

January 2012

Information about the Elementary Highly Capable programs

To the parents of Issaquah School District second graders:

The Issaquah School District offers two gifted/highly capable program options for elementary students in grades 3-5. MERLIN and SAGE provide students an academic program with added rigor.

MERLIN is an all-day program at Apollo and Endeavour Elementaries for students who typically test academically and cognitively at the 97th percentile or above in the areas of reading, math, verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative abilities. In addition, students must demonstrate exceptional ability on the Structure of Intellect—a score of 8 or above out of 9. Students who live in the following attendance areas: Apollo, Briarwood, Clark, Cougar Ridge, Issaquah Valley, Maple Hills, Newcastle, and Sunset will attend Apollo. Students who live in the following attendance areas: Cascade Ridge, Challenger, Creekside, Discovery, Endeavour, Grand Ridge, and Sunny Hills will attend Endeavour. **Parents are responsible for transporting MERLIN students to Apollo or Endeavour.**

SAGE is offered at all elementary schools, and students attend SAGE classes two hours a week. Students who typically score are at the 94th percentile academically and cognitively in the areas of reading, math, verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative abilities are candidates for SAGE. In addition, students must demonstrate exceptional ability on the Structure of Intellect—with a score of 7 or above out of 9.

Entrance procedures for MERLIN and SAGE comply with requirements for Highly Capable Programs in Washington State. Full details of the requirements are published on the Issaquah School District website at <http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/academics/Programs/gifted.aspx>

Testing for students includes Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) form 6 level A in verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative, the Structure of Intellect (SOI) measure of creativity, and the Stanford 10 achievement test in Math and Reading. This year the Stanford 10 will be administered the end of January and the CogAT and SOI will be administered during the first part of March.

The Issaquah School District tests all second grade students for the Highly Capable programs. If you do not want your child tested for the Highly Capable programs, please complete the Opt Out form for the CogAT and SOI located at <http://www.issaquah.wednet.edu/documents/elementary/CogATOptOut.pdf> or in your school office. This form is due back to your school office prior to March 1.

For students currently in the Issaquah School District, in the initial placement process for MERLIN/SAGE, outside testing will not be considered prior to the appeals process which follows the initial screening. Outside testing will be considered as part of the appeals process only.

The Issaquah School District, in compliance with the Washington State rules for Highly Capable Programs (WAC 392-170-047), has an appeals process. If you do not agree with the placement decision and you wish to appeal, you are asked to submit a letter of appeal indicating why you are making this request, additional standardized scores if available, and a sample of your student's writing. The deadline for submission of appeals is 4 PM, August 15. This information, along with the student's original scores, will be reviewed by members of the Highly Capable Review Committee and the decision will be sent to you by the end of August.

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Below are some characteristics of gifted/highly capable students. This may help parents as you consider whether a gifted/highly capable class is appropriate for your child. Not all students will exhibit all characteristics; however these serve as strong indicators of highly capable children. This list has been adapted from national best practices in gifted education.

A gifted child:

- Constantly asks a lot of questions about unusual topics
- Wants to know why or how something is so
- Seems interested and concerned about social or political problems
- Becomes impatient if work is not “perfect”
- Has his or her own idea about how something should be done; and sticks with those ideas
- Shows an unusual ability in an academic area – perhaps math or reading
- Invents new obscure systems or codes
- Creates problems with no apparent answers
- Tries to do things in different, unusual, imaginative ways
- Generally prefers older friends
- Sets high standards for self
- Has a preference for complexity
- Is an independent worker and often prefers to work alone

NOTE:

A letter with a combination of your student’s Stanford, CogAT, and SOI scores will be mailed home in late May or early June. The Placement Committee will review all students’ results to determine possible placement in the SAGE or MERLIN program(s).

Following the Placement Committee meeting in May, qualifying students will receive an invitation to participate in SAGE / MERLIN programs for 2012-2013 school year via US mail. Invitations will go out in June.

Please do not contact this office or your school prior to receiving the Individual Student Score Report letter (in late May or early June) as no test scores will be available prior to this time.

Sincerely,

Jodi Bongard
Executive Director of Elementary Education