



# Sample School District Gifted & Talented Education

## HANDBOOK

Created 2015

## The Gifted & Talented Education Handbook

- Purpose
- Rationale
- Mission, Principles, and Vision
- Definition
- Areas of Gifted Identification
- Overview of Identification
- Referral Process and Screening
- Body of Evidence (BOE) & Student Profile
- Types of Assessments
- Gifted Determination
- State Identification Areas and Criteria
- Programming
- Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)
- Portability
- Parent, Family, Student Communication and Engagement
- Procedure for Disagreement
- Additional Information & Resources

## Purpose

District recognizes that the student population includes students with exceptional academic abilities. These students have a need for educational services that are consistent with their ability levels and learning characteristics such as thinking abstractly, having the ability to study a topic in depth, and learning rapidly. These students shall be provided appropriately challenging curricula and instruction that are congruent with their learning abilities and styles through the shared responsibility of teachers, gifted and talented specialists, administrators, counselors, parents and learners themselves.

District is committed to providing educational programming that recognizes the unique abilities and needs of all students, while promoting adequate yearly progress from their points of entry. The following handbook is meant to be a living document for growth and change over time as new research refines strategies, and active use of forms shows better processes and communications.

## Rationale

*The Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) requires all administrative units (AUs) in Colorado to identify and serve students between the ages of five and twenty-one, and age four in administrative units with Early Access, 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. Administrative units include: school districts, Charter School Institute (CSI), multi-district administrative units and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).*

## Colorado Gifted Education Mission, Principles, and Vision

### **Mission**

Ensure gifted student growth and achievement through systems of support, programming, and advocacy.

### **Principles**

- Relevant, appropriate instruction and outcomes for gifted learners
- Shared responsibility and involvement of educators, parents, and community for the academic and affective outcomes and growth of gifted learners
- A climate of excellence and rigorous curricula for every child
- Differentiation in curricula, instruction, and assessment supporting tiered programming and a continuum of services for every gifted learner
- High quality standards for educators and counselors who work with gifted learners
- Identification and gifted programming in all populations of race, culture, gender, and income level

### **Vision**

All gifted students will accomplish challenging post-secondary workforce goals and become productive, creative citizens capable of succeeding in their area of strength.

## Definition

"Gifted and talented children" means those persons between the ages of four and twenty- one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services.

Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. 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 or Specific Intellectual Ability
- Specific Academic Aptitude
- Specific Talent Aptitude

## Areas of Gifted Identification

ECEA Rules, revised in 2015, specify the areas for gifted identification in Colorado. A student may be identified in one **or more** of these domains (areas):

### **General or Specific Cognitive 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**

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.

### **Specific Talent Aptitude in 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 Ability**

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 Ability**

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

## Overview of Identification

District procedures have been established using a multiple criteria assessment approach, per state guidelines. This means that many sources of information are reviewed over a period of time before formally identifying a student as gifted/talented in one or more areas.

Students who demonstrate certain abilities, but not enough body of evidence will be placed on a talent pool list. They may receive intervention services and support as available, but will not be formally identified unless a sufficient body of evidence is established. Identification decisions should be made based on sound reasoning and data interpretation with a team approach to identification.

## Referral Process & Screening

**Referrals**

Parents, teachers, counselors, community members and students are invited to submit the names of students they view as potentially gifted or talented at any time. They are asked to indicate what they believe to be the student's particular strength area(s) and may be asked to complete a referral form. Giftedness exists within all sub-groups of the population, and continuous attempts to improve the process will be made so that children identified as gifted reflect the diversity of the local community in terms of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Parents and teachers have opportunities to nominate students for GT services if they see the need.

## Screening

Standardized test scores for all students are screened for evidence of exceptionally high levels of performance on achievement tests. All second grade students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in the spring and 6th grade students take the CogAT in the fall. This process along with referrals, yields a list of nominees based on 85% score or above, from which GT teachers will begin the GATHERING BODY OF EVIDENCE process.

## Body of Evidence (BOE) & Student Profile

### Collection of Body of Evidence

The next stage in the identification process is to secure additional information that will aid in determining the student's talents or giftedness and his or her programming needs. Appropriate data will be gathered in the following four categories: Intellectual Ability, Achievement, Behaviors/Characteristics, and Demonstrated Performance. All information collected is confidential and will be placed on the Body of Evidence form.

### Review of Body of Evidence

Gifted student data is analyzed by the district review team which may consist of a building administrator, gifted and talented coordinator, and classroom teacher(s). The make-up of this group may change in order to include staff who are familiar with the child's abilities.

Some students do not perform well on standardized tests but may show evidence of exceptional ability in other ways. This is often true for those who are Twice-Exceptional (both gifted and learning disabled), second language learners, and children from low income backgrounds. In these cases, team discussion is necessary and further evidence may need to be gathered. Students are not denied services or identified on the basis of performance on any single score or instrument. Rather, those evaluating the data are looking for *sufficient evidence* of exceptional talent or ability to warrant special programming or services. This review is an *ongoing process*, and a student is not formally identified until a sufficient body of evidence is collected. Gifted identification recognizes and delineates exceptional strengths and potential in learners so that appropriate instructional accommodations and modifications can be provided.

## Student Profile

### Qualifying Data:

- Norm-referenced test
- Criterion-referenced test
- Norm-referenced observation scale
- Performance evaluation

### Additional Data:

- Anecdotal records
- Interview
- Observation
- Checklist

## Types of Assessments

Collection of data for a body of evidence (BOE) includes, but is not limited to assessment results from multiple sources and multiple types of data (i.e., qualitative and quantitative data about achievement, cognitive ability, performance, parent and teacher input, motivation 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 determines appropriate programming services. A body of evidence may consist of the following assessments:

### 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, and pattern arrangements, and crystalized abilities, such as mathematics problems, vocabulary, and comprehension of reading passages (Johnsen, 2004).

**Creativity Tests** Assessment data from standardized, norm-referenced creativity tests are used to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in the area of creativity. 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]). 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.

### **Achievement Tests**

Assessment data from standardized, criterion- and norm-referenced tests are utilized to determine if a student demonstrates gifted ability in a specific academic area. Specific academic aptitude areas include reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and world language. Specific talent aptitude areas include visual arts, performing arts, music, dance, psychomotor abilities, creative or productive thinking, and leadership abilities. Specific academic and talent 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

### **Behavioral Observation Scales**

Gifted students often demonstrate characteristics that lead to a referral for the gifted identification process. Through the use of these scales, educators and parents can identify outstanding talent by observing students in one or more settings that enable them to display their abilities. Characteristics such as leadership, motivation, memory, reasoning, creativity and sense of humor become a focus rather than academic aptitude measured by many of the more traditional tests students encounter in school. Norm-referenced observation scales are used as qualifying data for gifted identification. These scales are a valid and reliable way for educators and parents to evaluate gifted behavior characteristics.

### **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, 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 art work throughout elementary school and the portfolio being evaluated by a committee of regional art teachers.

## Gifted Determination

When the review team has completed the review process, if the student has met the requirements for identification, the parents are informed and the student will then receive specific programming strategies for his/her area of strength that are based upon the area of identification.



## General or Specific Intellectual Ability

### Specific Academic Aptitude

- Reading
  - Writing
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - World languages
- 

### Specific Talent Aptitude

- Visual Arts
  - Performing Arts
  - Musical Abilities
  - Dance
  - Psychomotor Abilities
  - Creative or Productive Thinking
  - Leadership Abilities
-

## Gifted Identification Criteria: General Intellectual Ability

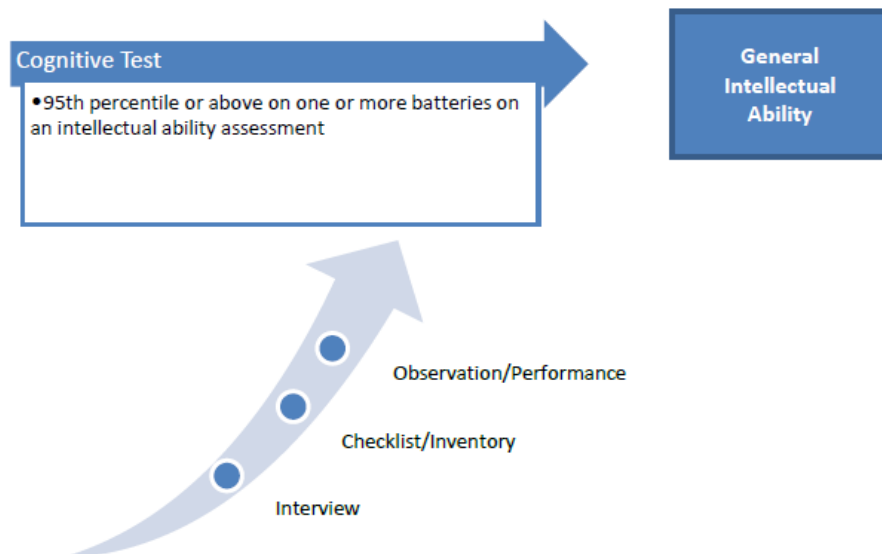
Department of Gifted Education



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### Area of Giftedness: General Intellectual Ability

Students may qualify in the area of general intellectual ability with a score of 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive test. The determination team must collect and review additional data for the body of evidence to develop the student's learning profile. A gifted determination based solely on a cognitive assessment score, without any other qualifying data, is the exception. A review team should use their professional judgment to determine if identification is appropriate by examining supplemental or non-traditional information collected through interviews, observations or performances beyond the academic content areas. Students from underrepresented populations may not demonstrate gifted abilities through the use of traditional assessment data. When only cognitive ability assessment data meets criteria in a body of evidence (95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above), the review team **may** determine that the student is identified with general or specific intellectual ability. This meets portability requirements.



## Gifted Identification Criteria: Specific Academic Aptitude (with Cognitive)

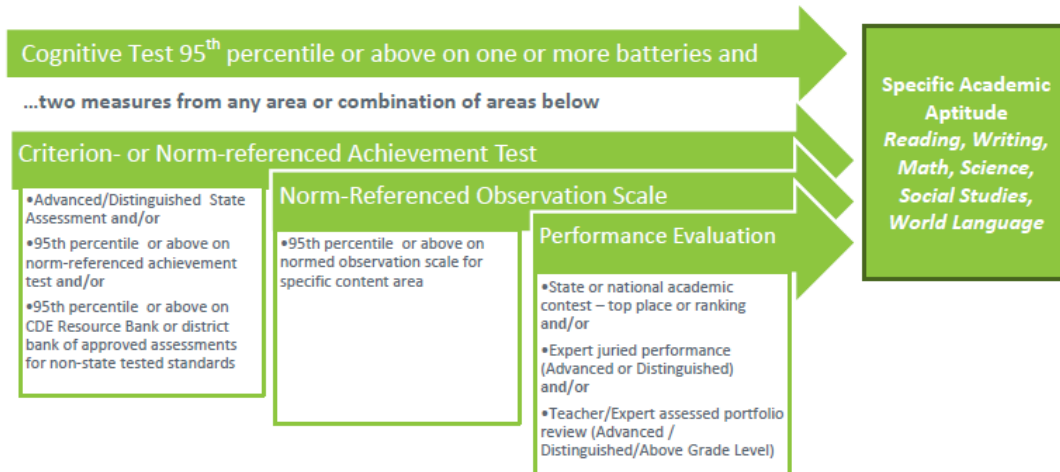


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### Area of Giftedness: Specific Academic Aptitude (with Cognitive)

Content areas for specific academic aptitude include: reading, writing, math, science, social studies and world language. **Two pathways may lead to identification in the area of specific academic aptitude.**

First, a student may score 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on one or more batteries of a cognitive test and demonstrate aptitude on two specific academic measures.



## Gifted Identification Criteria: Specific Academic Aptitude (without Cognitive)



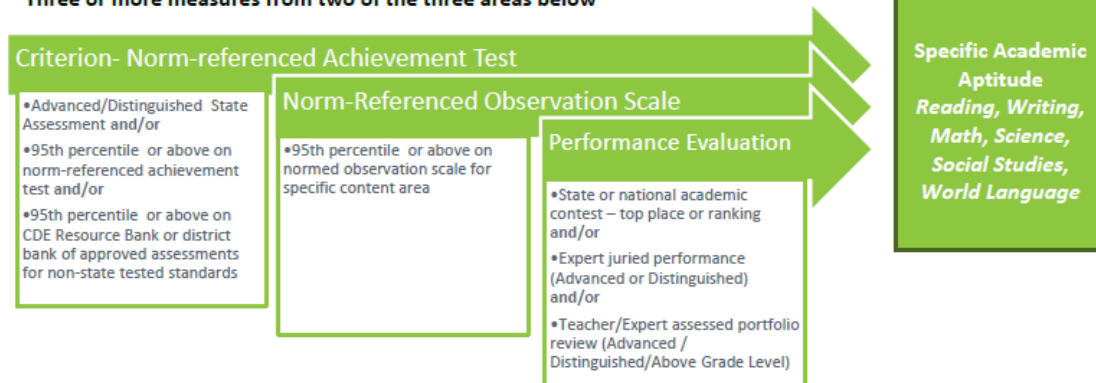
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### Area of Giftedness: Specific Academic Aptitude (without Cognitive)

Content areas for specific academic aptitude include: reading, writing, math, science, social studies and world language. **Two pathways may lead to identification in the area of specific academic aptitude.**

Second, a student may not score 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on a cognitive assessment. However, a review team may determine a **comprehensive** body of evidence demonstrates gifted academic ability. Content specific measurement tools to meet criteria for identification should include at least three or more measures from two of the three areas below. When cognitive data does not meet gifted criteria, identification in a specific academic aptitude requires an examination of multiple data points and trends over time.

**Three or more measures from two of the three areas below**



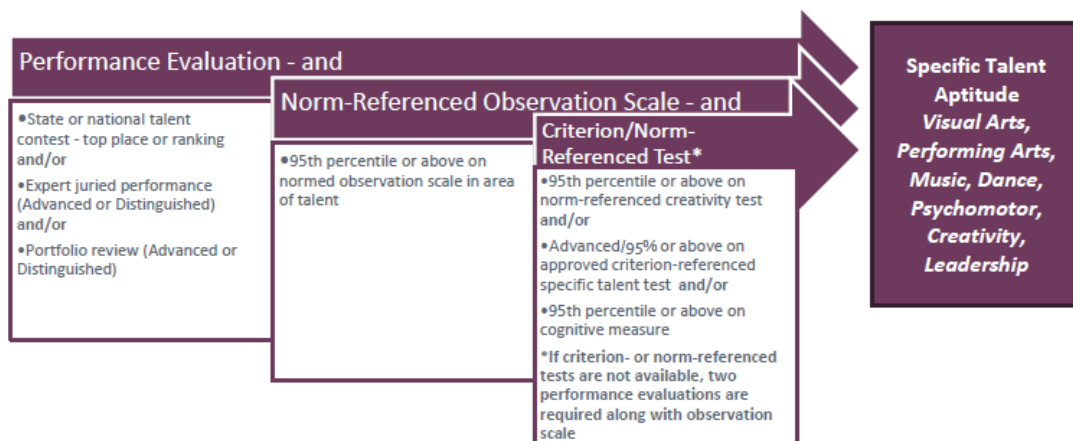
## Gifted Identification Criteria: Specific Talent Aptitude Department of Gifted Education



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### Area of Giftedness: Specific Talent Aptitude

Identification in the talent domains requires the examination of a variety of instruments and multiple pathways that lead to identification. Talent domains include: visual arts, performing arts, music, dance, psychomotor, creativity and leadership. Often criterion- or norm-referenced assessments are not available in a talent area; therefore performance evaluation is an important component in the body of evidence. If data from a valid and reliable test are not available to demonstrate exceptional ability, two or more indicators in the performance area may be used to meet identification criteria along with an exceptional rating on a norm-referenced observation scale. Identification in area of psychomotor is designated for national-level athletes who require programming accommodations to address the number of school days that might be missed during training and/or competitions. Districts are not required to provide or financially support athletic coaching, training or competitions for students identified in this area.



## Programming

Student data is used to match students to appropriate available programming. Services for all identified students seek to ensure that they continue to make growth commensurate with their ability in their strength areas, and to perform at advanced and distinguished levels. Programming is described in the student's Advanced Learning Plan and may include advanced classes, curriculum compacting in the regular classroom, differentiated instruction in the regular classroom, or other targeted services. Programming may also include content area or grade level acceleration, rapid pacing through the curriculum, mentoring, and affective (counseling) support services. Staff, parent, student and community all share responsibility for encouraging and supporting the student's continued growth in his/her identified strength areas.

## Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)

The State of Colorado mandated that all identified gifted and talented students shall have an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP). These plans are to be reviewed and updated annually. Each plan consists of at least one strength-based goal for each identified area of giftedness, an affective goal, a parent support goal, and service structures. Plans are developed in conjunction with school personnel, the student, and family. A copy of the ALP is placed in the child's cumulative file. The district has a process for transferring the ALP to the next grade level.

## Portability

The Exceptional Children's Education 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."

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). 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 important 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.

Although rules require portability, 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 do not vary. **If the receiving district's gifted review team determines the previous district identified the student using criteria not aligned to state guidelines, 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 students to re-evaluate the identification determination.

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 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.*

## Parent, Family, Student Communication and Engagement

**District** strives to provide opportunities for families to be involved with and participate in the school community. Parents are informed of identification procedures through information included in this handbook, letters sent home, and gifted identification information posted on the district website. Progress reporting of ALP goals occurs during parent teacher conferences and/or progress reports sent home. Programming options are discussed with parents and students during the development and review of the ALP. **Parents are encouraged to participate in the school community by attending parent teacher conferences, school accountability committee meetings, and family nights hosted by the school.** Parents have access to education about gifted topics and parenting gifted children through the East Central BOCES gifted education website and parent speakers at Gifted and Talented regional events.

## Procedure for Disagreement

### Dispute Resolution

ECBOCES recommends that member districts in our Administrative Unit follow the dispute resolution guidelines listed below when concerns are presented in relation to gifted identification and programming. Delete this comment for final revision.

- 1) Parents are notified of the identification or programming decision in writing by the local school district within 5 business days of the decision.
- 2) Parents have 7 days from receipt of the notice to file a written notice of dispute with the school district Gifted & Talented Coordinator.
- 3) District gifted and talented coordinator (and teachers as needed) meet with parents to discuss dispute.
- 4) At the end of the meeting, parents receive a summary of the meeting, including any decision adjustment if made.
- 5) If parents still have disagreement with school decision, parents have seven days to request district administration (principal and/or superintendent) to review the decision.
- 6) Parents receive a written summary of the meeting within five business days, including any decision adjustment if made.
- 7) If there is still no agreement, at the parent's or district's request, the Gifted and Talented Coordinator for East Central BOCES and/or the Gifted Education Regional Consultant will review the case and may meet with parents and district representatives to assist with mediation.
- 8) Parents receive a summary of findings and of any decision made after review of district case by the East Central BOCES Coordinator and/or the Gifted Education Regional Consultant within five business days.
- 9) If agreement can still not be reached, parents can address the local district school board who will be responsible for final decision.
- 10) Parents are notified of final decision in writing by the local school board within seven days.

## Additional Information & Resources

Websites with information on Gifted and Talented:

[ecbores.org](http://ecbores.org)

[cde.state.co.us/gt](http://cde.state.co.us/gt)

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

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

[coloradogifted.org/](http://coloradogifted.org/)

[giftedguru.com](http://giftedguru.com)

[byrdseed.com](http://byrdseed.com)