

Information about the Highly Capable Program for Families of Second Grade Students

December 2020

To the parents of Issaquah School District second graders:

The Issaquah School District offers a Highly Capable Program for eligible students in grades K-12. The Highly Capable Program provides students with academic acceleration and added rigor. In normal years, when all students attend in-person school every day, all second grade students are given a full battery of tests by their classroom teacher to determine eligibility for the Highly Capable Program (HCP). Testing usually occurs in January and March. The tests given are the CogAT, the Iowa Achievement Test and the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking. Of the approximately 1500 second grade students who are tested annually about 150 are determined eligible.

This year, given the constraints presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the second grade HCP eligibility process will look different. It will be modeled after the District's referral process used successfully every year in September. The District will return to its standard practice of universal testing of all second grade students in classrooms during the school day in the 2021-22 school year. Referrals of second grade students to determine possible eligibility for the Highly Capable Program will be accepted online January 13 through January 28. The referral link will be open during this time and is on the Issaquah School District [Highly Capable Program](#) webpage.

Referral Process

All families with second grade students who live in the Issaquah School District boundaries, including families whose students attend private and home base school, are welcome to submit a referral. While it is anticipated that most referrals will be submitted by family members, Issaquah School District staff and community members may also submit referrals. No advantage is given for multiple referrals for the same student or to teacher referrals. The referring individual is not required to submit additional evidence, nor will additional evidence be accepted. All referred students will be screened and some will be invited to participate in testing. Some students may be asked to take a screener test to determine if full testing is indicated. A referral does not guarantee testing. Highly Capable Program referral will be available again September 1 through 15, 2021, for students not tested during the second grade school year.

Timeline:*

January 13 – 28	Referral window open
January 29 – February 26	Referral screening by the district screening team
March – June	Testing (Testing will be in-person and will be scheduled for when school is in session, March through June, following the school calendar. Make-ups cannot be accommodated.)

*This timeline is subject to change based on COVID conditions, guidance from the Governor, OSPI, the Washington State Department of Health and the capacity of the District to conduct the testing.

Referral Screening Process

In June, the [Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) (OSPI) advised districts unable to follow their usual identification processes due to the pandemic to use the data they already have for each student in the annual Highly Capable Program screening identification process. Therefore, a screening process for referred students using existing data will be put in place. The District will review all available data from assessments that are conducted district-wide, as well as previous report card data. (This may include the Fountas and Pinnell reading test, the iReady Math Diagnostic assessment, and/or the Lexia assessment). Typically,

students who qualify have scores two to three standard deviations above the mean (average). Therefore, students who consistently score well above grade level are good candidates for referral. Some referred students may also be invited to take a screener test. Screening will be conducted by the District Multidisciplinary Selection Committee, as defined in the [Washington Administrative Code](#), not classroom teachers.

Test Information

Testing for students will be in-person and will include the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) form 7, level 9, the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT), and the Iowa Achievement Test, form E, level 8, in math and reading. Testing will be scheduled for when school is in session, March through June, following the school calendar. Make-ups cannot be accommodated. The location, dates and times of testing will be determined at a later date. Please note the following regarding student testing:

*If you believe an **extraordinary** circumstance occurred **during the testing period** that may negatively affect the validity of the test results (such as a death in the family or extreme physical ailment) written communication to this office **within two weeks after the testing date** is appreciated to support the appeal process, if necessary.*

Results from outside testing agencies will not be accepted for entry into the Highly Capable Program.

How and when will testing results be communicated?

The Multidisciplinary Selection Committee (MDSC) will review students' assessment results to determine possible selection for the Highly Capable Program. Following the MDSC meeting, a letter with your student's score report, which includes Iowa, CogAT, and TTCT scores, will arrive via US mail and/or email.

The letter will also include notification of your student's eligibility status for admission into the Highly Capable Program (HCP) for the 2021-2022 school year. Qualifying students will receive an invitation to participate in the HCP in this same mailing. Letters will arrive via US mail and/or email. Please make sure your contact information in Family Access is current.

Do students in PEP need to be referred?

Second grade students already qualified for services in the Primary Enrichment Program (PEP) do not need to be referred. They will be automatically offered an opportunity to participate in full-testing. Second grade assessment results will be used to determine appropriate placement decisions for grades 3-5. Alternately, families of students in PEP can choose to opt out of testing and select to have the student placed in either SAGE Math or SAGE Reading. Placement will be determined by the District depending on area of strength using existing data.

The Opt Out form is on the Issaquah School District [Assessment](#) webpage. Print, scan (pictures not accepted) and email the opt-out form to the Highly Capable Office at highlycapable@issaquah.wednet.edu during the referral window, January 13 to January 28. The form may also be mailed to: Highly Capable Office, Issaquah School District, 5150 220th Ave SE, Issaquah, WA 98029. For safety reasons, do not drop off anything in person at either the neighborhood school or the Issaquah School District Administrative Building.

Programs for Students in Grades 3 through 5

MERLIN—is a self-contained all-day program currently housed at Apollo and Endeavour Elementary Schools. It is for students who test academically and cognitively at exceptionally advanced levels in the areas of reading, math and creativity, as well as verbal, non-verbal, and quantitative abilities. Selected students will participate in accelerated and/or advanced instruction in all core subject areas. **Parents are responsible for providing transportation of MERLIN students to the school.**

SAGE— is a program offered at each of our elementary schools. It is for students who test academically and cognitively at exceptionally advanced levels in either the area of reading and verbal abilities or the area of math, quantitative and nonverbal abilities and creativity. Selected students will be served with either a math or

reading focus. SAGE students are served through pull-out, differentiated instruction in their classrooms and special enrichment projects.

Entrance procedures for MERLIN and SAGE comply with requirements for Highly Capable Programs in Washington State. Full details of the procedures are published on the Issaquah School District [Highly Capable Program](#) webpage.

If your student is selected for MERLIN

MERLIN is a self-contained district program located at two elementary school sites: Apollo Elementary and Endeavour Elementary. While the District strives to place students who live in the attendance areas of Apollo, Briarwood, Clark, Cougar Ridge, Grand Ridge, Issaquah Valley, Maple Hills, Newcastle, and Sunset at Apollo and students who live in the attendance areas of Cascade Ridge, Challenger, Creekside, Discovery, Endeavour, and Sunny Hills at Endeavour, students may be offered placement at either Apollo or Endeavour depending on current enrollment numbers at each site. **Parents are responsible for providing transportation of MERLIN students to the school.**

Please do not contact this office or your school prior to receiving your student's score report and eligibility letter, which will arrive in June. The committee does not make final placement decisions prior to this time.

Sincerely,



Page Perey
Director of Elementary Special Programs



Susan Mundell
Executive Director of Elementary Education

Exit and appeal procedures are below



Highly Capable Appeal Process

The Issaquah School District, in compliance with the Washington State rules for Highly Capable Programs (WAC 392-170-076), has an appeal process. Appeals of the selection decision are accepted on the **Selection Decision Appeal** form. These forms are found on the district website. Screening decisions, and/or program placement decisions are not subject to appeal, however, appeals of the selection decision may be filed based on one of the following criteria:

- An **extraordinary** circumstance occurred **during the testing period** (such as a death in the family or extreme physical ailment) that may negatively affect the validity of the test results. Notification to the district in writing within two weeks of the end of district testing window is appreciated to support the appeal process.
- The suspicion of an error in the administration of the assessment.
- A misapplication, miscalculation or misinterpretation of the scores.

All appeals go before the Appeal Review Team. Notification of the decision (either i.e., approved or denied) will be sent by mail. No in-person hearings will be held by the Appeal Review Team. The purpose of the Appeal Review Team is to consider individual circumstances based on one of the criteria above, that may have impacted your child's evaluation data. It is the goal of the Issaquah School District to provide all of our students with appropriate academic services.

Additional information may be submitted to explain the appeal. Please note: No outside testing will be considered.

Questions about the appeal process can be directed to Marianne Dikran, Assistant to the Director, at 425-837-7120.

The deadline for submission of appeals is (10) ten business days from the date of notification of score results.

The decision of the Appeal Review Team is final.

Highly Capable Program Exit Procedure

The Issaquah School District, in compliance with the Washington State rules for Highly Capable Programs (WAC 392-170-047), has a procedure to allow students to exit the Highly Capable Program.

The Highly Capable Program consists of a variety of models and services and therefore is dynamic and fluid. Students will be exited from the program for one of the following reasons:

1. Parents/guardians request that the student no longer take part in the services. In this case, the parents/guardians complete the exit request form and send it to the district office. The form will then be placed in the student's file.
2. A student, teacher, principal and/or program administrator may request the Multi-disciplinary Selection Committee convene to review a student's profile to determine if learning needs are best met with Highly Capable program services based on assessment data and classroom performance. The committee may request additional evidence of student capabilities and/or willingness to participate in the program. If the committee determines that highly capable services are no longer appropriate to fit the student's needs, it will be recommended that the student be exited from the program.