted and talented students have abilities and/or talents that lie well outside the norms of the typical learner and, therefore, require significant modifications to the pacing, depth and complexity of curriculum and instruction.

The *Clifton Public School District* is committed to special programming for these students to help them develop their extraordinary abilities. The district recognizes the unique interests, needs, and talents of gifted and talented students. Our mission is to provide optimal development of the gifted students' intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and to honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated and challenging curriculum.

Students in grades K-2 who are identified as intellectually gifted are enriched within the classroom through curriculum differentiation. The aim is to remove the ceiling on what is learned and promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills. Such extended learning opportunities are designed to support individual learning needs and are identified and provided through collaboration between the classroom teacher and the Gifted Resource teacher.



*All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should  
have an equal opportunity to develop our talent. -*

*John F. Kennedy*

Gifts and talents come to individuals across genders, all races and ethnic groups, all religious groups, and all socioeconomic levels. Gifted and talented students, characterized by precocious intellectual ability and/or marked potential for high levels of performance in their strength areas, need support and encouragement from family, school and the community to achieve full development. They also need access to curriculum and instructional services that allow them to make continuous educational growth at advanced and distinguished levels of performance.

Gifted and talented children are defined as: *Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.*

These students are capable of high performance, achievement, and/or potential ability in one or more of the following areas:

- Specific Academic Area
- Intellectual
- Leadership
- Creativity
- Visual/Performing Arts

### **K-2 SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, AND PROGRAMMING IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Children enter school with wide variations in skills, abilities, interests, and experiential backgrounds that help foster readiness to learn. Children are not bound by age from possessing or displaying a variety of talents. At early ages, it is often very difficult to denote how much precocious behavior can be attributed to an enriched home environment versus actual intellectual ability.

Identification of academically gifted students is far more reliable beyond the early grades. The first three primary years are critical for gifted children—as they are for all children—because at this time children are developing educational patterns and attitudes that last a lifetime and may affect later school performance. Recognizing and rewarding giftedness in young children helps develop their confidence, self-esteem, and enthusiasm for learning. A young child who is provided with appropriately challenging, stimulating schoolwork can show substantial gains in achievement, motivation, and self-concept

Although Clifton does not formally affix the label of “gifted” to children in grades K-2, the district does informally evaluate these young students as potentially gifted and believes it is our responsibility to provide a learning environment that will address each child’s instructional needs.

**Any K-2 student who functions at a consistently exceptional level in general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creativity, leadership or visual and performing arts may be considered for early identification.**

Throughout the school year, classroom teachers will collect evidence of the student's advanced abilities through conversations with the parent(s), observations, anecdotal records, portfolios, and behavioral checklist(s). The process of identification is continuous. Classroom teachers regularly review student progress and performance and student data is gathered each year in a portfolio as reference for the following school year. To this end, classroom teachers work to develop and implement appropriate programming for more able learners.

**Identified K-2 students are served within the regular classroom with age-appropriate curriculum differentiation strategies.**

**The curriculum for identified K-2 students will be differentiated from the regular curriculum in the areas of content, process, and product. Differentiated instructional strategies may include:**

- **Student centered classroom**
- **Cooperative environment**
- **Questioning techniques**
- **Critical, creative, evaluative, and interpersonal skills**
- **Learning Centers**
- **Flexible Grouping**

### **Roles and Responsibilities in Differentiated Programming**

Differentiation recognizes that every student is unique. It also acknowledges that special learning experiences to nurture high potential must extend beyond the classroom into the home and community. As such, teachers, students, and parents/guardians are partners in the implementation a total development program.

#### **K-2 Gifted Resource Teacher**

The Gifted and Talented Resource Teacher advocates for the needs of academically talented learners through:

- Collaboration with classroom teachers regarding identification, curriculum differentiation, instructional strategies and techniques
- Visits to all district elementary schools on a rotating basis to ensure TAG procedures and modifications are implemented in every K-2 classroom
- Communication with the parents and staff regarding programming and opportunities for advanced learning experiences.

#### **Classroom Teachers**

Teachers are the key players in providing challenging and interesting differentiated learning opportunities for their advanced learners. As part of lesson planning for effective differentiation, they should consider in particular the following items:

- assessment of student needs
- student grouping

- availability of suitable materials
- appropriate use of technology
- effective instructional models
- effective instructional strategies
- effective questioning techniques
- assessment of student understanding throughout the lesson

### Students

Students, too, are partners in shaping all parts of their classroom experience. This can be achieved by:

- developing awareness of their strengths, interests, and learning styles
- assuming ownership in the learning process
- setting high standards for themselves and others
- making choices that enhance their learning and promote growth
- working together with teachers and other students in setting goals, monitoring progress, and analyzing successes and setbacks
- demonstrating scholarly behaviors

### Parents/Guardians

Parents or guardians also play essential roles in the enrichment of their children's education. They can encourage appropriate differentiation by:

- communicating information to school staff on a student's areas of strength, talent, and interest
- developing an understanding of the nature of differentiation and its place in gifted and talented education
- understanding that teachers can not and should not differentiate all assignments and materials every day
- encouraging students to let teachers know when assignments are a good fit and when they are not
- volunteering in the classroom and helping to secure enrichment materials
- providing meaningful advanced learning experiences outside the classroom

## Characteristics of Gifted Children

Gifted children have unique behaviors, learning modalities, and creative characteristics that differentiate them from their age-mates. Generally, gifted children:

- Learn at a much faster pace
- Process material to a much greater depth
- Show incredible intensity in energy, imagination, intellectual prowess, sensitivity, and emotion which are not typical in the general population

To identify these children, one must look beyond what is usually considered “normal” and into the individual child. In some ways, gifted children are out of sync with what is developmentally expected behavior for their age. Because a gifted child's intellectual abilities may be at a dramatically different level than his or her social or emotional level, gifted children may show “problem” behaviors that, paradoxically, can indicate giftedness.

### **Characteristics of Gifted Children and Talented Children and Possible Associated Problems**

<p align="center"><b>Characteristics of Gifted Children and Talented Children</b></p> <p align="center">Gifted and talented children may:</p>	<p align="center"><b>Possible Associated Problems</b></p> <p align="center">Gifted and talented children may:</p>
Learn quickly and easily have the ability to abstract and reason critically; see relationships between ideas and events	Become bored and frustrated; dislike repetition and shallow curriculum; hide abilities to gain acceptance; receive negative adult attitudes to smartness
Exhibit verbal proficiency	Dominate discussion; have difficulty with listening skills; exhibit manipulative behavior
Have a high energy level	Need less sleep; become frustrated with inactivity, lack of challenge or active inquiry
Exhibit heightened curiosity	Take on too many activities
Be extremely persistent; concentrate on tasks of high interest for extended periods	Disrupt class routine; feel stifled by restrictions; resist interruption or schedules; be perceived as stubborn, uncooperative

Exhibit different learning styles - accelerated: desiring mastery, achievement and/or - enriched: desiring depth of knowledge, the need to experience, emotional investment in subject, imagination	Become frustrated with absence of progress; be prone to being 'overdriven' and/or not be motivated by results; be resistant to interruption; be seen as time wasting or preoccupied
Exhibit unusual emotional depth and intensity	Be unusually vulnerable; feel confused if thoughts and feelings not taken seriously
Be highly sensitive; be acutely perceptive	Be perceived as immature; try to mask feelings to conform; be vulnerable to criticism
Be concerned with adult/moral issues; be idealistic	Attempt unrealistic reforms; feel frustrated, angry. Depressed; develop a cynical attitude; receive intolerance from age peers
Aim at perfection	Set unrealistically high goals; feel inadequate; feel frustrated with others; fear failure, inhibiting attempts in new areas
Exhibit independence, nonconformity	Have a tendency to challenge and question indiscreetly; have difficulty with rigid conformity; may be penalized; exhibit rebellious behavior
Have heightened self awareness, feelings of being different	Experience social isolation; regard difference as bad, worthless, resulting in low self esteem
Have a keen sense of humour	Use humor inappropriately or to attack others; feel confused when humor not understood; feel rejected by others
Possess unusual imagination	Be seen as weird; feel stifled by lack of creative opportunities
Respond and relate to older children and adults	Experience social isolation; be seen as show off, odd, superior, critical; be rejected by older children

*(Adapted from publications by Clark, Colangelo, Dalton and Whitmore, by Marion Mackenzie for QAGTC inc.)*

# What Parents Can Do for their Gifted Child

- **Love, laugh, learn, and listen.** Encourage the support of extended family and friends. Raising and nurturing a gifted child can be exciting, yet daunting and challenging!
- **Learn to be positive.** Giftedness can be an exciting challenge or a chore, depending on how you see a child's characteristics. For example, persistence and stubbornness are the same trait.
- **Understand the way that your child's giftedness affects his or her needs: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical.** For example, ideas forged by eight-year-old minds may be difficult to produce with five-year-old hands.
- **Read aloud to your child.** It is important that parents read to their gifted child often, even if the child is already capable of reading.
- **Help your child discover personal interests.** Stimulation and support of interests are vital to the development of talents. Parents should expose their children to their own interests and encourage each child to learn about a wide variety of subjects, such as art, nature, music, and sports, in addition to traditional academic subjects.
- **Speak and listen to your child with consideration and respect.** From the time he or she can talk, a gifted child is constantly asking questions and will often challenge authority. "Do it because I said so" often doesn't work well. Generally, a gifted child will cooperate more with parents who take the time to explain requests.
- **Teach your child how to find information and resources in a variety of ways.** Gifted children need to know, to learn, to solve, and to ponder. There will be times when your child's expertise on a topic will be greater than yours, and you will not be able to provide answers or solutions. Prepare them for the future!
- **Become involved in a local, state, or regional parent group, or join an e-mail listserv.** Parents of gifted children need opportunities to share, and many of them are great teachers!
- **Be a knowledgeable advocate.** The brighter the child, the greater his or her emotional complexity and potential vulnerability. Approach schools in a positive, cooperative manner.
- **Be a vocal advocate!** Federal, state and local government agencies need to hear your voice... OFTEN... about the need for continued support for and expansion of gifted education opportunities in our schools.
- **The key to raising gifted children is to respect their uniqueness, their opinions and ideas, and their dreams.** It can be painful for parents when their children feel out of sync with others, but it is unwise to put too much emphasis on the importance of fitting in. Children get enough of that message in the outside world. At home they need acceptance and appreciation for being themselves.

*Adapted from S. Berger's Keys to Raising a Gifted Child. Learning Network,  
<http://familyeducation.com>*

### **Check List: Are You a Gifted Parent?**

1. Do you answer your child's questions with patience and good humor?
2. Do you take advantage of his questions and expressions of interest to guide him into further learning and exploration?
3. Do you help your child develop physical and social skills as carefully as you encourage mental growth?
4. Do you help him learn how to get along with children of all levels of intelligence?
5. Do you avoid criticizing him by comparing him with his brothers and sisters or companions?
6. Do you set reasonable standards of behavior for your child and then see that he meets them?
7. Do you impose firm and fair discipline that is consistent and neither too harsh nor too permissive?
8. Do you show your child that he is loved for his own sake and not for his intellectual achievements?
9. Do you try to find something specific to praise when he shows you his work? (A generalized compliment means little to gifted children.)
10. Do you help him to select worth-while reading materials and television programs?
11. Do you provide your child with hobby materials and books of his own?
12. Do you provide places where your child can study, work at his hobbies, and display his work?
13. Do you participate in some of your child's activities?
14. Do you let him learn about and share in some of your hobbies and interests/
15. Do you let him learn about and share in some of your hobbies and interests?
16. Do you enable your child to take advantage of lessons and activities offered by private groups or community organizations?
17. Do you teach your child how to budget his time, organize his work, and improve his study habits?
18. Do you help your child to make his own plans and decisions?
19. Do you give your child increasing independence as his ability to handle responsibility increases?
20. Do you give him household responsibilities and other tasks suitable for his age?
21. Do you avoid overstressing intellectual achievement?

22. Do you avoid “pushing” your child too hard by not being too demanding about after school lessons or activities?
23. Do you resist the impulse to show your child off before relatives and friends?
24. Do you resist any temptation to exploit his gifts commercially?
25. Do you teach him to use his gifts for the benefit of society rather than only for his own selfish purpose?
26. Do you encourage him to set high educational and vocational goals?
27. Do you refrain from trying to pick his vocation for him but try to help him learn about as many occupations as possible?
28. Do your expressions of attitude and your behavior set the example you want your child to follow?
29. Do you avoid talking down to him and speak to him as you do to adults?
30. Do you try to speak as correctly as you want him to do?

This check list is not all inclusive and there is no passing score. It is intended as a set of reminders as to what are the most important principles for promoting a child's giftedness. The parent who can answer “yes” to a large proportion of these questions can feel he is effectively promoting his child's gifts.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Gifted and Talented Services in New Jersey**

### **How does New Jersey Administrative Code define a gifted and talented student?**

The regulations (*N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1*) define gifted and talented students as: *Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.*

### **What services are required?**

All public school districts must have a board-approved gifted and talented identification process and provide services for identified students enrolled in the grades of that school district. The regulations require that identification and services be made available to students in grades K-12.

### **When should districts identify students for giftedness?**

*N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1(a)5 ii* requires district boards of education **to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students**. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten or upon entrance to the school or district. There is a misconception that schools are not required to identify students prior to grade three or that students who are new to a district must complete a state-mandated waiting period before they can be evaluated. That information is inaccurate. Additionally, local school districts are not obligated to identify students prior to their enrollment in the public school (e.g., three-year olds, students enrolled in community early childhood programs or private kindergartens). Local school districts are not obligated to identify students attending nonpublic schools.

### **What types of instructional accommodations must be made for students identified as gifted and talented?**

The regulations require that district boards of education provide appropriate K-12 services for gifted and talented students. This includes appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment. District boards of education must also take into consideration the *PreK-Grade 12 National Gifted Program Standards* of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students. A copy of those standards was sent to every chief school administrator and is available at [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org). In addition, each curriculum framework developed by the NJDOE provides general, as well as content-specific information on gifted education (e.g., terminology, examples of appropriate practices). The frameworks can be accessed at: <http://www.nj.gov/njded/frameworks/> or at [www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs](http://www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs).

## Gifted Resources: Information for Families

- **New Jersey**

**Resources and Contacts at the New Jersey Parents Interactive Network for Gifted Education**

<http://www.njping.org>

**New Jersey DOE Resources**

[http://www.state.nj.us/education/njpep/classroom/classroom\\_resources/gt\\_educators.html](http://www.state.nj.us/education/njpep/classroom/classroom_resources/gt_educators.html)

**New Jersey Association for Gifted Children**

<http://www.njagc.org>

**New Jersey Gifted Child Society**

[www.gifted.org](http://www.gifted.org)

**Academically Gifted/Talented Youth Programs at Montclair State University including Parents of Gifted Offspring (POGO)**

[giftedmsu@mail.montclair.edu](mailto:giftedmsu@mail.montclair.edu)

- **Other Gifted ...**

[www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

National Association for Gifted Children

[giftedkids.about.com](http://giftedkids.about.com)

The About.com Guide to parenting of K-6 children. Good, solid information and links, including fostering academic creativity in gifted students.

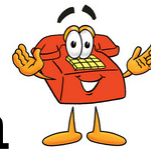
[GT WORLD.org](http://GTWORLD.org)

An on-line support community for parents of gifted and talented children

[www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org) The all-things-gifted site for parents and educators of gifted children, including articles and research, books, organizations, on-line support groups



# Academic TAG Program Contact Information



**Mrs. Dawn J. Ward**

3-5 Academic TAG Program Teacher  
K-2 Gifted Resource Teacher

School #5 ▪ Room 304 ▪ Grades 3, 4, 5

Main Office: 973-470-2386

\*Classroom telephone: 973-773-3413

*\*Limited availability*

Email: [dward@cliftonschoools.net](mailto:dward@cliftonschoools.net)



© www.ClipProject.info

**Dr. Francine R. Parker**

School #5 Principal ▪ TAG Program Coordinator

Main Office: 973-470-2386

Email: [fparker@cliftonschoools.net](mailto:fparker@cliftonschoools.net)