

## Gifted & Talented (G&T) Frequently Asked Questions - Assessment

Gifted & Talented (G&T) programs are one way the NYC Department of Education (DOE) supports the needs of exceptional students. G&T programs aim to deliver an enriched, accelerated curriculum and rigorous instructional strategies for students who meet eligibility requirements. Students who take the required assessments and are eligible to apply for admission may be offered placement based on our published criteria and available seats. Students scoring at or above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile are eligible to apply for placement in both citywide and district G&T programs. Students who perform at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile are eligible to apply for placement in district G&T programs only. Citywide programs admit students from any New York City district, and district programs give priority to students who live in specific districts.

For the 2013-14 school year, the DOE will administer the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT-2). Because of scoring errors made by the testing vendor in the 2012-13 G&T process, the DOE is requiring that additional procedural and quality assurance safeguards be utilized this year and that a refined scoring methodology be used to identify eligible students. This document answers frequently asked questions about these changes and the G&T testing process.

### **1. Which assessments are used to determine student eligibility?**

Student eligibility for G&T schools and programs is determined by student outcomes on two assessments, which measure verbal and nonverbal cognitive abilities. The *Otis Lennon School Ability Test- 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* (OLSAT-8) measures verbal reasoning and comprehension skills, as well as abstract thinking and logical reasoning skills in a multiple-choice format. The *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test- 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (NNAT-2) measures students' nonverbal abilities, including critical thinking and problem solving, through questions that address pattern completion, reasoning by analogy, serial reasoning, and spatial visualization. For additional information on each assessment, see the G&T Program Handbook which may be found on the G&T website ([www.nyc.gov/schools/gt](http://www.nyc.gov/schools/gt)).

The NNAT-2 and the verbal portion of the OLSAT-8 are reliable and valid measures of student abilities. These assessments are used by school districts across the country to identify students who may be eligible for gifted and talented programs. Students who take the NYC G&T assessment will be scored using national norms. This means that their performance will be measured against that of their peers from around the country who also took these tests. Research suggests that nonverbal measures, such as the NNAT-2, are particularly appropriate for identifying gifted children because the nonverbal content assesses different cognitive skills that apply to all children, including those who speak other languages, come from different cultures, and demonstrate varying levels of prior exposure to academic content.

### **2. Why isn't the DOE changing the assessments used to identify G&T eligibility?**

Any errors made during last year's process were the result of scoring calculation errors on the part of the vendor. They in no way reflect the validity and reliability of the assessments administered. The NNAT-2 and the verbal portion of the OLSAT-8 are nationally recognized assessments used to determine giftedness across the country.

The DOE is currently reviewing alternative assessment options for the G&T program. Based on this review, the DOE may release a Request for Proposals (RFP) at a later date for alternate assessments to identify G&T eligibility.

**3. What changes is the DOE making to address the scoring errors made by the testing vendor last year? What additional quality assurance measures will be in place?**

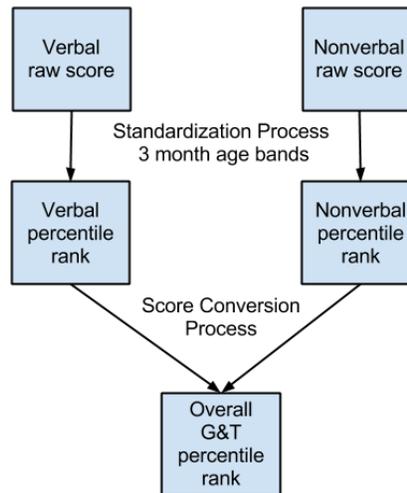
The DOE has worked extensively with the test vendor to ensure that additional procedural safeguards will be implemented for the 2013-14 G&T process. When last year's errors were identified and communicated, the vendor engaged both the DOE and an independent, third party group to audit the documented Assessment and Information process. As a result of the audit, the vendor has incorporated an internal and external quality assurance process designed to flag and correct errors before scores or results are reported.

**4. How will the assessments be scored for the 2013-14 G&T process? Are there any changes to how student eligibility is determined?**

Like last year, this year a student's overall G&T percentile rank will be used to determine eligibility to apply for district and/or citywide G&T programs. To calculate percentile ranks, the raw scores for each test are placed on a common scale, called an age-based normalized standard score, and reported as NAI (nonverbal standard score, for the NNAT-2) and SAI (verbal standard score, for the OLSAT), on a student's score report. The scales for the NAI and SAI are numbers between 50-150 and 40-160, respectively.

The DOE is making several adjustments to the scoring methodology to identify G&T eligibility in 2013-14. While the use of age-based normalized standard scores will remain the same, the weighting of each score is being adjusted. Last year, overall percentile ranks were calculated by weighting the NAI at 65% and the SAI at 35% of the overall percentile rank. These weighted NAI and SAI were combined to create a composite score, which was then converted to an overall percentile rank. This year, students' overall percentile ranks will be calculated using the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) associated with each student's NAI and SAI scores, instead of using composite scores. NCEs are numbers between 1 and 99 that show where a student falls along the normal (bell) curve. NCEs indicate a student's rank (how many students out of 100 had a lower score). NCEs can be averaged, which is important when combining assessments to wholistically understand student abilities in more than one domain (e.g. verbal and nonverbal). The NCEs associated with the NAI and SAI will be combined and averaged to generate an overall percentile rank. Since the NCEs will be averaged, the NAI and SAI will now be weighted equally at 50% in the calculation of the overall percentile rank.

Please see [Figure 1](#) below, for a graphic representation of the scoring methodology.



**Figure 1**

**5. Why is the G&T scoring methodology changing?**

After observing and analyzing the performance of NYC students on the assessments last year, the DOE has decided to adjust the scoring methodology. The Normal Curve Equivalency methodology is not new to the G&T process, and was used during the 2007-2012 G&T assessment administrations with the OLSAT and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The DOE changed the methodology last year from NCE-based scores to composite-based scores when the new nonverbal test (NNAT-2) was introduced. Since a composite score will not be calculated to generate the overall percentile rank, returning to the previously utilized Normal Curve Equivalency method is appropriate.

**6. How are families notified of the G&T testing, application, and admissions process?**

Each fall, the NYC DOE publishes a G& T Program Handbook which outlines the G&T assessment, application, and admissions process. Schools send explanatory letters to parents to inform them of the G&T program and process. Schools distribute hard copies of the G&T Handbook to families who request a copy. Additionally, the G&T Handbook is published online at: [www.nyc.gov/schools/gt](http://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. Parents may obtain more information about how to request testing for their child and about program requirements by reviewing the G&T Program Handbook.