

Glossary for Gifted Education Advocates

Ability grouping: Students are grouped by ability for instruction. This can occur in many different ways. For instance, sometimes gifted students are all placed in the same high-level classes; other times they are all placed together in the same classroom with average-ability students. Ability grouping gives advanced students the benefit of learning with academic and intellectual peers.

Ability tests: Often also referred to as intelligence tests, ability tests measure a student's general ability to succeed in a school setting. These tests sample a wide range of experiences and measure the student's ability to apply information in new and different ways.

Acceleration: An instructional option that allows gifted students to be exposed to more advanced material than what is normally taught in the regular classroom. Although there are a multitude of ways in which students can be accelerated (gifted programming expert Karen Rogers has identified at least 19 of them¹), there are two basic types of acceleration:

- *Whole-grade acceleration:* skipping a grade, or entering kindergarten early
- *Single-subject acceleration:* acceleration in a subject area of strength, either by moving to a higher-level classroom just for that subject or by receiving advanced instruction within the regular class

Achievement tests: These tests assess children in specific subject areas, such as reading or mathematics, to show mastery of facts and other information learned at school or at home. Results are influenced heavily by how much opportunity a child has had to learn these subjects.

Advanced Placement (AP): AP classes are college-level classes taken in high school and taught by high school teachers for high school credit. The courses are challenging and help prepare students for college-level work. At the end of an AP course, students take a national test that could earn them college credits, depending on their score and on the policies of individual universities. Some large high schools offer 10 or more AP classes, making it possible for students who take several of these courses to enter college with a sophomore standing.

Appeal: When a decision is made that a child is not eligible for special services, parents may have the right to request that the decision be reconsidered. Many school districts have special requirements for this process, which typically including a timeframe in which the appeal must be filed. Check with the district *before* the eligibility committee meets to ask about the appeals process; that way, you'll know how many days after the decision is made you will have to file an appeal, as well as any other requirements you must meet to ensure that your appeal is considered.

Charter schools: Charter schools are elementary or secondary schools that receive public funding but have been released from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools.

Cluster grouping: The process of organizing students within a grade level by ability for instruction in small groups. A cluster group may be composed of three to seven or more gifted students at the elementary or middle school level who are placed within a regular classroom with their average-ability peers. Clustering allows students to learn in settings with their intellectual peers while also receiving services provided to all students.

Competitions: Contests that take place outside of school in which students compete with each other using the knowledge and skills they have learned.

Correspondence courses: High school students earn credit by working at home, systematically completing and sending assignments to instructors by mail or email. The instructors grade the assignments and correspond with the student. The final exam is proctored by a certified high school counselor, and once the student passes the exam, credit is transferred to the student's high school transcript.

Curriculum compacting: Content that the student already knows is eliminated from the curriculum, and the extra time available is spent on enrichment.

Differentiation: A gifted child is in the same classes as his age peers, but the classroom work is modified for him to accommodate his special learning needs. Differentiation may also be called *individualization*.

Distance learning: Similar to correspondence courses, students earn credit in high school or college by working from home through an online program. Many homeschooled children take advantage of distance learning for some of their classes, even earning a high school diploma while working out of a remote location.

Dual enrollment: Students who take both high school and college courses at the same time participate in what is known as dual enrollment. This gives gifted students an opportunity to study subjects not available at their high schools. Dual enrollment requires a joint partnership between high schools and two-year or four-year colleges and universities, since these students are not able to meet normal college entrance requirements. Students then earn both high school and college credit.

Eligibility committee: The group of school officials (usually a teacher, gifted education specialist, school psychologist or counselor, and a school administrator) who meet to review all available information to determine a student's eligibility for gifted education services.

Enrichment: Curriculum is modified or extended for gifted students, usually by adding material that allows them to explore related issues or work with more advanced material.

Gifted program curriculum: Academic material characterized by higher-level content and/or a faster pace, with opportunities for students to select topics and projects of interest for in-depth study. Gifted education teachers have specialized training through coursework or professional development opportunities to teach the gifted education curriculum. Program models for gifted students vary widely in the amount of time and the depth of learning that gifted children spend with the more advanced curriculum.

Homeschooling: The education of children at home, typically by parents but sometimes by tutors, rather than in the formal settings of public or private schools. Once a strategy used primarily by religious communities to preserve their value systems, homeschooling is increasingly used by families of gifted children when efforts to accommodate student learning needs within the regular school seem to be falling short.

Identification: The process of discovering a person's gifted intellectual potential by reviewing results of tests, work samples, and other criteria.

Independent study: Students work one-on-one with a teacher to study a special topic of interest in depth and to accommodate the child's specific needs and learning styles.

Intelligence (IQ) tests: Tests that sample a wide range of abilities and emphasize skills such as memory and general problem-solving ability. Intelligence tests are less influenced by educational opportunities than are achievement tests.

International Baccalaureate (IB) program: The IB program is an internationally sanctioned program for middle and high school students. This program offers a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on higher-level learning skills, creative thinking, interdisciplinary studies, and community service. Students take exams in their junior and senior years, as well as write a lengthy essay and complete other requirements to be eligible for an International Baccalaureate diploma, which allows them to apply to any university in the world.

Learning contract: A student and teacher negotiate and agree to an individual learning/lesson plan in which the student is responsible for some of her own learning, checking in with the teacher at agreed-upon intervals. The contract is written and then signed by both the student and the teacher (and perhaps the parent).

Magnet schools: Public schools with specialized courses or curricula which draw students from other school zones.

Mandate: A law or directive by a local, state, or national authority to perform a certain action. The directive is usually written into regulation or code as determined by the authority of the governing body. Some states have a mandate or requirement that school districts provide services to students who are gifted and talented; however, gifted services in schools are not federally mandated.

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Davis, J.L. (2010). *Bright, Talented & Black: A guide for families of African American gifted learners*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press

Mentorship programs: Students spend time observing and working with individuals in the community for a negotiated period of time to provide them with opportunities to learn advanced skills and/or to expose them to information and techniques that are not readily available at school.

Multiple criteria: The use of several sources of data to make a decision regarding a child's eligibility for gifted services. For example, an eligibility committee might look at a child's grades, a portfolio of his best schoolwork, teacher comments, achievement test scores, and ability or intelligence test scores. Using multiple criteria provides a better opportunity for the student's exceptional potential to be considered and evaluated.

Nationally standardized tests: Tests that are intended to be used with students across the country that have been administered to a fairly large sample of individuals (a norming group) who represent different ethnic, gender, and regional groups. The responses of the norming group provide the basis for determining the average score, as well as scores that are below or above the average.

Nomination: The act of recommending a student for consideration for the gifted program. Parents, teachers, and other professionals may nominate students.

Portfolio: A collection of work samples completed by a student over time in different settings (home, school, or other, such as in community activities). Educators evaluate the portfolio to determine the level of the student's performance in school and in non-school-related activities.

Private and parochial schools: Private schools are under the financial and managerial control of a private body or non-profit organization. Generally, the students must pay fees to attend. If the school engages in religious education in addition to a conventional education, it is referred to as a parochial school.

Pull-out/send-out classes: Students leave their regular classes for one day (or part of the day) each week to participate in enrichment or extension activities.

Referral: Similar to nomination, some school districts ask that professionals such as teachers, counselors, and administrators refer students for services when special traits are recognized.

School-within-a-school: All of the gifted students from a district attend the same school, along with regular students, and work in advanced classes for part of the day, spending the rest of the day mixed with the other students.

Self-contained schools for the gifted: All students in the school are gifted in one or more areas of study.

Talent search programs: Programs operating through several different universities across the country that identify gifted students through their strong performance on above-level standardized tests (i.e., tests originally designed for older students). These students are given the opportunity to participate in highly advanced classes in a variety of subjects—such as computer science, anthropology, or mathematics—in residential programs on certain college campuses.

Telescoping: Any technique that shortens the amount of time a student is provided to acquire content and skills. This can include acceleration or compacting, and it can be in a specific subject or across a grade level.

ⁱ Rogers, 2002

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