COLORADO
Department of Education

Gifted Identification
Guidance Handbook

Office of Gifted Education

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Guidance for Developing Equitable Gifted Identification Processes

The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) requires all administrative units (AUs) in Colorado to identify and serve students between the ages of four and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs.

ECEA Rules specify the areas for gifted identification in Colorado. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness. See *Appendix A* for specific strength areas identified in ECEA rule.

Gifted identification is a comprehensive process set by the local administrative unit to meet requirements set forth within ECEA rule. This process encompasses procedures, materials, and identifies personnel for successful identification practices across schools and student groups. Implementation of this process with fidelity is critical for the integrity of identification within Colorado. Administrative burden that includes staffing limitations is not an acceptable or defensible reason to delay or deny GT identification. The purpose of these guidelines is to build common understanding and set a foundation for equitable identification opportunities that recognize the strengths, needs, and abilities of all the gifted students in Colorado.

This handbook is designed to provide local administrative units with guidance and considerations about: How referrals can be sought; possible screening methods and tools; what qualitative and quantitative tools can be used for building a body of evidence to recognize a student's strengths; the composition of the review team; and possible determination decisions. This guidance also addresses the use of subgroup and/or local norms and talent pool/development decisions. Gifted identification teams have a professional responsibility to look at individual student needs and to make an identification determination based on those needs in alignment with ECEA rules.

The gifted identification process will build a body of evidence to not only make a determination of need for gifted services but also provide a profile of the student's strengths and interests. This profile is the backdrop for developing a culturally responsive individual advanced learning plan (ALP). Through the ALP, culturally relevant academic and affective goals set the stage for developing academic and talent aptitude over time. The ultimate outcome of identification is that all gifted students receive appropriate academic and affective programming to meet their individual needs while in school. For more information on ALP development, please visit Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) | CDE.

Creating Access and Opportunity for All

Referrals

Referrals can be made by educators, school staff, family members, community members, peers, and/or the student. Local AUs establish a process for how gifted education referrals can be made and develop a protocol for informing educational partners of this process.

A referral made for possible gifted identification does **not** necessarily lead to the automatic administration of specific assessments. The identification team will carefully consider the referral, examine current student assessment data, and determine appropriate next steps. This may or may not include administering additional assessments.

Universal Assessment

Universal assessment is one of the many pathways from which a student might be considered for gifted services. "Universal Screening" means the systematic assessment of **ALL** students within a grade level for identifying students with exceptional ability or potential. This approach is especially useful in identifying students from traditionally underrepresented populations. It can also be conducted in conjunction with the creation of each student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP) at the middle school level.

AUs are strongly encouraged to include universal screenings in their identification procedures. Multiple ways exist to universally screen all students on a regular and ongoing basis. Some methods require dedicated testing while others rely on data already available. Additional information on the use of universal screening can be found in *Appendix B*.

Partnership with Families

Families should be included during the identification and determination process to the greatest extent possible. Families provide valuable insight into their child's strengths, abilities, and interests. Primary points for family involvement in the process are submitting a referral, adding important information to the body of evidence, and, when practical, participating in the determination meeting. Thoughtful consideration of how to engage and work with typically underserved families is critical to building an equitable identification process. In the Early Access process, families are involved with initiating referral and data collection in accordance with the AU's Early Access procedures.

Review Team Procedures

Each administrative unit shall use an identification process including review by a team, as described in state board rule, to identify gifted children. The team shall use a body of evidence upon which to base the determination of giftedness and the need for gifted services. The evidence must include, **at a minimum**, assessment results from multiple types of measures and data sources that demonstrate evidence of exceptional ability or potential. when compared to peers of similar age, environment, and experience. This may include, but is not limited to: qualitative and quantitative data about achievement, cognitive ability, performance, family and teacher input, motivation and observations of gifted characteristics/behaviors. The identification team has the professional responsibility to look at individual student needs and to make a determination based on those needs.

Review Team Composition

A review team must include at least one person trained or endorsed in gifted identification and programming per ECEA rule. Training may include work towards an endorsement or the completion of specific courses in gifted education.

Determination Process

During the determination process, the identification team shall gather evidence to document a student's exceptional abilities or potential, interests, and needs in order to guide student instruction and individualized planning and programming. The determination process may require the collection of student information over time, using additional data points from a response to intervention approach.

Not meeting criteria on a single assessment tool shall not prevent further data collection or consideration for gifted identification if other indicators suggest exceptional potential as observed in a body of evidence.

Review Team Timelines

ECEA Rules state an identification team has a timeline of no more than **30 school days** after a referral is received to determine whether or not a student will be formally identified based on a documented need for gifted services **or** if more time is needed to continue with identification assessment in order to determine if gifted services are needed. The team's decision should be communicated to the family, student, and other educators. **This does not mean an identification determination must be made within 30 days; rather all educational partners should receive information on the intended next steps of the identification process within this timeline.**

Step 1: Building a Body of Evidence

Once a referral is made for a student, the review team will begin the process of gathering a body of evidence (BOE) in order to make a determination. A body of evidence consists of quantitative and qualitative measures to determine if a student's aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. The BOE must include the criteria for gifted identification set forth in ECEA, additional supporting evidence demonstrating a need for gifted services, **and be used** to build an individual student profile of strengths and interests for the development of an Advanced Learning Plan.

ECEA rules allow for multiple pathways to build a robust body of evidence. Multiple pathways refer to the multiple ways a body of evidence can be built to allow the identification team to make a determination. The variety of assessments and data that can be used to develop a robust body of evidence to determine if gifted services are needed within any of the areas of giftedness create these multiple varied pathways which can be aligned to the individual student. No two children are identical; therefore, no two bodies of evidence will be exactly identical. The ability to leverage multiple pathways (various combinations of evidence) for identification allows for increased access for all students, especially typically underserved students.

According to ECEA rule, collection of data for a body of evidence (BOE) includes, but is not limited to results from multiple sources and multiple types of data (i.e., qualitative and quantitative data about achievement, cognitive ability, performance, parent and teacher input, and observations of gifted characteristics/behaviors). The body of evidence contains data to identify the strength area(s) according to the **definition** of gifted children, and also informs decisions about appropriate programming services. **In order to meet the requirement of multiple sources and multiple types of data, and keeping with the spirit of rule, this guidance recommends a minimum of three data points be used as part of the ECEA required body of evidence for determining the need for gifted services.** The documented body of evidence for each student should be sufficient enough to determine need for services and to determine what specific services are needed. "Too often, teachers try to figure out a student's learning process based on test scores or other types of assessments, but those tools don't offer holistic insight into the student's learning moves" (Hammond, 2015, p. 75). Therefore, the body of evidence must include enough qualitative data to create a holistic picture of the student's needs. Additionally, **using only one data point is not sufficient to make an adequate determination of the need for gifted services and does not meet the requirements set forth in ECEA rules.** Examples of robust bodies of evidence are included in *Appendix C*. These are examples and should not be seen as a formula to follow for all students' identification. **A body of evidence must include enough information and data that if the student transfers to another district, the receiving district is able to understand the determination decision, the identified area of strength, and the individual student programming needs.**

All qualifying data points in a body of evidence must be regarded **equally**. Placing greater emphasis on a specific test or awarding more points to a test score above a specific percentile is not considered an ethical practice in

gifted identification. This practice is often referred to as a "weighted matrix." This creates an opportunity for unintentional bias and is unfavorable to culturally different students (Ford, 2013). **While some of the data in a body of evidence will be used to meet the criteria for gifted identification as identified in ECEA rule, other data will be used to build a learner profile which demonstrates the student's exceptional ability compared to peers for the purpose of determining need for gifted services and identifying appropriate programming options.**

** Denotes a data point that could be used as a qualifying data point for formal identification if it meets criteria set forth in ECEA rules.*

A student may not be identified without a supporting body of evidence for gifted services. Supporting evidence must demonstrate the student's need for gifted services by evidencing their aptitude or competence in

abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains which are so exceptional or developmentally advanced they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs.

Assessment Selection

The gifted identification process should focus on research-based assessment practices to ensure multiple pathways to identification are available. Not all gifted students demonstrate the same profile of potential and/or ability. Gifted abilities manifest in a variety of ways; therefore, **multiple pathways** to building a robust body of evidence to support gifted identification must be explored. The use of a variety of types and sources of assessment should be used to allow for multiple pathways based on the individual student being considered for identification. Information on commonly used assessments for gifted identification can be found in *Appendix D*.

CDE has developed a resource matrix describing the most common assessments used in Colorado for the purpose of gifted identification. It is important to note that the matrix is intended for informational purposes as CDE does not approve specific identification instruments. An AU must consider the purpose, norming group, reliability, and validity of a specific test to guide appropriate instrument selection for the purpose of identification. The scope of the assessment should include items to measure exceptional ability and not just grade-level, foundational skills. Fidelity to administration protocols are critical to ensure results are valid. Any deviation from the established assessment protocols invalidates the test results. Assessments that deviate from the normed administration protocols will not yield results that are valid. The only deviation allowed is in the case of students with active IEP or 504 plans that specifically have need for alternative assessment administration. The allowable accommodations for each assessment are set by the assessment publishers.

See the ***Matrix of Commonly Used Assessments*** found on the CDE Gifted Education website.

Thoughtful consideration must be taken when working to identify students from typically underserved populations. ECEA rules allow for great flexibility in determining what assessments to include in an individual student's body of evidence. Assessment results that have been locally and/or subgroup normed, ACCESS tests, and other data relevant to that individual student can make up a BOE to support identification in the specific area of giftedness and must include the criteria for exceptional ability for the category of giftedness defined in 12.01(16). This means the body of evidence must include: 95th percentile or above on a standardized nationally normed test or observation tool, or a rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates along with multiple sources and types of data which demonstrate the student's exceptional ability and need for gifted services, but a single data point, even one at the 95th percentile, does not constitute a BOE sufficient for determining the need for gifted services, nor a portable identification.

Using Subgroup and/or Locally Normed Data as Part of Your Evidence

As part of building a BOE, AUs may choose to apply subgroup and/or local norms to norm-referenced cognitive and/or achievement tests to increase access and inclusion of students from underrepresented populations in gifted programs, or to show need for specialized programming to support individual needs. Local norms are assessment results that compare peers in local settings. Locally normed assessment data can be used within a BOE to support identification in the specific area of giftedness. A BOE for gifted identification must include the criteria for exceptional ability for the category of giftedness defined in 12.01(16). This means that the BOE must include various types and sources of supporting data along with at least one 95th percentile or above on a standardized nationally normed test, or observation tool, or a rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates.

Subgroup norms refer to a specific demographic within your data set, such as English learners, free and reduced lunch, or race/ethnicity. The use of subgroup norms can be applied when the opportunity to learn may be different among subgroups within your AU. Subgroup norms can be useful in AUs where local norms might continue to perpetuate inequities in identification of certain groups of learners.

While application of subgroup and/or local norms are encouraged on assessments used as part of the body of evidence, a nationally normed assessment, observation scale or performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates is required by ECEA rules for gifted identification. Additional local norm guidance can be found in *Appendix E*.

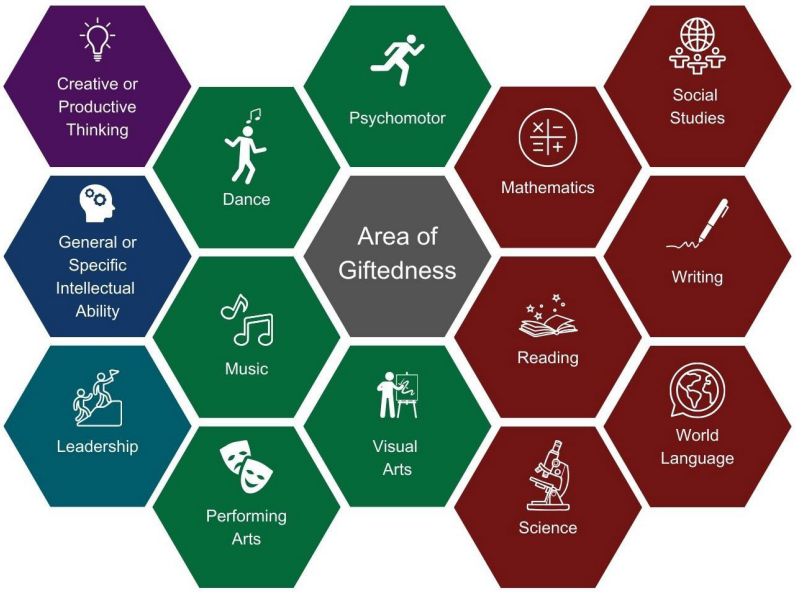
Step 2: Ensuring the BOE Contains Required Identification Criteria

Criteria are the standards set forth in rule which must be a part of every qualifying body of evidence. The 95th percentile ranking and above describes the rule for demonstration of exceptionality on a **standardized, nationally-normed** test, or observation tool. A performance assessment that indicates exceptionality compared to age mates includes a rating that exceeds expectations or demonstrates distinguished/advanced command. Performance indicators may include criterion-referenced tests, portfolio, or observation. Criterion-referenced data may be used as qualifying evidence if the student's performance level exceeds grade-level expectations or if "above-level" assessments are used. **A single piece of evidence, including one at the 95th percentile, does not guarantee gifted identification. The AU's identification team's determination of giftedness is based on the entire body of evidence.**

Identifying an Area of Giftedness

When building and reviewing a body of evidence for a student, the identification team must ensure that the evidence gathered provides robust information upon which a determination of individual student need for gifted services can be made. The body of evidence must include the qualifying criteria as identified within ECEA rules as well as supporting data from a variety of sources.

The body of evidence should provide the team with evidence of aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more of the following areas: general intellectual ability, reading, writing, math, science, social studies, world language, visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance, psychomotor abilities, creative or productive thinking, or leadership.



A body of evidence (BOE) which includes multiple types and sources of data which demonstrate the individual student's exceptionality/distinguished performance compared to age mates along with evidence supporting the need for specialized services must also include at minimum one of the following criteria:

- 95th percentile or higher on a standardized nationally normed test **or**
- 95th percentile or above on a nationally normed observation scale **or**
- A rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates

Using only one data point, even one at the 95th percentile, is not sufficient to make an adequate determination of the need for gifted services and does not meet the requirements set forth in ECEA rules. Gifted Education Rules require a body of evidence in addition to the qualifying criteria when making a determination for gifted services.

Considerations when using an observation scale as your identification criteria

The use of a body of evidence with an observation scale as the criteria for a gifted identification should be used with extreme caution and only in cases where other qualifying criteria are unable to be gathered. This approach should only be used in cases where the student is severely impacted by risk factors and data collection over time through a response to intervention approach has yet to yield other qualifying criteria in the form of a 95th percentile or higher on a standardized nationally normed test **or** a rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates**.**

It is recommended in the rare cases where observation scale data is used as the qualifying criteria, that two or more nationally-normed observation scales are completed by different respondents (from school, community, and/or home) who know the student and both pieces of evidence align. This approach leads to a more robust use of this tool as a qualifying criteria. It is also recommended training be provided to anyone who completes the observation scale to increase likelihood it is completed correctly.

Considerations for Specific Areas of Giftedness

A body of evidence and the qualifying criteria will vary according to the individual student and the ***area(s) of giftedness*** being considered which include:

- ***General intellectual ability***
- ***Specific academic aptitude (reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language)***
- ***Talent Aptitude (visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance, and psychomotor abilities)***
- ***Creative or productive thinking***
- ***Leadership***

General Intellectual Ability

Identifying a student as gifted in the domain of *general intellectual ability* requires a body of evidence that shows the student's capability or potential recognized through cognitive processes (e.g., memory, reasoning, rate of learning, spatial reasoning, ability to find and solve problems, ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections, etc.). Students identified in this area might not be demonstrating advanced abilities in content areas but are showing advanced abilities in cognitive processes which demonstrate the need for specialized services. Twice-exceptional learners, underserved populations, and those gifted learners whose academic and affective needs are not being met through grade level programming might have a body of evidence in which a general intellectual strength area is appropriate. As with all identification areas, identification requires a body of evidence, not a single data point. Intentional consideration should be made when a student is identified with a general intellectual strength that the body of evidence provides ample information to develop an Advanced Learning Plan for the student.

Academic Aptitude

Using only achievement data without the support of a cognitive test requires caution. An examination of multiple data points and trend data over time may be necessary before formal identification can be made. Services may be provided as necessary through the talent pool/development until sufficient data is available. Sufficient data is defined as a body of evidence that includes, **at a minimum**, assessment results from multiple types of measures and data sources that demonstrate evidence of exceptional ability or potential compared to peers of similar age, environment, and experience. This may include but is not limited to: qualitative and quantitative data about achievement, cognitive ability, performance, family and teacher input, motivation and observations of gifted characteristics/behaviors. The understanding of the nuances between high achieving and gifted students can aid in making a determination. *Appendix F*

The use of above level/off level academic assessments is recommended to show evidence of exceptional needs in a specific academic area. A performance trend of "exceeds expectations" on the English Language Arts state assessment is qualifying evidence for identification in **both** reading and writing.

Talent Aptitude, Creative and Productive Thinking, or Leadership

It is important to understand the unique and varied characteristics a student may demonstrate in the talent domain, creative and productive thinking, or leadership. Within these areas, several years of talent development may be needed before sufficient evidence is gathered for a body of evidence to support gifted identification. Often criterion- or norm-referenced assessments are not available in these areas; therefore, performance evaluation is an important component in the body of evidence. In some cases, a norm-referenced scale may not provide an appropriate measure for certain talent areas. An observation instrument that has been developed through analysis and research of the discipline may be used to provide qualifying evidence. Observation scales

and performance evaluation scales should contain content and construct validity. Districts are **not** required to provide or financially support programming outside of what is available within the district for students identified in this area.

Identification in the area of psychomotor is designated for state-level or national-level elite athletes who have received this ranking from the sport's national governing body. These athletes may require a gifted determination to address the interventions necessary as a result of the amount of time the student is out of school or to earn credits for specific courses. Districts are **not** required to provide or financially support athletic coaching, training, or competitions for students identified in this area.

Step 3: Making a Determination

The review team examines the body of evidence and may make one or more of the following determinations:

- Move to formal gifted identification
- Identify student for a talent pool/development
- Select new tools to collect additional data
- Determine data do not support identification at this time
- Determine a student may need to be referred for special education assessment in addition to his/her gifted identification (twice exceptional students)

Gifted Identification

Once a student has been identified, programming continues through graduation. Once a student is identified for gifted services, they do not need to requalify at any point for gifted services. Annually, the programming the student is receiving is reviewed as part of the ALP development and should be adjusted to meet their current needs. "When underachievement and/or motivational issues are observed behaviors in a gifted student, the ALP team, child study team or review team shall problem solve in collaboration with the family, the student, and appropriate staff." 12.02(2)(h)(ii)

Codes for reporting identification to the state can be found in *Appendix I*.

Talent Pool/Development

The body of evidence for some students may not lead to gifted identification, but data may demonstrate the student should be included in a "talent pool." Local AUs determine the use of Talent Pool. Additional information on Talent Pool can be found in *Appendix G*.

Portability

The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) requires that a student who moves from one district in Colorado to another district in the state retains his/her gifted identification. This concept is referred to as "portability." Specific information related to portability requirements can be found in *Appendix H*.

Conclusion

The need for special provisions can vary based on district programming and individual student's needs; therefore, identification practices can vary, but these practices must meet the requirements set forth in ECEA rule. Local AUs are required to implement identification procedures based on the requirements set forth in ECEA rules. Equitable identification and programming must be a consideration when developing AU processes.

Multiple pathways can lead to a determination of giftedness in one or more domains as identified in ECEA rules. Multiple pathways refer to the variety of assessments and data that can be used to develop a robust body of evidence to determine if gifted services are needed within any of the domains of giftedness. No two students are identical and therefore, no two bodies of evidence will be exactly identical.

For students experiencing poverty, students of color, students who have experienced or are experiencing trauma, English learners, and students with disabilities the application of subgroup and/or local norms to assessment results may be used when developing robust bodies of evidence that support the qualifying criteria required by ECEA rules. The analysis of subgroup and/or local norms can be one of the pivotal tools that will help reduce gaps in identification. These alone cannot eliminate identification gaps and should be part of a targeted approach to identification which allows for multiple pathways to demonstrate the need for gifted services. The overarching purpose of this guidance is to encourage the gathering of diverse and robust data to identifying students who are gifted and in need of programming beyond what is typically provided within the general education classroom. It should be emphasized that local specialists have the authority and the obligation to identify gifted learners and identify appropriate services based on individual student need. This guidance encourages a proactive approach to identification and allocating resources to serve identified students in order to provide equitable identification and programming for all gifted students in Colorado.

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Appendix A

Strength Areas

ECEA rules specify the areas for gifted identification in Colorado. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness.

General Intellectual Ability
Intellectual ability is exceptional capability or potential recognized through cognitive processes (e.g., memory, reasoning, rate of learning, spatial reasoning, ability to find and solve problems, ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections).

Specific Academic Aptitude (reading, writing, math, science, social studies, world language)
Specific academic aptitude is exceptional capability or potential in an academic content area(s) (e.g., a strong knowledge base or the ability to ask insightful, pertinent questions within the discipline). All academic areas should be considered.

Talent Aptitude (visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance or psychomotor abilities)
Visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance or psychomotor abilities are exceptional capabilities or potential in talent areas (e.g., art, drama, music, dance, body awareness, coordination, and physical skills).

Creative or Productive Thinking
Creative or productive thinking is exceptional capability or potential in mental processes (e.g., critical thinking, creative problem solving, humor, independent/original thinking, and/or products).

Leadership Abilities
Leadership is the exceptional capability or potential to influence and empower people (e.g., social perceptiveness, visionary ability, communication skills, problem solving, inter-and intra-personal skills, and a sense of responsibility).

Appendix B

Understanding Universal Screening

Universal screening supports equitable access and opportunity for all students. The intent of a universal screening is to find indicators of exceptionality among all student groups. A universal screener is a tool that allows students to show their ability and potential in areas such as, but not limited to, reasoning, perception, creativity, and problem solving. It is important to note that universal screening alone cannot eliminate disproportionality in gifted identification.

A universal screener is not just for the specific purpose of identifying highly capable or gifted students. Data collected through a universal screener provides information to support instructional planning for:

- **All** students
- Students referred for additional gifted identification assessment
- Students recommended for talent pool

Many of the commonly used universal screening instruments provide resources to support instructional planning for all students along with technical assistance specific to interpreting the data.

There are several types of universal screening tools widely used in gifted education. One approach provides quantitative data collected through the use of a cognitive abilities test or achievement tests. Another approach provides qualitative data through the use of reliable and valid (proven) classroom observational tools. Tests or inventories that are considered qualitative use the results and tally of observations to describe and understand an individual's strengths or other characteristics. Quantitative assessments use metrics to describe and understand an individual's strengths or other characteristics (Ryser, 2004).

Universal screening data enable decisions about referrals or talent pool designation in gifted identification assessment. Students who require a referral may need additional tests or information about achievement, performance, and/or behavioral characteristics for building a body of evidence (BOE). The BOE is then used by a team when making identification determinations and identifying programming needs. Students identified for a talent pool require further differentiated instruction and experiences with monitoring of progress over time in order to build a comprehensive body of evidence to determine if formal identification for services is necessary.

Universal screening at the middle school level includes both identified and non-identified gifted students at a specific grade level. The identified and non-identified students may receive different measures if deemed appropriate. When considering the use of local or subgroup norms, inclusion of all students within the grade level is necessary. For the non-identified gifted students, a cognitive abilities screener will provide data about strengths and indicators of giftedness that might initiate a body of evidence for gifted identification. Results from this screener may identify students new to the AU or whose strengths did not manifest at an earlier age. Administrative units may consider the administration of an assessment to already identified students that will be most useful when developing the student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP). Performance assessment, above-level or norm-referenced test, or a portfolio assessment might be administered in these cases.

Examples of widely used universal screening tools:

Cognitive Instruments

One type of universal screening involves collecting objective data through the administration of a norm-referenced cognitive instrument. Cognitive instruments provide quantitative data indicating potential in

the area of intellectual ability. Cognitive data may lead to a referral for gifted identification. Data are also used to designate a talent pool of students who may not have been identified through the use of achievement tests. Results can also be used to make programming and curricular adjustments for all students.

Two types of cognitive assessments widely used in Colorado are the *Naglieri Non-verbal Ability Test*, referred to as the NNAT2 or NNAT3 and the *Cognitive Abilities Test*, referred to as the CogAT7 or CogAT8. Both assessments have an online testing platform or can be administered paper-pencil. Like all norm-referenced assessments, training for correct and ethical administration should occur each year for all test administrators. Fidelity to administration protocols is essential for valid results.

Observational Instruments

Data gathered through observation instruments provide subjective information from people who know the student. There are several common instruments used to collect qualitative data for universal screening that are not nationally normed. Examples include: the *Kingore Observation Inventory* (KOI), the *Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students* (TOPS), the HOPE Scale and the Renzulli Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students. Both the KOI and TOPS instruments use specific planned experiences for all students. Teachers observe student behaviors and performance during these experiences and record their observations. After completing a specified number of planned experiences, teachers analyze their findings. These results contribute names for referrals and supporting evidence within the BOE. Explanations of other observational instruments can be found in the ***Matrix of Commonly Used Assessments*** found on the CDE Gifted Education website.

These instruments support teachers in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally and linguistically different families and for children with disabilities. A lack of appropriate recognition and response can lead to problems for gifted children, their families, and educators. For example, young gifted children who are not extended in their learning can experience boredom, alienation, social difficulties, and depression. Some become underachievers, failing to reach their full potential, and develop negative attitudes towards their early childhood setting or school (Morrisey & Grant, 2013).

Districts/AUs that choose to utilize these observational tools for a universal screening must be aware of the instruments' limitations and cautions. To maintain the validity of these observation tools, gifted directors must ensure they have developed specific guidelines and procedures for the administration of the planned activities. This must precede the use of the actual observation tool to guarantee all students in a grade level have a common and consistent experience. Proper administration requires a very targeted and specific training of teachers. Training materials have been produced by the instrument developers that can be purchased in addition to the screening materials. A plan for annual training of all new staff must be developed. Additionally, there must be a plan for the calibration of the scoring process to ensure inter-rater reliability. This includes examining administration practices to uncover any potential for unrecognized bias. A team should evaluate the results after the screening is complete and reflect on the process to determine if the students identified as demonstrating advanced potential mirror the demographics in the district.

Achievement Data Reviews

One often overlooked universal screening tool is achievement data. Annually reviewing all student achievement data to identify any students who may be achieving at advanced levels relative to their peers is a no additional cost method for universally screening all students. A data review of all student achievement on either state assessment or local assessments can yield students who may need further exploration as to the need for gifted

services. Drilling the data down and reviewing by various subgroups of students can help to determine any students who may be outliers within their peer group. For example: If achievement data, such as statewide assessment results, is reviewed holistically to identify potential students needing gifted services, the data can then be reviewed looking at all English learners and even further by reviewing English learners students within a certain proficiency level. Students who are performing better than their peers within those subgroups should be considered to see if a body of evidence would support the need for gifted identification. This approach helps to identify students who may need services but due to other factors such as opportunity or access might not perform well on achievement assessments when the data is looked at based solely on advanced performance. This approach helps to identify potential for advanced achievement.

An advantage of this type of universal assessment is that it does not limit the assessment to only a few grade levels. It can be done using any existing achievement data that is universally given to all AU students. When reviewing achievement data, be sure to understand which assessments are measuring grade level achievement only and how that informs your decision making and contributes to the overall body of evidence for a student. Understanding how adaptive achievement assessments are normed and how to interpret scores are critical to their use within the body of evidence.

Appendix C

Body of Evidence Examples

A robust body of evidence (BOE) will look different for every student. CDE has asked AUs to share redacted examples of a robust BOE. The examples demonstrate some of the many pathways that can be used to identify a student for gifted services. The examples are by no means exhaustive and should not be used as a formula to apply to every student with a similar profile. It is the professional responsibility for the identification team to review the body of evidence for each student and make a determination based on the needs of that individual student. Contact CDE's Office of Gifted Education for these examples.

Appendix D

Common Assessments for Building a Body of Evidence

A body of evidence may consist of the following assessments but is not limited to:

Cognitive Tests

Cognitive tests are designed to measure a student's **general intellectual ability**. Such tests do not measure specific **academic** aptitude in various content areas such as reading or math. Many general intelligence tests and checklists include items that assess both fluid reasoning, such as analogies, block designs, pattern arrangements, and crystalized abilities, such as mathematics problems, vocabulary, and comprehension of reading passages (Johnsen, 2004).

For example, the *Cognitive Abilities Test* (CogAT) is divided into three batteries: Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal. **All three batteries can be used as evidence of exceptional ability for gifted identification.** It is important to note that an exceptional score on the nonverbal battery does not mean the student should be identified as gifted with a nonverbal strength area. "**Nonverbal**" is not one of Colorado's areas for identification. An exceptional score on the nonverbal battery can be a qualifying score and indicates a student demonstrates a strong command in general or fluid reasoning and can conceptualize at an advanced level using the format of pictures and images. The Nonverbal CogAT battery and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test **do not** measure visual-spatial ability. The multi-dimensionality of the nonverbal items does not require a student to create a mental model or use three-dimensional problem solving to select a correct response. Therefore, the battery is not measuring spatial abilities. Rather, it is measuring fluid reasoning. Similarly, the verbal and quantitative batteries are not aligned to specific content areas such as language arts or math. **Any of the three batteries can result in qualifying criteria for gifted identification as part of a body of evidence which demonstrates need for gifted services in any one or more of the areas of identification set forth in ECEA.**

It is important to thoroughly review cognitive test manuals to ensure proper **and** ethical test administration practices are followed. This includes knowing the allowable accommodations that can be provided to students with an IEP/504, the appropriate use of practice tests prior to administration of an actual cognitive test, and sections within a battery that can be eliminated to reduce the language load for English Language Learners.

Additionally, it is important to review test manuals to ensure appropriate interpretation of assessment scores used for the purpose of identification. For example, Dr. Lohman, creator of the Cognitive Abilities Test, states the composite score should **not** be used for identification purposes, rather the scores from individual batteries are used to identify exceptionality.

> "Therefore, procedures for identifying academically talented students that either deliberately or inadvertently rely on a single composite score that averages across ability domains will exclude many children who reason well in particular symbol systems. Even students with strong ability to reason in two symbol systems can have scores in the third area that bring down their composite score. Consistently high scores across multiple domains is not a necessary feature of giftedness. True, those who exhibit high scores in all domains tested are very able. But they are not the only gifted students who warrant special attention" (Lohman, 2008).

If a student scores at the 95th percentile or above on the composite of CogAT, but does not score at the 95th percentile or above on one or more of the separate batteries, it is recommended to consider providing the

student a different cognitive or intellectual assessment that is perhaps untimed, administered individually, or an instrument that approves the use of a composite score to measure exceptionality.

Achievement Tests

Assessment data from standardized, criterion, and norm-referenced tests are utilized to determine if a student demonstrates exceptional ability in a specific **academic** area. Specific academic aptitude areas include reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language. Specific academic aptitude is demonstrated by a student scoring at the advanced/distinguished level on criterion-referenced assessments and/or 95th percentile or above on norm-referenced achievement tests. Districts may use alternative achievement tests to determine advanced academic competence.

If a student does not demonstrate exceptional general intellectual ability from a cognitive assessment, but does demonstrate exceptional abilities in a specific academic area, best practice recommends observing and collecting data **over time** and not moving to formal gifted identification based on achievement data collected from just one grade level. When a young child (kindergarten-third grade) demonstrates specific academic potential without a qualifying cognitive score, differentiated pace and depth of instruction can be used to build additional data over time to identify exceptionality.

The Colorado READ Act requires that teachers assess the literacy development of all kindergarten-third grade students. Data from these reading competency tests are used to determine if a student has a significant reading deficiency and may be included in a student learning profile, but are **not** used as qualifying data for gifted identification. Assessments utilized to **progress monitor** student achievement or **diagnose** an academic deficiency are often defined as diagnostic instruments. Diagnostic assessments or skill inventories measure proficiency of grade-level foundational skills. Diagnostic and inventory assessments are not intended to measure exceptional abilities in a specific content area. Therefore, these instruments are **not** used as qualifying data.

Use of subgroup and/or local norms on a district developed standards-based criterion referenced test aligned to state academic standards (e.g., a district math criterion-referenced assessment at grade 2) is useful for building a body of evidence. A few districts have developed criterion-referenced tests to complement/verify state assessment results. These could be helpful in building a body of evidence, especially at the primary level where state assessment data are not available.

Creativity Tests

Assessment data from standardized, norm-referenced creativity tests are used to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in the area of creative productive thinking. Creative aptitude is demonstrated by a student scoring 95th percentile or above on norm-referenced creativity tests (e.g., Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking [TTCT], Profile of Creative Abilities [PCA]).

Some students who do not achieve qualifying scores on cognitive or achievement tests may still demonstrate many characteristics of giftedness. Many gifted traits and behaviors are evidence of the high level of creativity typical of many gifted students. To aid in identifying students who do not score at or above the 95th percentile on cognitive or achievement measures, creativity tests may be useful in building a body of evidence for formal identification, because these tests add validity to the observed creative characteristics.

A score at the 95th percentile or above on a creativity test is not required for identification in the arts areas such as visual or performing arts.

ACCESS for English Learners

ACCESS for ELs is a suite of English language proficiency assessments for students who have been identified as English learners (ELs). The assessments are grounded in the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards and given annually to all NEP/LEP K-12 English learners in Colorado. The scores from ACCESS can be a powerful tool to include within the body of evidence for gifted identification of English learners.

English language proficiency is a measure of the language students use in their interactions with peers and teachers in both instructional and social settings. Language and cognition develop over multiple years, and the path of each individual varies depending on many factors, including age, educational experiences, and personality.

The ACCESS Overall composite score is the most comprehensive indicator of performance in language acquisition and may be used as qualifying evidence for gifted identification. The ACCESS Literacy composite score (reading and writing) may also serve as qualifying evidence. While individual domain scores cannot be used for qualification, they are useful as a component of the body of evidence to support programming for a student's strength area(s).

ACCESS scores may be used as qualifying evidence on a performance assessment through any one of the following:

- **Accelerated Acquisition Rate:** If a student increases his or her Literacy or Overall composite score by 2.0 or more from one year to the next (e.g., 1.0 to 3.0 or higher); or
- **Accelerated EL Trajectory:** If a student exits the EL program at an accelerated pace (e.g., 3 years vs. 6 years from newcomer to monitor status); or
- **Growth Percentiles:** If a student demonstrates growth at the 95th percentile or above in any year, and that growth is part of a trend of sustained excellence.

Observation Instruments

Gifted students often demonstrate characteristics that lead to a referral for gifted services. Through the use of these norm-referenced behavior observation scales, educators and families can identify outstanding talent by observing students in one or more settings that enable them to display their abilities. Such measures add valuable information to the body of evidence and focus on more than the academic aptitude measured by many traditional tests students encounter in school.

Norm-referenced observation scales are used as qualifying criteria for gifted identification. These scales are a valid and reliable way for educators and families to evaluate gifted behavior characteristics. Examples of qualifying measures are the *Scales for Identifying Gifted Students* (SIGS), *Gifted Evaluation Scale* (GES), and the *Gifted Rating Scales* (GRS). The SIGS provides a norm-referenced scale for parents to complete. The parent scale may be used as qualifying data.

Other methods of obtaining information on gifted characteristics may also be utilized to develop a student profile. Informal tools, such as an interview or checklist, can provide beneficial information to better understand a student's strengths and interests. These tools provide families the opportunity to give important input about their child during the assessment process.

Districts may use quantitative and qualitative measures to collect behavioral data. Certain observation tools have been very successful in recognizing students with potential from under-represented populations. Examples of such tools are the *Kingore Observation Inventory* (KOI), *Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students* (TOPS), the HOPE Scale, and the Renzulli Scale for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students. Research-based practices have been created for teachers to implement when observing student behaviors during specific planned experiences. Data from these planned experiences can be used to determine students who might require additional assessments and/or to develop a talent pool. **Data collected from a KOI or TOPS provide information for the body of evidence but are not used as qualifying criteria for identification.**

It is important to note that some educators have particular stereotypical expectations of how gifted students should perform, therefore, eliminating certain students who do not demonstrate the more typical gifted characteristics (Johnsen, 2004). If these types of observational data are collected, it is important that one recognizes that different genders, cultures, races, ethnicities, and social classes have different ways of communicating that may impact an observer's/interviewer's perspective on what behaviors constitute giftedness (NAGC, 2008). Training for educators who participate in this type of data collection is essential to build understanding of how educator bias and expectations can play into the outcomes.

Performance Evaluation

Gifted ability is often not measured on a specific assessment, but rather demonstrated through some type of performance. Identifying a student with exceptional abilities in a content area or a talent area such as art, music, theater, dance, psychomotor, creativity, or leadership requires an evaluation of performance. There are many types of performance data that might be utilized to develop a body of evidence. These may include:

- **Juried Performance:** Students often participate in events within school or outside of school that are judged and evaluated. Students receive some type of rating based on their performance. Data from a valid and reliable juried performance may be considered as qualifying evidence if the jury consists of a team of experts in their field. An example of such a performance would be a student selected for a statewide choral group or debate team.

- **Contest/Competition:** Many contests and competitions are available to students within school or outside of school. Top placement in a regional, state, or national competition may be considered as a qualifying measurement for gifted identification. An example of such a performance would be a student finishing first in a state science fair or Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) categorical competition.

- **Portfolio:** Over time, some students develop a portfolio of work that might be evaluated by a team of experts in the field. The advanced/distinguished rating of a portfolio may be considered as qualifying evidence for gifted identification. A valid and reliable rubric is used in the evaluation of a portfolio to ensure consistency and equal opportunity. An example would be a collection of a student's artwork throughout elementary school and the portfolio being evaluated by a committee of district art teachers and local artists.

- **Classroom Performance:** Classroom teachers are often critical in providing qualitative data about a student's performance within the classroom. As the curriculum experts, teachers can identify those students working above their same-age peers. Evidence of above grade-level performance builds a

student's profile. An example of this might be a fourth-grade student who has already demonstrated mastery of fourth and fifth grade math standards and has successfully completed all the pre-algebra modules from an online math program. Advanced classroom performance must be measured through examples of above grade-level work. Earning an "A" in a class does not necessarily indicate exceptional performance. Grades lack standardization and are influenced significantly by students' motivation, classroom behavior, personal appearance, and study habits. Further, teachers' knowledge of students' IQ scores, income, SES, area of residence, and family structure contribute to stereotypes by teachers that are frequently characterized by low and negative expectations (Ford, 2013).

Appendix E

Applying Subgroup and/or Local Norms

Establishing subgroup and/or local norms may assist a district/school in setting priorities for instruction and interventions. In these situations, it is important that users of local norm data do not confuse typical performance within the district, school, or classroom with acceptable proficient/advanced performance, or on-track to pass state assessments. Problems with confusing local performance with acceptable standards of performance may be reduced by knowing the correlation between locally normed test scores and the relevant tests being used for identification (Stewart & Silberglitt, 2008).

Administrative units are **encouraged** to apply subgroup and/or local norms when relevant based on local context because such data will enhance services to student groups who may be under-identified for gifted services. **Subgroup norms may be used as evidence within the BOE for students experiencing poverty, students of color, students who have experienced or are experiencing trauma, English learners, students with disabilities or any other student group who may be underrepresented within your BOCES or district.**

School level norms and/or school level subgroup norms may be necessary if district or BOCES norms would negatively impact identification of student groups due to the variability of individual school populations within the AU. Efforts should be made to implement identification practices that address and work to eliminate disproportionality in gifted identification and ensure individual student's need for services is met.

If only subgroup and/or local norms are used for district level identification for services (these students may not be reported to the state as gifted because the identification does not meet conditions of rule), portability of identification is not confirmed until re-evaluation provides evidence of exceptionality according to state criteria. A portable identification must have a BOE that includes multiple sources and types of data which demonstrate exceptionality, the need for services and includes the state required criteria of a 95th percentile or above on a standardized nationally normed test or observation tool, or a rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates.

The use of only subgroup and/or locally normed data for identification does not meet conditions of ECEA rule. Districts should use the term "talent development" student rather than using the formal state label of gifted for students identified for gifted services based only on local norms. These students may not be reported to the state as gifted because the identification does not meet conditions of rule. This local identification for gifted services is not portable. It is the district's responsibility to explain to parents and students that they are receiving gifted services based on local norms and that identification and programming may not continue when the student transfers to another district.

Appendix F

High-Achieving versus Gifted

Specific Academic Aptitude is an area of identification in Colorado. Cognitive tests provide information for identification in the intellectual domain; however, these tests may or may not be helpful in identifying a student with exceptional abilities in a specific content area. Some students who are high-achieving in an academic area may qualify for gifted identification. However, **not all high-achieving students are gifted.**

Some high-achieving students may not have evidence of exceptional cognitive ability, but other data including standardized achievement tests, classroom performance, evaluation of a portfolio, or norm-referenced checklists provide multiple indicators of exceptional ability. According to Dr. Marcia Gentry, Director of the Gifted Education Resource Institute at Purdue University, "Achieving at a high level requires high ability in that content area. Requiring an assessment of "g" to confirm what is already shown in the achievement measure is not necessary, nor is it sound."

In the primary years it is not uncommon for a student to demonstrate above grade-level performance in areas such as reading or math. A child may enter school as an early reader or can learn math facts rapidly and demonstrate accurate computation skills. However, over time, the student may not continue to exhibit above grade-level capabilities. The question then becomes, "Did the student's achievement plateau because of a lack of rigorous and challenging course work, or as a natural progression of the child's academic growth?" **Without the use of a cognitive score, identification of students at the primary level should be made with caution**. A comprehensive collection of data using a variety of tools should be examined to make a gifted determination. If the identification team determines more time is needed to make a gifted determination, it is important to provide the necessary advanced, differentiated programming the student requires for continued growth and achievement through a response to intervention approach. Young high achievers and/or gifted learners academic and affective needs should be addressed both with or without formal identification.

Generally, a high-achieving student is one who works hard to succeed; is attentive in class; learns with ease; memorizes facts; correctly answers questions; and earns good grades. In comparison, a student who might be considered gifted in a particular content area is performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment compared to grade level peers; generates complex, abstract ideas; comprehends complex ideas; infers and connects concepts; is self-directed in learning; and can answer content-related questions but also asks complex questions (Kingore, 2014).

No two gifted children are alike. The professional judgment of the identification team ensures that gifted determinations are made according to the unique traits and characteristics of each child in the identification process.

Appendix G

Talent Pool

A **talent pool** is defined as a group of students who demonstrate an advanced or even exceptional ability in a particular area, but at this time do not have a body of evidence sufficient for formal gifted identification. Students within the talent pool should receive appropriate programming options and/or interventions to address potential strength areas. A review team may also consider if additional assessments need to be administered to collect additional data and/or continue to review the student's data over time to determine if gifted identification is appropriate at a later date. Gifted identification should never be just a moment in time during the educational path of a student. Identification is fluid and continuous throughout the school years. As students are presented with additional levels of challenge and rigor, increased achievement may occur. Some students identified as gifted in one domain may be part of a talent pool for a different domain. For example, a student who demonstrates a specific academic aptitude in reading as an elementary student may be included in a talent pool for mathematics. Over time, data are reevaluated to determine if this student meets the criteria for specific academic aptitude identification in the area of mathematics. Multipotentiality in gifted students often leads to identification in additional domains later in a child's educational path.

Students whose scores on a screening assessment are lower than the 95th percentile, or whose results on observation or performance assessment screening tools are not at the level to meet identification criteria, may be recommended by the review team for further data collection and observation or for inclusion in a talent pool.

AUs may determine if a talent pool is used and the length of time in which a student participates. Selection for a talent pool is not just being included on a list for future identification assessment. Rather, it is inclusion into appropriate differentiated programming options necessary to develop an academic or talent aptitude and promote achievement and growth. Research indicates that some students may not have enough experience and talent development exposure to meet criteria for gifted identification without receiving access and opportunity to develop their abilities over time. This suggests that not all students will stay in the talent pool for the same amount of time.

Appendix H

Portability

Portability means that a student's identification in one or more categories of giftedness transfers to any district in the state. Gifted programming must continue according to the receiving district's programming options. Portability of identification is a part of the student's permanent record and Advanced Learning Plan. AUs will determine the process and procedure used to ensure the appropriate and timely transfer of a student's Advanced Learning Plan, that includes the student's gifted identification profile (body of evidence, or BOE). The transfer process may include secure electronic file transfers or mailing of the student's record to the new district/school. When a student transfers from one district to another, it is required that the sending district include gifted education records with all other student records sent to the receiving district. Names and contact information of AU Gifted Directors/Coordinators may be found on the CDE Gifted Education website.

Administrative units are encouraged to have a process to notify the appropriate gifted educator in a district of a newly enrolled gifted student. This may occur with a review of an incoming student's records and through the registration process when parents indicate their child has a gifted identification.

The rule for gifted portability is based on AU implementation of identification processes that are aligned to identification procedures defined within ECEA rule. ECEA rules support a universal and consistent practice for recognizing students with exceptional ability and potential while providing flexibility for AUs to design equitable identification processes as required within ECEA. Districts are responsible for selecting appropriate tools that will support identification of students from underrepresented populations. Districts have the autonomy to select the specific instruments and procedures that will be utilized for gifted identification. These assessment tools may vary across districts but the criteria of using a robust body of evidence with at least one component of the BOE being 95th percentile or above on a standardized nationally normed test or observation tool, or a rating on a performance assessment that indicates exceptionality/distinguished compared to age mates does not vary. As long as the determination decision is based on a body of evidence consisting of multiple sources and types of supporting evidence showing exceptional ability and need which includes a piece of qualifying criteria as defined in ECEA, the identification is portable. If the receiving district's gifted review team determines the previous district identified the student in a manner not aligned to **state rules**, the rule for portability does not apply. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the receiving district to consult with the former district, parents, and student to re-evaluate the identification determination. Identifications made under previous guidance meet portability and should be honored by receiving districts.

The rule for portability does not apply to students moving into Colorado from another state. However, the receiving school should review the student's records for evidence of giftedness, and then determine whether additional assessment is necessary to confirm if the student meets Colorado criteria for gifted identification. Districts should also be aware of the parameters within the Military Compact Agreement for identified gifted students moving to Colorado as a result of a military transfer.

The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children created legislation to ease school-to-school transfers for military children. The intent of the Compact is to minimize the disruption in education when a military child is forced to move as a result of a transfer or deployment. The Compact states:

> *The receiving state school shall initially honor placement of the student in educational programs based on current educational assessments conducted at the school in the sending state or participation/placement in like programs in the sending state. Such programs include, but are*

not limited to: 1) gifted and talented programs; and 2) English as a second language (ESL). This does not preclude the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.

The following graphic illustrates the steps for receiving districts to meet the requirement of portability:

Appendix I

Coding

During the fall pupil count, gifted students are coded using the following identification areas. A student may be marked in **one or more** of the following areas:

- General Intellectual Ability
- Creative or Productive Thinking
- Leadership Abilities
- Specific Academic Aptitude
    - Reading
    - Writing
    - Mathematics
    - Social Studies
    - Science
    - World Language
- Specific Talent Aptitude
    - Visual Arts
    - Performing Arts
    - Musical
    - Dance
    - Psychomotor Abilities

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