Department of Education
Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Gifted & Talented (G&T)

Frequently Asked Questions - Assessment

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) provides Gifted & Talented (G&T) programs for students who meet assessment eligibility requirements, apply for admission, and are accepted via lottery. Students scoring at or above the 97th percentile are eligible for placement in both citywide and district G&T programs. Students who perform at or above the 90th percentile are eligible for placement in G&T district programs only. Citywide programs admit students from any New York City district, and district programs admit students who live in specific districts. G&T programs provide an enriched, accelerated curriculum and instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of academically advanced students.

For the 2012-13 school year, the DOE is making an adjustment to the assessments used to determine student eligibility for G&T programs. This document answers frequently asked questions about the assessments.

Which assessments are used to determine student eligibility?
Student eligibility for G&T programs is determined by student outcomes on two assessments, which measure verbal and nonverbal abilities.

The *Otis Lennon School Ability Test- 8th Edition* (OLSAT-8) measures verbal reasoning and comprehension skills, as well as abstract thinking and reasoning skills. Test items are presented in a multiple-choice format and are proven valid measures of logical reasoning skills. Students complete test items such as:

- detecting likenesses and differences;
- recalling words and numbers;
- following directions;
- classifying items;
- establishing sequences;
- solving arithmetic problems; and,
- completing analogies.

Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, the *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test- 2nd Edition* (NNAT-2) will replace the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment* (BSRA). The NNAT-2 is a measure of students' nonverbal abilities, including critical thinking and problem solving using nonverbal reasoning skills. There are four types of nonverbal tasks measured in the NNAT-2:

- pattern completion (e.g. look at a design and identify which portion is missing)
- reasoning by analogy (e.g. consider relationships between several geometric shapes)
- serial reasoning (e.g. determine a sequence in a series of shapes)
- spatial visualization (e.g. visualize how two or more objects would look if combined)

What are the changes to the G&T assessments in the 2012-13 school year?
The DOE will continue to use the OLSAT-8, but beginning in the 2012-13 school year, only the verbal component of this assessment will be used. The non-verbal component of the OLSAT-8 and the BSRA, which were used in previous years to measure non-verbal abilities, will be replaced by the NNAT-2 beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

The BRSA, a school readiness assessment, measures the kinds of skills and knowledge that children acquire in educational settings. The NNAT-2 is a measure of children's cognitive abilities in the nonverbal domain. While both elements are important to children's success in school, nonverbal cognitive aptitude is a more accurate indicator of giftedness in diverse populations because the impact of primary spoken language, socioeconomic background, culture, or prior school experience is lessened.

Why is the DOE making these changes to the assessments? What is the research base for making these changes?
By introducing the NNAT-2 as a companion to the OLSAT-8, the DOE will decrease the impact of test prep and prior academic experiences on student G&T assessment results, and increase the accuracy of assessment and placement.

Research has shown that nonverbal measures, such as the NNAT-2, are particularly appropriate when the goal is to find gifted children from diverse populations because the completely nonverbal content puts every child on a level playing field. Gifted children may speak other languages, come from different cultures, and demonstrate varying levels of prior academic achievement, and yet they might not be included in gifted programs. It has been recognized for more than 80 years that nonverbal tests of general ability reduce this disparity. Specifically, recent studies indicate that the NNAT-2 yields small racial and ethnic group differences, and is a good predictor of student achievement.

Are there any changes to the test administration procedures?
The G&T assessment administration will be very similar to previous administrations – in general, parents can expect the same testing procedures as before. Pre-K students will continue to take the exam in a 1:1 setting. One change to note is that students in grades K-2 previously took some components of the exam in a 1:1 setting, and now these students will take the assessments in small groups. Young children (four-year-olds born in 2007) are *not* expected to record written responses. The test administrator will record their responses.

How are the assessments scored, and how are parents notified of their child's results?
All assessment materials are returned to the test vendor for scanning and scoring. Parents will receive their child's overall percentile rank, which determines eligibility for G&T schools and programs. The nonverbal component of the assessment is weighted at 65% and the verbal component of the assessment is weighted at 35%.

After the assessment has been administered and scored, parents receive a score report both by email and USPS mail (for online applicants) or only by USPS mail (for in-person applicants).

How are families notified of the G&T testing, application, and admissions process?
Each fall, the NYC DOE publishes a parent handbook which outlines the G&T assessment, application, and admissions process. Schools receive notification letters to send to parents, informing them of the G&T program and process, as well as hard copies of the G&T Handbook. Schools distribute the handbook to families who request a copy. Additionally, the G&T Handbook is published online at: www.nyc.gov/schools/gt. Parents whose children are participating in the assessment, application, and admissions process receive regular communication via email and/or US mail.

How do I apply if I want my child to be tested?
A Request for Testing (RFT) form is completed by parents who wish to have their children participate in the G&T assessment process. All pre-kindergarten through second grade students (PK-2) who are New York City residents at the time of testing are eligible to submit an RFT,[1] which is included in the DOE's G&T Handbook. Parents may submit the form in person at their child's school[2] or online at http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/applyonline. Families may begin submitting RFTs in late September/early October. The deadline to submit an RFT is at the end of October/early November. Student performance on the G&T assessments determines the programs or schools to which they are eligible to apply.

How can students prepare to take the assessments?
Families should make sure their child gets adequate sleep and eats a nutritionally balanced meal prior to taking the G&T assessment. While children should be encouraged to do their best, they should also be reminded that they are not expected to know the answer to every question.

Families may review the practice test materials with their children, which are included in the G&T Handbook. Families can also review basic concepts that students are likely to encounter on the assessments. While a practice test is provided, it is only meant to familiarize young children with the test experience, some test items, and the test structure.

Are the assessments available in other languages?
Yes. Alternate language assessments are available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese & Mandarin), French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Urdu.

What if my child is absent on the day of the assessment administration?
Current NYC DOE public school students who are absent due to illness will have their test rescheduled at the discretion of their schools, within the test administration window. To inquire about make-up administration, public school parents should contact their school's test coordinator.

For DOE pre-k and non-public school students who are absent from their scheduled test administration due to illness, parents may contact the Accountability Service Desk (212) 374-6646 to arrange for a new test date within the test administration window. Parents should be prepared to provide a valid explanation and/or documentation for their child's absence. The DOE reserves the right to reschedule the assessment based on availability, but generally makes every effort to accommodate the request for a new test date.

How do I report an issue with a test administration?
Parents wishing to report an issue with their child's test administration must do so in writing within 48 hours of the test administration. Reports must be sent to Gifted & Talented Test Administration Services at 52 Chambers Street- Room 309, New York, NY 10007 or via email (OAServicedesk@schools.nyc.gov).

[1] Parents of students in kindergarten or first grade moving into New York City after the deadline to submit the RFT may not complete an application or test prior to establishing permanent residency in New York City. Once permanent residency in New York City has been established, parents may visit their local Enrollment Office to register their children for the summer administration for the G&T assessment, which is provided for students who arrived in New York City after the fall RFT deadline.
[2] Parents of private school students must submit the form to their local Enrollment Office.