



THE COUNCIL  
OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
CITY HALL  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

November 6, 2008

Chancellor Joel I. Klein  
New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Klein:

We are writing to express our extreme frustration and anger over changes made to the admissions policy and process for gifted and talented (G&T) programs. These changes were implemented citywide this year by the Department of Education (DOE) to improve G&T education through greater "equity and access" and setting "clear, high standards" for admission. Despite being forewarned by academics, parents, advocates and other stakeholders that the proposed changes would not have the desired effect, DOE proceeded to implement the ill-advised modifications.

In his January, 2005 State of the City address, based on a theme of increasing opportunity for all New Yorkers, Mayor Bloomberg also promised to maintain all existing G&T programs and to create more in "historically under-served districts." According to news reports, the changes implemented by DOE have had exactly the opposite effect. Whereas last year only two districts had no entry-level G&T programs, this year 7 districts lack such programs. The total number of entry-level G&T students also dropped by more than half this fall, from 2,678 last year to 1,305 this year. This drop occurred despite DOE's greater outreach efforts, which resulted in a huge increase in the number of students that applied for G&T classes (16,324 in 2008 up from 6,246 in 2007, according to DOE data).

Further, rather than becoming more integrated, G&T classes have become far less diverse. In a school system in which the kindergarten and first grade student population is 17% white, 41% Hispanic, 27% black and 15% Asian, this year's entry level G&T classes are 48% white, 9% Hispanic, 13% black and 28% Asian. This represents a big step backward from ratios under the previous admissions policy which resulted in G&T classes that were 33% white, 15% Hispanic, 31% black and 20% Asian.

The change in G&T policy has created additional inequities. There are now some G&T kindergarten classes with as few as 8-11 students in the same schools where other kindergarten classes struggle with 22-28 students. Also, rather than guaranteeing a G&T seat to all eligible

children, some students, primarily those from poor districts, who achieved the required test score for entry were unable to take advantage of G&T placement because there was no G&T program nearby and DOE denied bus transportation to them.

It is our belief that the source of most of the problems cited above results from DOE's decision to base admission to entry-level G&T programs solely on a high cutoff score from a weighted average of two standardized tests. The tests now being used are the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The BSRA was introduced during the 2008 admissions process to replace the Gifted Rating Scale (GRS), a measure based on teacher observation that DOE claimed was too subjective. Initially, DOE maintained that only those scoring in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on a weighted average of these exams would be admitted because, "The research on G&T education shows...children in the top 5% need significant curricular modification and adaptation in order to succeed academically." (However, the director of the Gifted Development Center in Colorado, the source cited by DOE, has stated in published reports that research shows that only the top 2-3% are deemed to need special programs with specially trained teachers.) When DOE's top 5% standard produced too few eligible students, the standard was lowered to those scoring at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally. Lowering the standard still resulted in less than half as many students entering G&T programs and far less diversity than the old policy.

Many experts contend that this is a misuse of standardized tests, since neither the OLSAT nor BSRA were designed to identify gifted children, but instead were intended to measure school readiness. Critics also maintain that there is an inherent racial and class bias in such standardized exams. Children of wealthier parents certainly have access to far more books and other resources and are more likely to be exposed to the concepts measured by these tests. More importantly, early childhood specialists point out that standardized tests are unreliable for use with young children, because of widely varying rates of development. Since a test score is only a one-day snapshot of a student's performance, there's always the chance that a gifted child who is having a bad day or who has test anxiety will not do well on the exam. In addition, rapid expansion in the number of tests given inevitably leads to exams being administered by many more inexperienced testers, which increases the chances of testing errors. There are also built-in disincentives for principals to increase the number of students tested – for many, it means they'll lose their school's brightest students to a G&T program in another school, which is likely to lower their school's Progress Report grade and possibly place their job in jeopardy.

We call upon the DOE to make the following changes in the G&T admissions process and eligibility criteria for next year.

1. We urge you to set aside 10% of kindergarten (the entry-level for all G&T programs next year) seats in each community school district for G&T programs next year.
2. If DOE chooses to continue to use the OLSAT and BSRA tests, we urge you to follow the recommendation of the director of the Gifted Development Center, who suggests that the top-scoring children on either test be admitted, rather than using a weighted average of the two. This would help students who excel in different areas, rather than giving an advantage to those who score well in areas measured by the OLSAT, currently weighted twice as much as the BSRA.

3. G&T kindergarten classes should be housed in the schools with the largest number of eligible students (by increasing the number to 10%, these classes could be made available in perhaps one-half of elementary schools or more). That would provide an incentive to principals to maximize the number of students tested.
4. For all grades above kindergarten, we urge you to base G&T admissions, in part, on teacher recommendations, rather than solely on the basis of standardized test scores.

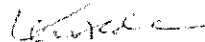
In effect, setting aside 10% of seats for top scorers in each district uses local rather than national norms, which will increase both the overall number of G&T students and increase diversity in G&T programs, which should more closely reflect each district's population. Because of the unreliability of standardized tests for young children and other reasons cited above, we believe that it is better to cast a wide net and err on the side of inclusion, rather than exclusion of possibly gifted children in entry-level G&T programs. Setting the number of entry-level seats at 10% will also allow DOE to better plan for incoming students, since the number of G&T kindergarten students to be served will be known in advance.

The DOE has succeeded in one area – more outreach and information to parents has led to greater awareness of G&T programs, more students tested and greater demand for G&T seats. Unfortunately, the new policies have resulted in fewer children being accepted, especially poor and minority children, and far greater disappointment for New York City children and families. Of course, the ultimate solution is to create more high quality schools in every neighborhood, where all parents would be happy to send their children to learn. We look forward to working with you to help realize that goal, which we know that you share. To that end, we invite you to come and personally testify at an oversight hearing on DOE's G&T programs that will be held on December 16<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm in Council Chambers. We look forward to your receiving your response to our requests.

Sincerely,



Robert Jackson  
Chair, Education Committee



Lew Fidler  
Assistant Majority Leader

Cc: Erin Stevens



**Department of  
Education**

Joel I. Klein  
Chancellor

52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Testimony of Deputy Chancellor Marcia V. Lyles  
Teaching and Learning

City Council Committee on Education  
Gifted and Talented

December 16, 2008

Good afternoon Chairman Jackson and members of the Education Committee. My name is Dr. Marcia Lyles, Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at the New York City Department of Education. I am joined by my colleagues Anna Commitante, Director of English Language Arts, Social Studies and Gifted and Talented, Elizabeth Sciabarra, Chief Executive of the Office of Student Enrollment, and Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor. We are pleased to be here today to discuss the Department's gifted and talented (G&T) programs.

## **Historical Context**

Before we delve into our most recent changes in G&T, I would like to provide the committee with some background and context.

The DOE started to analyze the City's Gifted & Talented programs in 2004. Our initial analysis identified local application processes characterized by diverse and inconsistent methods for outreach and parent notification, identification, and placement. There was also little cohesion and clarity of curriculum and instruction. There was no focused, organized program for teacher and administrator professional development and little articulation of Gifted & Talented program standards. While there were high-quality programs in some school districts across the City, the landscape at the time reflected each local district's definition of what it meant to be "gifted," what services gifted students needed, how to assess whether students were gifted, and how to assign and place gifted students into programs.

Another problem at the time was the insufficient process utilized by some districts when it came to notifying parents about gifted and talented programs. We heard too often from parents and community members throughout the City about the inadequate outreach efforts by districts. In some districts, parents were never told of their children's assessment results. Rather, they were advised only if their children were eligible or not. We heard that many parents did not fully understand what the district's assessment tools were meant to assess and why the district had selected the assessment that was being used. In 2005 some districts were using homemade interviews and assessments that had neither been standardized nor validated. Some districts were using the Stanford Binet, some districts were using OLSAT, others were using SLOSSEN, SOI (Structures of Intellect), and still others were using ECLAS or "local assessments." Generally there was no fair, coherent system that allowed all parents in a community to learn of the opportunities available.

As a City, we also faced a complaint from the federal Office of Civil Rights related to our G&T admissions process. OCR's complaint about Parent Access to Information on School Programs (Case # 02-96-1118) said it was not fair to use the Stanford Binet IQ test as the sole determining factor for eligibility. (Since 1997, DOE has been working first with New York State Office of Civil Rights and then with the State Attorney General to resolve issues relating to equity of opportunity for all students in G&T programs.)

Our initial analysis also displayed a highly fragmented system – difficult for most parents to navigate – and challenging to assess.

## **Setting Clear Standards and Making G&T Accessible**

We decided to develop a clear central policy for G&T programs that could be implemented over time and that would be applied consistently and fairly in all districts.

In the first year of implementation (2005-06) DOE simply asked that all districts employ the use of multiple criteria to identify Gifted & Talented students. This meant that districts continued to use the assessments they had been using but were required to add an additional assessment component. We asked districts to use two assessments so that they would be in compliance with the US Department of Education's guidance on the matter.

The DOE also issued a Request for Proposal to select two assessment instruments that would be used in future years to identify students for placement to public school Gifted & Talented programs. We had two goals: addressing the recommendations of the US DOE and using a single measuring stick in our City of giftedness. We received proposals from several large and well-known test publishers and organizations

and awarded the contract to Harcourt Assessment, Inc. (which has since become Pearson Assessment, Inc.).

As we conducted the RFP process, we also began working with several local organizations and universities with expertise and knowledge in the field of gifted and talented education to provide focused professional development. Our goal was to improve G&T instruction.

A year later, the DOE required each school district to use the two assessments selected through the RFP process.

Though all districts were using the same two assessments, the testing processes and scheduling were handled at the regions and centrally the Office of Student Enrollment handled the placement process.

During the first year of implementation (2006-07) of the central process, DOE implemented no eligibility criteria. The Office of Student Enrollment simply continued to offer students a placement in ranked score order (and using parents' choices for school programs), as long as there were available seats to fill. This meant that in districts where there were few programs, the pool of students placed reflected students with very high scores. However, it also meant that in districts with many programs, students with combined G&T scores in the lowest percentiles were placed in Gifted and Talented Programs. This was a disservice to the students, the parents, and the schools.

The data showed us that filling all available seats was not a good system as this led to the placement of children into Gifted and Talented programs who were not ready for an accelerated educational program. This placement process of filling all seats also affected the instructional level of the class. If we believe that these programs should actually provide a service to students who need this kind of educational setting in order to learn well – then we needed to figure out which students would most benefit from the Gifted and Talented program placement. This was not an easy task and we spent some time looking into what other large urban school districts were doing and initially the decision was made to implement eligibility criteria at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for district programs and at the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile for citywide programs.

That first year, we also learned other lessons. For example, we found that the one of the assessments, which required teacher evaluations, was not practical in our system. Some private schools refused to comply, for example. It took a lot of time for teachers to evaluate each student by hand. Plus, we realized that while teachers who have daily contact with students are able to recognize traits of giftedness over time and can address the limitations of a single standardized assessment, some research has also shown that teacher recommendations are not always reliable. Two teachers will frequently rate the same child differently, or one teacher will frequently rate two children with equal abilities differently. This lack of reliability, often due to subjective assumptions and beliefs about students unrelated to their actual cognitive abilities, tends to favor students who are well socialized into the norms of the academic classroom, who are good at completing class assignments, and who behave well in class. Consequently teacher recommendations may systematically overlook students with strong intellectual abilities who may be bored with the curriculum or the pacing of the class, who are not the “teacher pleasers” and usually not the best behaved.

For these reasons, we decided to seek out an alternative assessment to replace the Gifted Rating Scale (GRS). We realized that we needed two assessments that were objective and that could be administered at the same time and that would complement each other well.

### **Today's System**

A little more than a year ago, we worked to improve on the changes we had implemented in Gifted and Talented, creating a single citywide standard for gifted education and creating a single, centrally run admissions process. Our goals were to make sure that a parent could expect the same high level instruction no matter what neighborhood his or her family lived in—and to make these programs more accessible to families in all parts of the City.

We continued to use the OLSAT, an assessment that has been around for a very long time and is currently used throughout the United States as a tool for placement to Gifted and Talented programs. We selected the OLSAT because it was the product that met the needs of NYC and it looked at students' abilities in a variety of areas – in both verbal and non-verbal domains. It can be administered by teachers after a short training session, and it was widely used and had been standardized with a large national sample.

We also started using the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) in the place of the GRS. BSRA presents six subtests and asks students to identify colors, shapes, letters, and numbers, make comparisons, and distinguish size.

We chose these two assessments because they measure two different cognitive dimensions of giftedness: general intellectual ability and general academic ability. Intellectual ability refers to a student's ability to think and reason with information, including verbal and arithmetic reasoning, recognizing and extending patterns, reasoning through analogies, and classifying information. The OLSAT was designed to measure this general intellectual ability. Academic readiness refers to a student's ability to master age-appropriate academic content. The BSRA was designed to measure this general academic ability.

We also set a citywide standard for giftedness so that "gifted" would mean the same thing across the City. At first, we proposed setting the bar at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile against national norms. We decided later in the fall to set the cut off at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. We made this decision for two reasons. First, after listening to parents' feedback, we agreed that we could accommodate more students who might be able to handle the demands of the program. Second, we thought the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile would still maintain high program standards and integrity. The students scoring at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile and above would benefit from **some** curricular modification and advancement while those in the top 3% - those children identified for citywide gifted and talented programs – will benefit from **significant** curricular modification and acceleration.

Based on the feedback we received from some schools and teachers this school year, we've learned that this was the right decision. Educators are telling us that the students have been prepared to handle the demands of a challenging and often fast-paced instructional program.

A quick note on the assessments: It's important to remember that the perfect assessment instrument does not exist. Any test in use anywhere will most certainly have its advantages and its disadvantages. But we also know that it is only with a standardized assessment that we can be sure that we are fair in our decision-making, providing students with equal opportunity to access these programs. We understand and appreciate that any test will fall short because we know that young children grow and develop at different rates and at different points in time. We also understand that there is no fixed or absolute definition of a gifted and talented child. While there are new theories concerning the developmental nature of intellectual ability, we also know that we have children that enter the New York City public school system with a great capacity for learning quickly and well. We want to provide these children with a more demanding and aggressive educational experience, and we also want to ensure that **all** students have some access to frequent enrichment and challenging learning experiences.

This is the reason the Office is called **Gifted/Talented and Enrichment**. We believe that programs and services should exist along a continuum, so that all students receive the support they need. We encourage all schools to implement enrichment programs that provide students with challenges, and nurture their talents, abilities, and interests. We also want to support the district Gifted and Talented self-contained programs for students who require some daily instructional modification and/or acceleration, and we want to support those top scoring students in our citywide Gifted and Talented schools who will require the most instructional modification and acceleration.

At last count, we had about 170 schools K-8 that were actively implementing schoolwide enrichment programs. Many of these schools have committed time and funds to send their teachers to special week long summer training at the University of Connecticut that focuses on developing these programs. In 2004 only eight public schools in NYC availed themselves of this training, in 2005, sixty-six; in 2006, one hundred twenty-four; in 2007, ninety-three and in 2008 ninety-six. That is a total of **379** public schools

since 2004 in NYC whose administrators and teachers spent an entire week of their summer vacation learning how best to offer exciting enrichment opportunities to all learners in their schools.

It has been suggested that we should set aside 10% of seats in each district for G&T programs. I wanted to briefly address this suggestion. In effect, this would take us back to the old days of local norms. While this may seem like a good compromise, what we will have is an inconsistent system of eligibility criteria once again. This will mean that the top 10 % in District X will include students from the 99<sup>th</sup> to the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile and the top 10 % in District Y might include students from the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. (In fact, according to last year's numbers, at least 14 of our 32 community districts would admit students with composite scores below the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile.) We are one city and parents should be able to expect that we hold our schools and students to a uniform standard.

We also have concerns about implementing programs in one-half or more of all elementary schools. We fear this will not yield high quality programs that are actually providing an instructional service, but rather watered-down programs that are gifted "in name only." If more programs are the recommendation, we suggest that these programs be enrichment programs. As we stated earlier, these programs can be easily implemented in schools and will encourage schools to serve the students in their own communities. This will also strengthen the instructional program for the entire school.

We recognize that today, although we've done a lot of outreach in the neediest neighborhoods, there is still disparity in G&T admissions around the city. Our challenge and our goal in the coming years is to close this gap. We have realigned our Office of Early Childhood Education to support our community-based organizations that provide pre-k services for the majority of our pre-K students. We understand the need to provide a strong, enriched developmentally appropriate pre-k experience.

Working with the Office of the Deputy Mayor, we are also targeting communities where we have an under-representation of students in G&T programs. And we have expanded full day pre-k programs in our public schools to prepare more students for school. It's our duty to provide all of our students with curriculum programs that meet their needs and will keep them engaged and challenged so that they can learn and grow. We are working on improving our pre-K enrollment and admissions process to help prepare all students by giving them access to quality pre-K programs. To prepare students for the challenges they will face in school—whether in gifted programs or general education programs—we are also piloting programs such as Core Knowledge, which we believe will provide our students with enhanced content and background knowledge starting in Kindergarten.

Plus, because we know that young students develop at different times, we are offering admission to G&T programs in Kindergarten and Grade 1, expanding access to these options. We believe strongly that we have give children in every community in our City access to these programs and we are committed to equitable opportunity for all students.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have been working hard to improve our gifted programs. Over the past four years, we have created a clear, high citywide standard. We have also opened up access to these programs. And we have worked with schools and educators to create enrichment programs in many of our elementary schools. We look forward to working with you in the future to improve these programs further. And I look forward to answering your questions.



**New York City  
Gifted & Talented Program  
Test Information  
2008-2009**

**Talented**

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|---|--|
| <p>يمكن الاطلاع على النسخ المترجمة لهذا المنشور، معلومات حول اختبار برنامج المتفوقين والموهوبين لسنة 2008-2009 للتلاميذ مواليد سنتي 2003 و2004، على شبكة الانترنت في الموقع الالكتروني أدناه .</p>  | <p>2003 년 및 2004 년에 태어난 학생들을 위한 2008-2009 학년도 뉴욕시 영재 프로그램 평가 정보 번역본을 다음 웹사이트에서 검색하실 수 있습니다.</p>  |
| <p>যেসব শিক্ষার্থী ২০০৩ ও ২০০৪ সালে জন্মগ্রহণ করেছে, তাদের জন্য 'নিউ ইয়র্ক সিটি গিফটেড অ্যান্ড ট্যালেন্টেড প্রোগ্রাম টেস্ট ইনফরমেশন ২০০৮ - ২০০৯' প্রকাশনার অনূদিত সংস্করণ নিচে উল্লিখিত ওয়েব সাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।</p>   | <p>С переводом этой публикации, "Информации о тестировании в 2008-2009 учебном году в программы г. Нью-Йорка для одарённых и талантливых учащихся, родившихся в 2003 и 2004 гг.", можно ознакомиться на нижеуказанном вебсайте.</p>  |
| <p>針對 2003 和 2004 年出生之學生的出版物《2008 - 2009 學年紐約市資優課程測驗資訊》(New York City Gifted &amp; Talented Program Test Information 2008 - 2009) 的翻譯版本可在下列網站上找到。</p>   | <p>En el sitio web que figura a continuación, se pueden encontrar las versiones traducidas de la publicación, Información para el examen del Programa de la Ciudad de Nueva York para estudiantes con aptitudes y talentos avanzados de 2008-2009, nacidos en 2003 y 2004:</p> |
| <p>Ou ka jwenn piblikasyon Enfòmasyon sou tèspou pwogram Gifted &amp; Talented (G&amp;T) 2008-2009 pou elèv ki fèt an 2003 y 2004 yo nan lòt lang si w ale sou sit wèb ki pi ba a.</p>  | <p>اس اشاعت کا ترجمہ شدہ متن، نیو یارک شہر 2009-2008 کے گفٹڈ اینڈ ٹیلنٹڈ پروگرام کے امتحان کی معلومات ان طلباء کے لیے جو کہ 2003 اور 2004 میں پیدا ہوئے ہوں مندرجہ ذیل ویب سائٹ پر حاصل کی جا سکتی ہے۔</p>   |
| <p>Translated versions of this publication, <i>New York City Gifted &amp; Talented Program Test Information 2008 - 2009 For students born in 2003 &amp; 2004</i>, can be found at the website listed below.<br/><b><a href="http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented/EligibilityApplications">http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented/EligibilityApplications</a></b>.</p> |  |



**Department of  
Education**

Joel I. Klein  
Chancellor

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The New York City Department of Education acknowledges the permission of Harcourt, Inc. for the reprinting of sections of this handbook and the sample OLSAT.

Gifted & Talented Programs are provided for students identified as gifted and talented by assessments that are administered by the New York City Department of Education (DOE). This handbook provides information about the assessments, the process for requesting testing and what parents can do to help their children prepare for the tests. The DOE provides testing for all pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2 students who are current New York City residents and wish to be considered for self-contained Gifted & Talented Programs.

In a self-contained classroom, gifted and talented students are grouped together for the entire day and receive appropriate instruction in all content areas. The term "G&T program" refers to this self-contained classroom model where children who have met the established criteria are grouped as a class for daily instruction. The DOE identifies gifted students as those children who perform at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on the assessments administered. Students scoring at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile are eligible for district G&T programs. Students who score at or above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile are eligible for placement to citywide G&T programs.

The department's recommendation is for teachers of children identified as gifted to differentiate instruction, provide appropriate enrichment opportunities, compact the curriculum and/or accelerate the content.

### **Applicants who were born in 2004 & 2003** (for K & 1 placement in the 2009-2010 school year)

#### **2008:**

**Beginning October 29:** G&T Program Test Information handbooks available to schools (with Request for Testing Forms and OLSAT practice test)

**November 1 – November 19:** Request for Testing forms (RFT) due

#### **2009:**

**January 5 – February 13:** OLSAT/BSRA testing at school sites for public school students

**January 10, 11, 24, 25 & 31 and February 1, 7, 8, 14 & 15:** OLSAT/BSRA testing at selected sites for non-public school children

**By early April:** Score reports and applications with available G&T sites mailed to eligible students

**By late April:** Applications due with program choices

**By late May:** Placement conducted and offers mailed

**By early June:** Parents accept/decline placement offer to Office of Student Enrollment

### **Applicants who were born in 2002 & 2001** (for 2 & 3 placement in the 2009-2010 school year)

#### **2008:**

**Beginning October 29:** G&T Program Test Information handbooks available to schools (with Request for Testing Forms and OLSAT practice test)

**November 1 – November 19:** Request for Testing forms (RFT) due

#### **2009:**

**February 23 – March 23:** OLSAT/BSRA testing at school sites for public school students

**March 14 & 15:** OLSAT/BSRA testing at selected sites for non-public school students

**By early May:** Score reports and applications with available G&T sites mailed to eligible students

**By mid May:** Applications due with program choices

**By late June:** Placement conducted and offers mailed

**By mid July:** Parents accept/decline placement offer to Office of Student Enrollment

1. Parents must first complete a Request for Testing Form (RFT). **The RFT form is included in this handbook before the sample test.** Additional forms are available at public schools, at all Borough Enrollment Offices and online at the DOE G&T website:  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented/EligibilityApplications>
2. Students will only be tested if a Request for Testing Form has been completed and returned to the DOE on or before Wednesday, November 19, 2008.
  - o Parents of students already enrolled in New York City Public Schools should return the form to their children's current school. These students will be tested in their own schools (see page i for the possible dates).
  - o Parents of students not currently enrolled in New York City Public Schools – i.e., in private or parochial school or enrolled in a Community-Based Organization (CBO) Pre-Kindergarten program or Charter School – should return the completed form to a Borough Enrollment Office (locations listed below). These students will be tested by trained DOE teachers on weekends in January, February and March of 2009 (see page i for the possible dates).
3. After tests have been administered and scored, only those students who score at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile will receive a G&T Program application by mail. All students will receive a score report by mail.

***It is extremely important that your address is recorded accurately and kept up-to-date throughout this process. For public school students, it is necessary to inform your school of any change in address.***

**Borough Enrollment Office Locations are listed below:**

| Borough  | Borough Enrollment Office  | Districts Served |
|----------|--|------------------|
| Bronx    | 1 Fordham Plaza, 7th Floor<br>Bronx, NY 10458<br>Phone: 718-741-8495 | 7, 9, 10         |
| Bronx    | 1230 Zerega Avenue<br>Bronx, NY 10462<br>Phone: 718-828-2975         | 8, 11, 12        |
| Brooklyn | 1780 Ocean Avenue<br>Brooklyn, NY 11230<br>Phone: 718-758-7687       | 17, 18, 22       |
| Brooklyn | 415 89th Street<br>Brooklyn, NY 11209<br>Phone: 718-759-4914         | 20, 21           |
| Brooklyn | 29 Fort Greene Place<br>Brooklyn, NY 11217<br>Phone: 646-596-1814    | 13, 14, 15, 16   |
| Brooklyn | 1665 St. Mark's Avenue<br>Brooklyn, NY 11233<br>Phone: 718-240-3600  | 19, 23, 32       |

| Borough       | Borough Enrollment Office   | Districts Served |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| Manhattan     | 333 Seventh Avenue, 12th Floor<br>New York, NY 10001<br>Phone: 212-356-3700     | 1, 2, 4          |
| Manhattan     | 388 West 125th Street, 7th Floor<br>New York, NY 10027<br>Phone: 212-342-8300   | 3, 5, 6          |
| Queens        | 28-11 Queens Plaza North<br>Long Island City, NY 11101<br>Phone: 718-391-8386   | 24, 30           |
| Queens        | 30-48 Linden Place<br>Flushing, NY 11354<br>Phone: 718-281-3791                 | 25, 26           |
| Queens        | 82-01 Rockaway Boulevard<br>Ozone Park, NY 11416<br>Phone: 718-348-2929         | 27               |
| Queens        | 90-27 Sutphin Boulevard<br>Jamaica, NY 11435<br>Phone: 718-557-2774             | 28, 29           |
| Staten Island | 715 Ocean Terrace, Building A<br>Staten Island, NY 10301<br>Phone: 718-420-5629 | 31               |

**How will students be informed of the date when they will be tested?**

- If your child is currently enrolled in a New York City public school, your child's school will inform you of the test date.
- If your child is not currently enrolled in a New York City public school, you will be informed of the scheduled test date and time by USPS mail.

### What assessments will be used?

The DOE will utilize two assessment instruments that have been used nationally in many districts. The *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)* and the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA)* will be used in combination to provide a thorough and balanced look at each child's intellectual abilities and to identify students who will benefit from participation in a self-contained G&T program.

### When will children be tested (BSRA and OLSAT)?

|  | Children born in 2004 & 2003  | Children born in 2002 & 2001                          |
|--|---|---|
| New York City public school students                         | School days: January 5, 2009 through February 13, 2009                        | School days: February 23, 2009 through March 23, 2009 |
| Non-public school children currently living in New York City | Weekend days: January 10, 11, 24, 25 & 31 and February 1, 7, 8, 14 & 15, 2009 | Weekend days: March 14 & 15, 2009                     |

### Why does the DOE consider multiple criteria for admissions?

Multiple criteria are considered so that many areas of ability will be measured and more than one assessment instrument will determine a child's placement in a G&T program.

### What does the OLSAT measure?

The OLSAT is designed to measure verbal, quantitative and figural reasoning skills that are most closely related to scholastic achievement. Tasks such as detecting likenesses and differences, recalling words and numbers, defining words, following directions, classifying, establishing sequence, solving arithmetic problems and completing analogies are included because they have been shown to be valid measures of an individual's ability to reason logically.

The OLSAT measures the cognitive abilities related to a child's aptitude. This test assesses children's thinking skills (abstract thinking and reasoning) and provides an understanding of children's relative strengths and weaknesses in performing a variety of reasoning tasks.

On the OLSAT, children will be tested in four clusters: Verbal Comprehension, Verbal Reasoning, Pictorial Reasoning and Figural Reasoning. Verbal reasoning does not correspond to speaking ability. All questions are presented in a multiple-choice format.

### What is the difference between the verbal and non-verbal sections of the assessment?

Verbal items assess a student's receptive language skills (their ability to listen carefully, follow directions and understand the vocabulary spoken by the test administrator). Non-verbal items assess a student's visual, spatial and arithmetic understandings. There are four content clusters, two clusters are verbal and two are non-verbal:

1. Verbal Comprehension (verbal): Measures the ability to manipulate or respond to information through listening to language, i.e. following directions.
2. Verbal Reasoning (verbal): Measures the ability to discover patterns or relationships and to solve problems through the use of language such as aural reasoning and arithmetic reasoning.
3. Pictorial Reasoning (non-verbal): Assesses the ability to reason using pictorial representations such as picture classification, picture analogies and pictures in a series.
4. Figural Reasoning (non-verbal): Assesses reasoning skills independent of language, i.e. figural classification, figural analogies, pattern matrices and figures in a series.

2008 – 2009 New York City Gifted and Talented Testing Program  
Otis-Lennon School Ability Test®, Eighth Edition (OLSAT 8)\*

**\*Tests are administered based on the birth year of the child,  
not current grade level.**

| Year of Birth         | OLSAT                                    |
|-----------------------|--|
| Children born in 2004 | OLSAT 8, Form 6, Level A, Questions 1-40 |
| Children born in 2003 | OLSAT 8, Form 6, Level A, Questions 1-60 |
| Children born in 2002 | OLSAT 8, Form 6, Level B, Questions 1-60 |
| Children born in 2001 | OLSAT 8, Form 6, Level C, Questions 1-60 |

**What specifically does the BSRA measure?**

The BSRA is designed to assess a child's concept knowledge and receptive language skills for school readiness. The BSRA contains the first six subtests of the *Bracken Basic Concept Scale* (BBCS). Since a high correlation exists between total scores on the BBCS (11 subtests) and the BSRA (six subtests), the DOE will administer the shorter BSRA in conjunction with the OLSAT.

**What specifically does each section or subtest of the BSRA measure?**

There are 6 sections, defined below:

1. Colors: Measures a child's knowledge and recognition of colors.
2. Letters: Measures a child's knowledge of upper and lowercase letters.
3. Numbers/Counting: Measures a child's recognition of single and double digit numerals and samples the child's ability to assign a number value to a set of objects.
4. Sizes: Measures a child's knowledge and recognition of terms such as tall, long, short, big, small and thick.
5. Comparisons: Measures a child's ability to match and/or differentiate objects based on one or more of their characteristics.
6. Shapes: Measures a child's understanding of one, two and three dimensional shapes.

**How do parents know that the OLSAT and BSRA use high standards to measure student ability?**

Each test question on the OLSAT has been rigorously reviewed by educators, measurement specialists and psychologists to ensure that it is of high quality and without bias toward any subgroup, including gender and ethnic/racial categories. The questions were reviewed for clarity, appropriateness of content, accuracy of correct answers, plausibility of answer options, appropriateness of vocabulary, absence of stereotyping or bias of any kind and general overall quality.

All items on the BSRA have been statistically analyzed and evaluated for difficulty, reliability, fit, bias and effectiveness across each age group and for each subtest.

Reliability and validity studies have been conducted and both tests have demonstrated good evidence of reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the accuracy and precision of the test scores. Validity refers to the extent to which the test measures what it is intended to measure.

**Will the assessments be offered in languages other than English?**

Materials related to the New York City DOE assessment program will be available to students with limited English proficiency, including speakers of Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Urdu.

**Who will score the tests?**

The OLSAT and BSRA materials, which are administered by trained educators, will be returned to Pearson Assessment for scanning and scoring.

**How will the scores be calculated?**

The scores of the OLSAT and BSRA will be combined to generate a total percentile score. The OLSAT score will be weighted 75% and the BSRA score will be weighted 25% to generate a total G&T score.

**What is a percentile rank?**

A percentile rank shows a student's relative standing in comparison to other students of the same age. A percentile is not the same as percent correct. Percentile ranks are useful in showing the students' standing within a group, but should not be used in describing differences between the scores of two or more students.

**Is the percentile rank based on the child's grade or age?**

The percentile rank is generated based on the child's age; each child is compared to others within the same three-month age band. Therefore, all percentile ranks show the student's standing in comparison to other students of the same age, not grade.

**When will results be available?**

Results/score reports will be mailed to the student's home – please check page i for more specific information. It is very important that parents provide us with current and complete addresses and contact information. *If your address changes after the Request for Testing Form is filed, make sure you provide your child's current school with the updated address.* If your child is currently enrolled in a New York City public school, be sure that your current address is listed in the school's database of information. If your child is not currently enrolled in a New York City public school and your child's address and/or biographical information changes after submitting the RFT form, please contact a Borough Enrollment Office in your borough of residence and have them update the information.

**How can parents help their children prepare?**

There are several things parents can do to help their children prepare for the G&T assessments. Parents should make sure children get adequate sleep and eat a nutritionally balanced meal prior to taking the OLSAT and BSRA. Parents can also aid children's performance by helping to ease their minds about the test. Reassurance from parents about the test can positively impact a child's test scores. Before the actual OLSAT administration, parents should review the OLSAT practice materials with their child. This practice test may be used to familiarize students with test items and the test structure. Parents can also review basic concepts that students are likely to encounter on the BSRA. Parents should read and review any and all information they receive regarding the testing experience. Parents should also encourage their children to do their best, while reminding them that they are not expected to know the answer to every question.

While the OLSAT Practice Test is provided, it is only meant to be used to familiarize young children with the test experience and some test items. Please remember that young children (4-year-olds born in 2004) are not expected to bubble in their responses. The test administrator will record the responses.

### **Is there an appeals process for the test administration?**

If parents wish to report a problem with any test administration, **the problem must be reported within 48 hours** of the test administration. Problems must be reported to the Office of Accountability within 48 hours of test administration via letter or email:

Office of Accountability, G&T Test Administration  
52 Chambers Street, Room 309  
New York, NY 10007  
[OAServicedesk@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:OAServicedesk@schools.nyc.gov)

For additional questions regarding the Assessments, please contact  
The Office of Accountability Service Desk at 212-374-6646.

### **What does my child need to be eligible for a district G&T program?**

1. Your child needs to score at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above.
2. Your child must be zoned to a district that has district G&T programs. We attempt to have a minimum of one G&T program in each district. However, if there are not enough children to open a G&T class in a specific district, we will offer those qualifying students placement in a neighboring district.

### **What does my child need to be eligible for a citywide G&T program?**

1. Your child must currently live in New York City.
2. Your child needs to score at the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile or above.

Students who score at or above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile are eligible for citywide programs and for their district programs, should their district have a G&T program. The citywide G&T schools serve eligible students from all five boroughs. However, there is no guarantee that a student will receive a placement offer to a citywide G&T program.

### **If my child is eligible, how will placement be determined?**

Placement is based on meeting qualification cut-offs, sibling priority, family preferences (ranked program choices) and remaining available seats.

For entrance into a district G&T program, students must score at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above. For entrance into the citywide programs, students must score at the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile or above.

All younger siblings who make the qualification cut-offs (90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for district programs and 97<sup>th</sup> percentile or above for citywide programs) will receive placements at the older sibling's school, as long as:

- there are enough seats for all eligible sibling applicants (there may be more eligible siblings than available seats),
- the older sibling is presently in grades K-4,
- and the applicant lists the sibling's school as his or her first choice.

After siblings are placed, all other eligible applicants will be rank-ordered from highest percentile to lowest eligible percentile. Students will only be placed in schools that have declared they have available seats.

### **What happens when many students have the same percentile rank and want a seat at the same program?**

When there are eligible applicants with the same percentile and not enough available seats for these applicants, all applicants with that same percentile will be offered placement in a random order. All offers are final and there are no wait lists.



**My older child attends a G&T program. I would like my younger child to be in the same school, but he or she did not make the qualification cut-off. What can I do?**

If a younger sibling does not make the qualification cut off for his or her older sibling's G&T program, he or she may file a placement exception request (PER) to attend the general education program offered in the same school, provided there are available seats. You can file a PER at your local Borough Enrollment Office.

**I have two children testing for entrance into a G&T program for the 2009-2010 school year. I would like them both to be in the same school, but only one of them made the qualification cut-off for a G&T program. What can I do?**

You may file a placement exception request, as explained in the answer directly above.

**What does a guaranteed placement offer mean?**

All eligible students are guaranteed a placement offer to a district program **only** if all district choices are ranked. There is no guarantee for a placement offer to a citywide program.

**If I receive a placement offer and decline that placement, can I still be considered for a placement later if there are available seats?**

All G&T placement offers are final. If you are offered a placement and you decline that placement, no other placement offer will be made. There are no wait lists.

**If my child receives placement to a G&T program, will transportation be provided?**

Placement to a G&T program does not guarantee school bus service. Transportation for G&T programs follows the same rules as for the rest of general education. In particular, if the program your child attends is in a different district than where you live, school bus transportation will NOT be available (but DOE will provide you with a MetroCard). If the program your child attends is in the district where you live, DOE will first use the table below to determine, based on your child's grade and distance from the school, whether or not she or he gets free transportation.

| GRADE LEVEL | WALKING DISTANCE FROM CHILD'S HOME TO SCHOOL |                                      |                                       |                                |
|-------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|             | Less than ½ mile                             | ½ mile or more, but less than 1 mile | 1 mile or more but less than 1½ miles | 1 ½ miles or more              |
| K-2         | Half fare MTA bus pass                       | Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard       | Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard        | Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard |
| 3-6         | No transportation is provided                | Half fare MTA bus pass               | Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard        | Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard |

If your child's grade and distance from school falls into a box above for "Either Yellow Bus or MetroCard," your child will get a yellow school bus if (a) The school has applied to OPT for yellow bus service, (b) the student lives in the same district as the school **and** (c) we can reach the student and at least 10 other students on a bus route that does not exceed 5 miles in length. Eligible students that do not meet these criteria get a MetroCard. This means that an eligible kindergartener will get a Metro Card if s/he goes to school in another district or is the only person at her/his school who lives south of the building so that we can't create an 11 person / 5 mile bus route.

For information about current bus stops at specific schools, please contact the school directly. For additional general information about eligibility please visit:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/ParentResources/GeneralEducationEligibility>.

There is an exception for the students who attend the three citywide G&T programs – The Anderson School (PS 334M), NEST+ m (PS 539M) and TAG Young Scholars (PS 12M). These students do not have to live in the same district as their school to be considered eligible for transportation; they must live in the same borough, Manhattan, and all other eligibility rules apply.

After the period to submit the Request for Testing form concludes on Wednesday, November 19, 2008, additional information will be made available through your child's school and online at the G&T website: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented>

**If my child is already in a district G&T program, does he or she need to be retested?**

Children already enrolled in a district G&T program should NOT complete the Request for Testing (RFT) form unless they want to be considered for placement at a citywide G&T program, which includes The Anderson School (PS 334M), NEST+ m (PS 539M) and TAG Young Scholars (PS 12M).

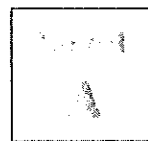
Students already in a district G&T program do not retest for another district G&T program as we **do not** transfer students from one district G&T program to another. In the event that a family moves to a different district and there is a G&T program in the new district of residence, a transfer will be considered provided there is a seat available in the new district of residence.

If a parent requests their district G&T student be tested for one of the citywide G&T programs listed above and the student is found not eligible for the citywide G&T programs, this score will have no impact on the student's current status in a district G&T program.

**I do not currently live in New York City, but my family is moving after the deadline to submit the RFT. Can my child still be considered for the program?**

You may **not** complete an application and test prior to your permanent residency in New York City. Application to our program may not be completed until the point in time your children show up to register in a New York City public school.

Once you have established permanent residency in New York City, please visit a Borough Enrollment Office. A placement officer there should be able to advise you. There will be a summer administration for students new to New York City (those who arrived after the established testing period).



# 2008 REQUEST FOR TESTING FORM

for Gifted & Talented Programs in the 2009–2010 school year  
For Students Born in 2003 & 2004

**OPEN ONLY TO CURRENT NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS**

To be eligible to take the tests required for consideration for the District-based and Citywide Gifted & Talented Programs in the 2009–2010 school year, you must complete this form for your child.

- If your child is currently enrolled in a New York City Public School, submit this form to his/her school on or before **Wednesday, November 19, 2008**
- If your child is a resident of New York City but not currently enrolled in a New York City Public School, submit this form to one of the **Borough Enrollment Offices** listed on the back of this form on or before **Wednesday, November 19, 2008**

## 2009 Test dates for children BORN IN 2003 & 2004

New York City PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS will be tested at their current school, during the school day:  
Monday, January 5, 2009 – Friday, February 13, 2009

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS living in New York City will be tested on a weekend day and will be notified of the test date and location:  
January 10, 11, 24, 25 & 31, and February 1, 7, 8, 14 & 15, 2009

### STUDENT INFORMATION – Please print clearly in ink.

|                   |                    |               |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| STUDENT LAST NAME | STUDENT FIRST NAME | CURRENT GRADE |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| DATE OF BIRTH (MM / DD / YY) | OSIS # / STUDENT ID # (if available) |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

|   |
|---|
| CURRENT ADDRESS (House #, Street, Apt. #, City, State and Zip Code) |
|---|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| CURRENT SCHOOL or PROGRAM NAME & ADDRESS | ZONED COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT (CSD)<br>DISTRICT <input type="text"/> |
|--|--|

Child is currently enrolled in which of the following? (Please check all that apply):  
 NYC Public School, NON-G&T Program  NYC Public School, G&T Program   
 Parochial/Private School  Community-Based Organization  Charter School  NONE

|   |
|---|
| SPECIAL TESTING SERVICES (if applicable)<br>Is your child currently entitled to testing modifications under a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/><br>IF YES, please attach the 504 Plan or IEP.<br>Would you like your child to be tested in a language other than English? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/><br>IF YES, in which language would you like your child to be tested? (Please check one box only)<br>Arabic <input type="checkbox"/> Bengali <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian Creole <input type="checkbox"/> Korean <input type="checkbox"/> Russian <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|

|  |
|--|
| FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS: Please rank your order of preference for TESTING WEEKEND. Use a 1 to indicate your 1 <sup>st</sup> choice, 2 to indicate 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice, 3 to indicate 3 <sup>rd</sup> choice, 4 to indicate your 4 <sup>th</sup> choice and 5 to indicate your 5 <sup>th</sup> choice.<br>January 10 & 11 _____ January 24 & 25 _____ January 31 & February 1 _____ February 7 & 8 _____ February 14 & 15 _____ |
|--|

### PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION – Please print clearly in ink.

|                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| PARENT/GUARDIAN LAST NAME | PARENT/GUARDIAN FIRST NAME |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|

|                                    |                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| PARENT/GUARDIAN TELEPHONE # (home) | PARENT/GUARDIAN TELEPHONE # (cell) | PARENT/GUARDIAN E-MAIL |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|

### SIGNATURE – Please complete clearly in ink.

I would like my child evaluated to be considered for Gifted & Talented (G&T) placement. I have read the *Gifted & Talented Test Information* handbook and I understand the timeline, assessment, criteria, eligibility and placement. The information I have provided is accurate and truthful. When applicable, I agree to have my child present on a date that is chosen from the weekends I ranked above.

PRINT Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**REMINDER:**

If your child currently attends a New York City Public School, please submit this form to his/her school on or before **Wednesday, November 19, 2008**.

If your child is a resident of New York City but not currently enrolled in a New York City Public School, submit this form to one of offices listed below on or before **Wednesday, November 19, 2008**:

| Borough       | Borough Enrollment Office Address                        | Phone        | Districts Served |
|---------------|--|--------------|------------------|
| Bronx         | 1 Fordham Plaza, 7th Floor<br>Bronx, NY 10458            | 718-741-8495 | 7, 9, 10         |
| Bronx         | 1230 Zerega Avenue<br>Bronx, NY 10462                    | 718-828-2975 | 8, 11, 12        |
| Brooklyn      | 1780 Ocean Avenue<br>Brooklyn, NY 11230                  | 718-758-7687 | 17, 18, 22       |
| Brooklyn      | 415 89th Street<br>Brooklyn, NY 11209                    | 718-759-4914 | 20, 21           |
| Brooklyn      | 29 Fort Greene Place<br>Brooklyn, NY 11217               | 646-596-1814 | 13, 14, 15, 16   |
| Brooklyn      | 1665 St. Mark's Avenue<br>Brooklyn, NY 11233             | 718-240-3600 | 19, 23, 32       |
| Manhattan     | 333 Seventh Avenue, 12th Floor<br>New York, NY 10001     | 212-356-3700 | 1, 2, 4          |
| Manhattan     | 388 West 125th Street, 7th Floor<br>New York, NY 10027   | 212-342-8300 | 3, 5, 6          |
| Queens        | 28-11 Queens Plaza North<br>Long Island City, NY 11101   | 718-391-8386 | 24, 30           |
| Queens        | 30-48 Linden Place<br>Flushing, NY 11354                 | 718-281-3791 | 25, 26           |
| Queens        | 82-01 Rockaway Boulevard<br>Ozone Park, NY 11416         | 718-348-2929 | 27               |
| Queens        | 90-27 Sutphin Boulevard<br>Jamaica, NY 11435             | 718-557-2774 | 28, 29           |
| Staten Island | 715 Ocean Terrace, Building A<br>Staten Island, NY 10301 | 718-420-5629 | 31               |

**Borough Enrollment Offices are generally open from 8:00am until 3:00pm.**

## **OTIS-LENNON SCHOOL ABILITY TEST PRACTICE TEST**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Enclosed is the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test: Seventh Edition (OLSAT) Practice Test. You may use this practice test to familiarize your child with the types of questions they will encounter on the actual test. The practice tests for the OLSAT are highly secure. It is your responsibility to protect the security of the practice test by agreeing to the following:

- Not to share or discuss the contents of the test, generally or specifically, with anyone;
- Not to copy any part of the test or the directions;
- Only those children whose parents/guardians have completed an application to take the assessment for admission to a NYC Department of Education Gifted and Talented Program may use the practice materials.

**For parents of Pre-K children:** Please note that students are not expected to bubble in answers in the test booklet; however, they must be able to clearly indicate with a pencil their answer choice for each item.

# OLSAT

## Otis-Lennon School Ability Test

### Seventh Edition

*Arthur S. Otis • Roger T. Lennon*

## Directions for Administering Practice Test Level A



015861030X



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# Directions for Administering Practice Test

The purpose of this Practice Test is to prepare your child for taking the *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test* (OLSAT), so that they will be familiar with the types of questions that appear on the test. They will learn to follow a row across the page from left to right, to mark their answers properly, and to change their answers when necessary.

Practice Tests help students understand what to expect on the real test, thus reducing anxiety.

The Practice Test is not scored. Therefore, your child should be given as much help as needed to complete the questions successfully. For most effective use, the Practice Test should be administered approximately one week before the regular test administration. For your convenience, correct responses to the questions are printed on page 10.

# Specific Directions for Administering

All directions to be read to your child are in **bold type**. Directions to the parent (not to be read aloud) are in regular type. If you make a mistake in reading a question during the test, stop and say, "No, that is wrong. Listen again." Then read the question or direction correctly.

SAY

**Today we are going to do some interesting activities that are like puzzles. I am going to give you a booklet. Leave your booklet closed until I tell you what to do.**

Bold-face directions make it easy to dictate questions to your child

Be sure your child gets a booklet, a pencil, and an eraser.

SAY

**Open your booklet to page 3. Now look at the first row, where you see a little star at the beginning of the row. Put your finger on the star.**

Make sure that your child has opened their booklet correctly and has page 3 showing.

SAY

**1 When pictures go across the page like this, we say they are in a row.**

Demonstrate by moving your finger across the page from left to right.

SAY

**In this row, you see a girl playing a piano, a girl drawing, a boy playing a harmonica, a boy playing a trumpet, and a girl playing a violin. One of these pictures shows something that does not belong because it is not like the other pictures. Let's figure out together which picture does not belong. All the pictures in this row show children doing something. Can you tell me what makes one of these children different from the others?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, that's right. The picture that shows a girl drawing is different, isn't it? All the other children are playing an instrument. The girl drawing does not belong with the other pictures in this row.**

**Now I will show you how to mark your answer. Do you see the little circles under the pictures? We call these answer spaces. Since a girl drawing does not belong with the other pictures in this row, you will fill in the space under the girl drawing. This is how you mark.**

Show your child how to mark the answer space by drawing an answer circle and filling it in. Your child need not keep their marks completely within the answer circles, and all the space within the circles does not have to be filled in. Show your child how to erase an answer they might want to change. After you begin to administer the test, make sure that the directions are being followed correctly.

Young children benefit from being shown how to mark an answer space.

SAY

**\*2 Now put your finger on the row with the umbrella. In this row, you see some shapes with little circles. One of these shapes does not belong with the others. Which shape does not belong?**

Pause for reply.



SAY

**Yes, that's right. The last answer is the correct one, isn't it? This shape does not belong with the others because it is the only one that has a white circle in the dark area. All of the others have dark circles in the white area. Mark the space under the last shape. Do you understand what to do?**

Careful explanations help children to understand why wrong answers are wrong.

SAY

**3 Put your finger on the next row, the one with the heart. Be sure you can see the answer spaces. In this row, you see some pictures of children doing different things. Mark the space under the picture that does not belong with the others.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**Which space did you mark?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, you should have marked the space under the first picture—the one with the boy climbing the ladder— because all the other pictures show children jumping. Do you understand why the first picture is the right answer?**

Be sure your child understands question 3. Explain further if necessary. Then go on to question 4.

SAY

**4 Now move your finger down and put it on the row with the crayon. Be sure you can see the answer spaces. In this row, you see some circles with arrows in them. Mark the space under the circle that does not belong with the others.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**Which space did you mark?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, the third circle does not belong, does it? The third circle has arrows pointing in opposite directions from each other. The other circles have arrows pointing in different directions but only in the third circle are arrows pointing in opposite directions. Do you understand?**

Answer all questions.

SAY

**If you marked the space under a different circle, erase your mark and then mark the space under the third circle.**

Pause to give your child time to erase and mark the correct answer.

SAY

Now turn the page. You should see a little ruler at the beginning of the first row.

5 Put your finger on the first row, the one with the ruler. Next to the ruler, you see four boxes. In the first box on top, there is a picture of a road. In the box next to it, there is a car. The road and the car go together in a certain way. In the first box at the bottom, there is a train track. The other box is empty. Now look at the row of pictures next to the boxes and think about what should be in the empty box. What goes with the train track in the same way that the car goes with the road? Mark the space under your answer.

Each format change in the test is explained carefully to your child.

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

Did you find the answer?

Pause for reply.

SAY

Yes, the train should go in the empty box. The train goes with the train track just like the car goes with the road. The other answer choices—a station, a truck, and an engineer—do not go with the train track in the same way that a car goes with a road. Do you understand why the train is the right answer?

The Practice Test allows unlimited time for making sure your child understands the process.

Be sure that your child understands question 5. Repeat the explanation, if necessary.

SAY

6 Now put your finger on the next row where you see the tree. In the two boxes on top, you see a large dark triangle and a small white triangle. These triangles go together in a certain way. In the first box on the bottom, there is a large dark square. Now look at the row of shapes next to the boxes. Which shape should be in the empty box? Which shape goes with a large dark square in the same way that a small white triangle goes with a large dark triangle?

Pause for reply.

SAY

That's right, the small white square should go in the empty box. You should mark the space under the small white square to show that it is the right answer. Do you understand why?

Answer all questions. Explain further, if necessary.

SAY

7 Now put your finger on the next row, where you see a hammer. Look at the pictures in the two boxes on top. These pictures go together in a certain way. Think about how these two pictures go together.

Pause.

SAY

How do the two pictures on top go together?

Pause for reply.

**SAY**

**Yes, the first picture is a jar and the second picture is a lid to a jar. Now look at the picture on the bottom. Here you see a carton. Think about what should be in the empty space next to the carton. Mark the space under your answer.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

**SAY**

**What goes with the carton in the same way that the lid to a jar goes with the jar?**

Pause for reply.

**SAY**

**Yes, a lid for the carton goes with a carton in the same way that a lid to a jar goes with a jar. If you marked the space under a different answer, erase your mark and then mark the space under the lid to a carton.**

Your child is encouraged to become comfortable with erasing answers and changing them.

Pause for your child to erase and mark the answer correctly.

**SAY**

**Do you understand what we just did?**

Answer any questions your child has. Then go on to question 8.

**SAY**

**8 Put your finger on the last row, the one with the sock. Look at the shapes in the two boxes on top. These shapes go together in a certain way. Now look at the shapes in the first box on the bottom. Think about what should be in the empty box next to it. Then find your answer in the row next to the boxes and mark under it.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

**SAY**

**You should have marked the answer space under the third picture. The two little circles go with the three little circles in the same way that the two little rectangles in the top row go with the three little rectangles. Do you understand why the third answer is the correct one?**

Answer all questions. Repeat the explanation, if necessary.

**SAY**

**Now look at the top of the next page. You should see a little chair at the beginning of the first row.**

All of the skills assessed in OLSAT are included in the Practice Test.

**9 Move your finger to the first row, where you see the chair. Be sure you can see the answer spaces. Look at the building blocks next to the little chair. Find the number that is right below a heart. In the next part of the row, mark under that number.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**What number is right below a heart?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, the number 2 is the only number that is right below a heart. The number 3 is next to a heart but it is not under one. The number 5 is above a heart, and the number 6 is next to a heart. Do you understand why the number 2 is the correct answer? Raise your hand if you do not understand what we just did.**

Answer any questions. Then go on to question 10.

SAY

**10 Put your marker under the next row, where you see the scissors. Mark the space under the picture that shows this: A girl is sitting between a dog and a cat and watching a TV show. A lamp is in the back of the TV.**

Engaging art makes the testing process less of a chore for your child.

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**Did you mark under the first picture? The first picture is the only one that shows a girl between a cat and a dog, with a lamp behind the TV.**

Answer any questions. Explain further, if necessary.

SAY

**11 Now move your finger to the next row, where you see the boat. Look at the pictures in the boxes at the beginning of the row. These pictures go together in a certain way. Something belongs in the empty box. In the next part of the row, mark under the picture that shows what belongs in that box.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**Which space did you mark?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, you should have marked the space under the third picture. In the boxes at the beginning of the row, the pictures show a puppy growing bigger and bigger. The third picture shows the puppy grown up, so it belongs in the empty box. Do you understand why only the third picture is correct?**

The Practice Test includes questions at all difficulty levels, so that your child learns what to expect on the real test.

Answer any questions. Explain further, if necessary.

**SAY**

**If you did not mark the answer space under the third picture, erase your mark and mark the answer space under the third picture.**

Pause for your child to erase and mark the answer correctly.

**SAY**

**12 Now put your finger on the last row, the one with the rainbow. Look at the box next to the rainbow. The box has circles and letters in it. In the next part of the row, mark under the letter that is inside both circles.**

Pause.

**SAY**

**Which space did you mark?**

Pause for reply.

**SAY**

**Yes, the third answer is the correct one, isn't it? Only the letter C is inside both circles. The letters B and D are each inside only one circle, and the letter A is outside both circles. If you marked the space under a different letter, erase your mark and mark the space under the letter C. Are there any questions?**

Answer any questions your child may have.

**SAY**

**Now turn the page. You should see a little hand at the beginning of the first row.**

Make sure your child is looking at the top of page 6.

**SAY**

**13 Look at the pictures in the box next to the hand. These pictures go together in a certain way. Something belongs in the empty space. Let's figure out together what belongs in that space. In the top row of the box, there is a white circle followed by a dark circle and then another white circle. In the next row of the box, there is a white square followed by a dark square and then another white square. In the last row, there is a white triangle followed by a dark triangle. What belongs in the empty space?**

Pause for reply.

**SAY**

**That's right, there should be a white triangle in the empty space. You should mark under the white triangle to show that it is the correct answer. Do you understand what we just did?**

Explain further, if necessary, so that your child understands.

**SAY**

**14 Now move your finger to the next row, the one with the kite. Mark under the box where there is a triangle next to a square that has a circle inside it.**

Pause while your child marks the answers.

SAY

**Did you mark the first answer? It is the only one that has a triangle next to a square that has a circle inside it. Do you understand why the other answers are wrong?**

Make sure that your child understands question 14.

SAY

**Move down to the next row, where you see a little table.**

**15 Listen. Peter ate the two slices of pizza you see at the beginning of the row. David ate exactly as many slices as Peter. In the next part of the row, mark under the picture that shows how many slices of pizza David ate.**

Pause.

SAY

**Did you mark under the second answer, two slices of pizza? Peter ate two slices, and if David ate exactly as many, then he ate two slices. Do you understand?**

Explain further, if necessary.

SAY

**16 Now move your finger to the last row, where you see the egg. Mark under the picture that shows this: In a store window, there are two things to wear and one thing to play with.**

Pause while your child marks the answer.

SAY

**Which picture did you mark?**

Pause for reply.

SAY

**Yes, the fourth picture is the only one that shows two things to wear and one thing to play with. Do you understand why the fourth picture is the correct answer?**

Make sure that your child understands question 16.

SAY

**That is all we will do now. Put your pencil down. In a few days, we will be doing some more problems like these. They will seem familiar to you, because you will remember how they work. Close your booklet so that the front cover is on top.**

Demonstrate. Then collect the test booklet. This concludes the Practice Test.

## List of Correct Responses

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 1  | 2 |
| 2  | 5 |
| 3  | 1 |
| 4  | 3 |
| 5  | 2 |
| 6  | 3 |
| 7  | 2 |
| 8  | 3 |
| 9  | 1 |
| 10 | 1 |
| 11 | 3 |
| 12 | 3 |
| 13 | 4 |
| 14 | 1 |
| 15 | 2 |
| 16 | 4 |

# OISAT

## Otis-Lennon School Ability Test

Seventh Edition

*Arthur S. Otis • Roger T. Lennon*



### PRACTICE TEST

 **Harcourt  
Educational Measurement**

A Harcourt Assessment Company

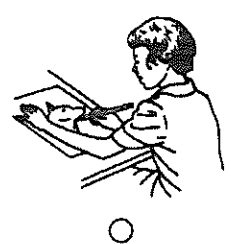




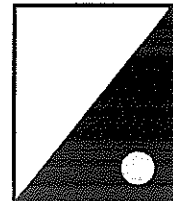
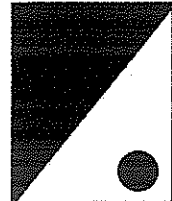
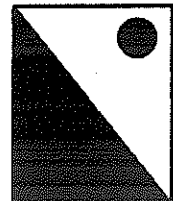
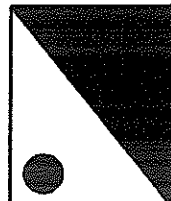
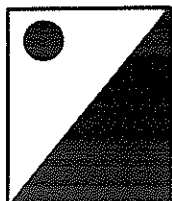
# Practice Test Level A



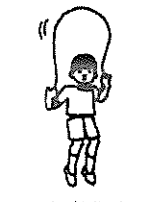
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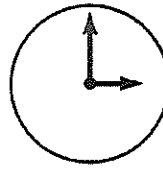
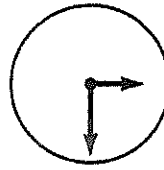
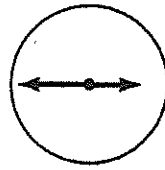
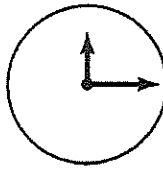
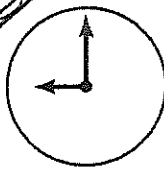
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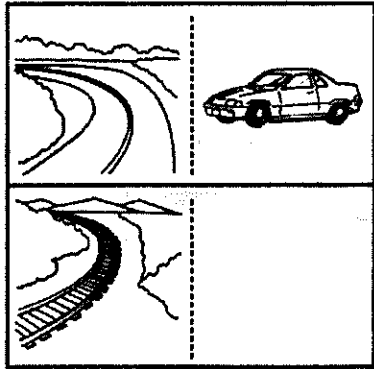


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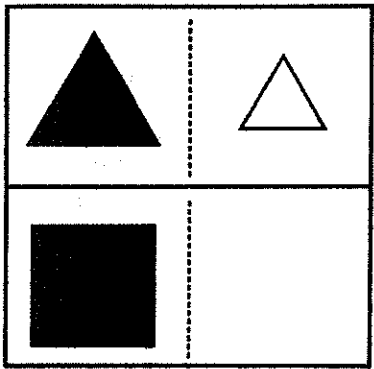




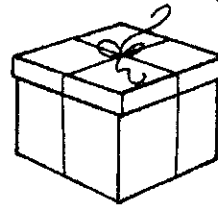
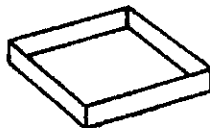
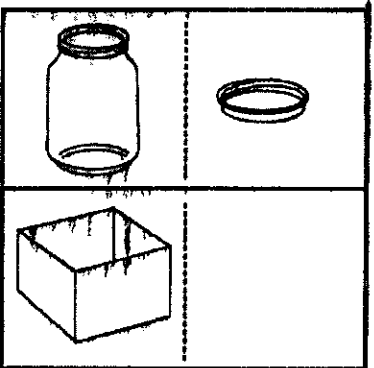
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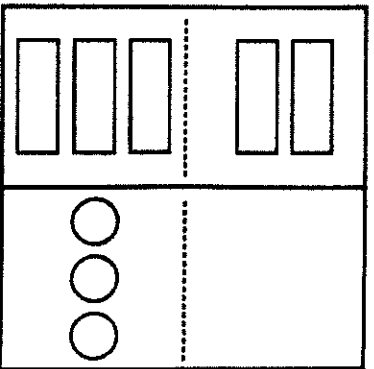
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7



8





9



|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♥ | ★ | D | ● | 5 |
| E | ● | ★ | H | ♥ |
| A | ★ | 3 | ♥ | 2 |
| ♥ | 6 | ● | ★ | B |

2



3



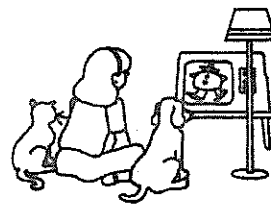
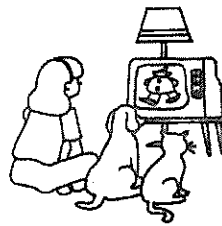
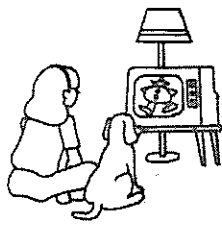
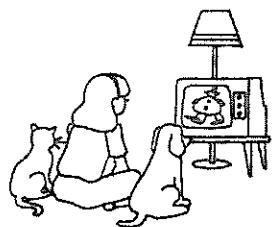
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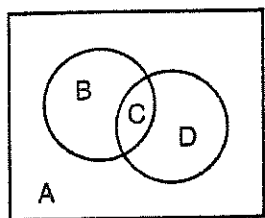
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11



12



A



B



C

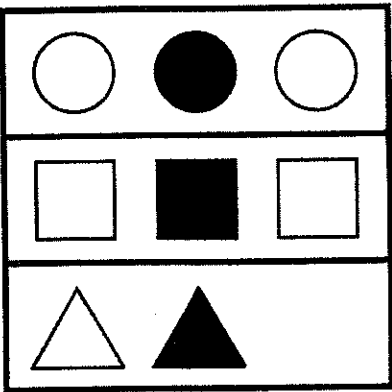


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13



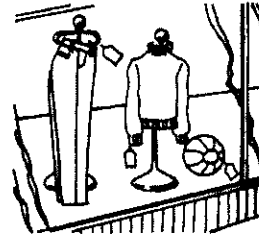
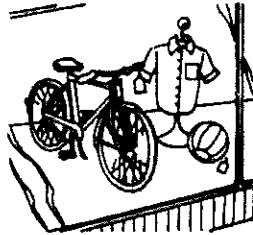
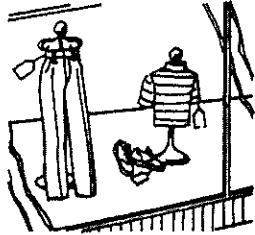
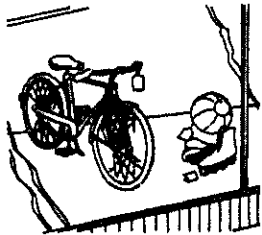
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15



16



## FOR THE RECORD

### Testimony before the Committee on Education of the Council of the City of New York Regarding Admission Policy for Gifted and Talented Programs

James H. Borland, Ph.D.  
Professor of Education and Coordinator of Programs in Gifted Education  
Teachers College, Columbia University

December 16, 2008

Please note that this testimony represents Professor Borland's views and does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Teachers College, Columbia University; its officers; or other members of its faculty.

Recently, the Department of Education made significant changes to the admission policy for its gifted and talented programs. In a move to standardize practice across the City, the Department made admission to these programs dependent solely on scores on two tests taken by preschoolers and kindergartners, the Bracken School Readiness Assessment and the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test.

Announcing the policy change, Chancellor Klein spoke of a need to bring uniformity to the City's diverse gifted programs. He also expressed a desire to equalize access to the programs and increase the number of children from lower-income families who would be admitted. Samuel Johnson famously described second marriages as the triumph of hope over experience. One could characterize the Department's policy change in the same manner.

The results of the change are well known. Gifted and talented classes are less diverse than they were previously. The wealthier parts of the City have seen an increase in the percentage of students in these programs; the poorer parts have seen a decrease. The surprising thing about this is that anyone could possibly be surprised. The inevitability of this outcome should have been apparent to anyone with the most rudimentary understanding of testing, of race and class in our society, of American education.

The current admission policy is a disaster, and it cannot be fixed by tinkering. Major changes are necessary if the Department of Education really wants to mitigate the inequities that are, unfortunately, seemingly endemic to gifted and talented programs, inequities that the Department has exacerbated by

instituting this remarkably misguided policy. These changes involve correcting some misconceptions about gifted education and the identification of gifted students and then acting on those corrections.

The first misconception is that standardization is a good thing in and of itself. Standardization should be seen as a means, not an end. It is only beneficial if it brings about positive results, and it is indisputably in this case that the results have been anything but positive.

The second misconception is that giftedness is the same thing everywhere. We who work in the field of gifted education do not agree on what giftedness is; everyone has his or her own definition. But a common feature of almost all definitions is that gifted students have more of something, or do something better, than other students do. An important question to ask is, *what* other students?

The reasoning within the Department seems to be that, to need a gifted and talented class, a student in a particular school in New York City has to score higher on two nationally normed tests than 90 or 95 percent of students nationwide. Notice that I used the phrase “*need* a gifted and talented class,” not “*deserve* a gifted and talented class.” Gifted education is a form of special education, conceptually if not legally. Its purpose is to provide an appropriate education for students who otherwise would not receive one. It exists to address educational need. And educational need is dependent on context.

Take, for example, a tenth grader at Stuyvesant High School who scores at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on a test of mathematics achievement. Does that student need a special math program instead of the regular math class at Stuyvesant? Probably not. There is no reason to think the student has an educational need. At this school, this student is probably quite typical. Mathematics instruction at Stuyvesant is geared to such students, and the mainstream at that school is the right placement.

Consider another student, say, a second grader at a school where most of the students score well below the national mean in mathematics achievement. This student’s math skills are such that he or she scores at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally. Is the regular math class at this student’s school likely to be appropriate ~~for~~? Probably not, because, instruction will be geared to the average level of need of students in

this school. And although the student scores at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally, in this school, the student is at the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile. That student *does* need a special class.

Again, gifted programs can only be justified if they address needs, and needs are specific to local realities, not abstractions such as national norms. This means that a one-size-fits-all approach to identifying students for the City's gifted and talented programs can be neither equitable nor educationally sound. There have to be reasonable approaches that take into account the actual, specific needs of real students in real schools in different neighborhoods in our diverse City.

A third misconception is that one can devise an admission policy that relies on tests that does not advantage the wealthiest and disadvantage the poorest. It is established beyond debate in the psychological and educational literature that children from lower-income families and African-American and Latino children do not do as well as other children on standardized tests. There are no culture-fair or culture-free tests, despite decades spent trying to create them. And nonverbal tests are no panacea. Continued reliance on test-driven admissions to the City's gifted and talented programs can only be justified if one believes that poorer children, African-American children, and Latino children are "less gifted" than other children.

A fourth misconception is admissions practices must rely on objective tests. A test is neither good nor bad solely by virtue of being objective. An objective test is simply one that is the same test wherever and whenever it is given, even if it is administered by someone with no knowledge of what is being tested. What matters in a test, or any form of assessment, is not whether it is objective, but whether it is *valid*. A test or assessment is valid if it truly measures what it is intended to measure. Not all objective measures are valid, and not all valid measures are objective. For example, a battery of two standardized tests designed to identify which students require gifted and talented classes in New York City that actually identifies which students have come from more privileged circumstances is not valid.

A fifth misconception is that testing preschoolers will not reflect the benefits that more affluent parents can provide their children. Testing children before the educational system has had its admittedly

limited equalizing effect simply magnifies the effects of differences in socioeconomic status. It reflects which children have had the advantage of expensive preschools; of parents with the time, ability, and inclination to read to them regularly; of opportunities to travel and experience what the world has to offer; and to be exposed to cultural events rarely experienced by less advantaged children.

What should the Department do? First, and foremost, it should relinquish prescriptive control over the admission policies of the individual school districts and, instead, exercise quality control. Districts should develop their own admission procedures, and the Department of Education should monitor, but not dictate every detail of, the creation, implementation, and outcomes of those procedures.

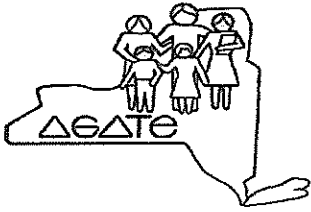
The Department should also insist that admission procedures use a variety of indicators, not just standardized tests. This is universally recommended best practice in gifted education. All information available about a student should be used when educational placements are being considered, and there should be no City-wide minimum cut-off test score for gifted and talented programs.

In addition, the Department should consider children for admission to gifted and talented programs at various grade levels, not just preschool and kindergarten, and it should exercise special caution when preschoolers are being assessed, for reasons I mentioned earlier.

Moreover, the Department should provide local educators with the resources needed to design and implement admission procedures. These resources could include consultation with experts in the field, release time to work on the development of admission procedures, and written and other materials.

Finally, the Department should acknowledge that, however well-intentioned its changes to the admission policies for its gifted and talented programs were, the effect of their implementation has been nothing short of disastrous and that wholesale changes, changes in thinking and practice, will be needed to undo the damage and move forward.





ADVOCACY FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION  
IN NEW YORK STATE, INC.  
[www.agateny.org](http://www.agateny.org)

## FOR THE RECORD

December 16, 2008

**Comments of New York State Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE)  
Re: Gifted Admission Policy in the New York City Public Schools**

Prepared by: Dr. Christy Folsom, Professor, Lehman College at CUNY and Secretary  
New York State AGATE  
Dr. Joseph Piro, Assistant Professor, Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus  
and Member, Board of Directors, New York State AGATE

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The education of gifted children in New York City has long been addressed in a variety of ways. Included among these have been citywide specialized schools and programs, local magnet schools, IGC (intellectually gifted children) classes, and other forms of instructional intervention. The term “gifted” has many definitions and dimensions. In this document, we refer to the term as it has been defined by New York State as follows:

The term ‘gifted pupils’ shall mean those pupils who show evidence of high performance capability and exceptional potential in areas such as general intellectual ability, special academic aptitude, and outstanding ability in visual and performing arts. Such definition shall include those pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their full potential.” (New York Education Law Chapter 740, Article 90, Section 4452.a)

We suggest that admissions procedures for gifted programs be carefully designed, structured, and implemented in order to ensure that there is sufficient congruence between the admissions process, including identification, and the actual intervention offered to children in a gifted program. This paper includes background information on the admissions process and recommendations from AGATE.

## **Background**

There has long been a debate about the specifics of how to recognize and address the talents of gifted children. Many experts in the field consider the identification of gifted children as an ongoing problematic issue. As the definition of gifted students indicates, these pupils require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program to meet their potential. Preceding any academic participation in these programs and services has been a need to craft an admissions process that includes accurate identification. An efficient and effective identification process is a critical part of any form of best practices designed to meet the needs of a gifted population at all levels of education programming.

In general, intervention programs for gifted children have presented customized, qualitatively differentiated experiences that focus on self-directed, advanced content learning that often involves project work. Most interventions for gifted students explicitly teach critical and creative thinking skills, productive thinking strategies, and the application of these learning and reasoning strategies to a wide spectrum of academic and creative endeavor. Programs designed for gifted learners emphasize exposure to experiences that not only require the intellectual participation of the learner, but encourage the application of the learner's talent in original and stimulating ways.

Now that we are well into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must continue to ensure that identification procedures used in the admissions process to identify children, especially very young children, acknowledge potential giftedness within a diverse population of applicants. Identification procedures need to be both balanced so to include effective and efficient identification instruments, and sensitive to the increasing multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic composition of the New York City public schools. To this end, we suggest the guiding principles of student identification as advanced by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) to assist in this identification process. These include:

- Instruments used for student assessment to determine eligibility for gifted education services must measure diverse abilities, talents, strengths, and needs in order to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate any strengths
- A student assessment profile of individual strengths and needs must be developed to plan appropriate intervention
- All student identification procedures and instruments must be based on current theory and research

### **AGATE'S Recommendations for Identification of Gifted Children**

At the outset, it is important to note that our organization, New York State Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education (AGATE), does not subscribe to any one theory of the nature of human abilities, their origins, and hence their identification. Because gifted children, as a group, are not monolithic, any approach in identifying them must be flexible and equitable as well. We assert that there are children who demonstrate high performance, or who have the potential to do so, and that we have a responsibility to provide optimal educational experiences for talents to flourish in as many children as possible, for the benefit of the child, the community, the nation, and the world.

The following principles are ones that AGATE suggests be included in an identification process that involves gifted children. These multiple principles pertain to specific components of the identification process which should be well in place before any testing takes place:

- identification should be based upon an agreed-upon definition of giftedness
- identification procedures must be congruent with educational goals for a program
- identification should be part of an overall school program that also includes differentiated curriculum, appropriate levels of instruction, and ongoing professional development for teachers
- identification instruments must be recognized for their strengths and weaknesses
- identification criteria should be clearly outlined, available to all, and explained
- identification should utilize appropriate testing instruments for special populations

Any identification process should include information obtained about children from multiple sources. Therefore, the following recommendations focus on a balanced approach to

identification that include appropriate identification instruments, observable performance activities, case study information, and

### **Recommendation 1: Identification Instruments**

AGATE endorses NAGC guidelines for testing procedures associated with identifying gifted children. Anyone involved in administering, selecting, or consulting on testing and identification practice should:

- Understand measurement principles, including how to evaluate the test's technical claims (e.g., validity and reliability);
- Know about the particular test used, its appropriate uses, and its limitations, including possible consequences resulting from scores;
- Administer, score, and interpret results in a professional and responsible manner;
- Employ procedures necessary to reduce or eliminate bias in test selection, administration, and interpretation;
- Understand the influence of cultural diversity, linguistic diversity, and socioeconomic disadvantages on test performance; and weigh the results of tests carefully with other information.

For example, there are concerns that the Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT) and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) do not adequately test young pre-K children who will be entering kindergarten. First, the OLSAT brochure and website state that “OLSAT consists of seven levels that collectively assess the range of ability of students in Kindergarten through Grade 12.” Second, tests such as the OLSAT are primarily used for screening before administering other tests with a higher ceiling that more accurately identify the most intellectually advanced children. Third, the OLSAT does not accurately find children with advanced abilities in divergent thinking. Included in this paper is a chart (Table 1) that gives information about a number of tests used to identify students for gifted programs. This chart states the type of test, the age group for which it is appropriate, the purpose, and the time required to administer the test. This information can be helpful in evaluating tests currently used and selecting the most appropriate identification instruments.

### **Recommendation 2: Performance Activity**

We suggest the inclusion of a “performance activity” as an important addition to the criteria the New York City Department of Education utilizes for entrance into a kindergarten program. Observing candidates for a kindergarten gifted program as they participate in individual and group classroom activities that parallel the typical kindergarten classroom yields important data regarding the potential of the child. The best identifier of gifted children, most frequently, is observable gifted behaviors. Observations of interactions with peers and teachers are examples of some information that can be included in this data point. We recommend that New York City DOE create its own set of performance standards that are locally developed, tested, and assessed and provide clear direction and guidelines against which gifted behaviors can be referenced. These identification procedures should be scalable in the sense that they will be able to be modified and added to based upon, for example, research findings or any demographic shifts.

### **Recommendation 3 :Case Study Approach**

In addition to using an appropriate identification instrument and performance activities, a case study approach can gather information about a child from parents and teachers that reflects an accurate and authentic learning profile of the child’s strengths and talents within one portfolio. Consideration should be given to the child’s intellectual achievement as evidenced by scores on any instruments used in identification, along with language status and observation data provided by experts who have viewed the child in simulated classroom experiences. Parent data, providing information as to when their child reached significant developmental milestones, can also be obtained in the form of a brief questionnaire. All of these data can then be adequately reviewed and assessed before a final admissions decision is made.

#### **Recommendation 4: Early Identification**

AGATE suggests identification to continue to occur as early as possible in a child's school career so that early intervention can be provided to ensure measurable and meaningful intellectual, social, and emotional progress. Identification should also be used for the acquisition of diagnostic information essential for the provision of appropriate educational services.

#### **Conclusion**

We recognize the many challenges and complexities that the New York City Department of Education faces in operating the largest urban school organization in the United States and commend the Department of Education for their efforts in ensuring that gifted children are fully accommodated within its system. That they are willing to offer a citywide program to meet the direct needs of gifted students, and continue to refine the identification process of this program is laudable.

When the identification process of gifted children is one that is well-structured, comprehensive, thoughtful, and carefully implemented, it can help alert schools to the potential of these students and help them plan more effectively for them. When gifted students are accurately identified, this important first step can lead to the crafting of intervention that allows these students to fully develop their special talents and intellectual abilities for maximum contribution to society. It is also important to accomplish this process as early as possible so that young children's attitudes, motivation, and energies can be successfully and positively shaped by early academic experiences.

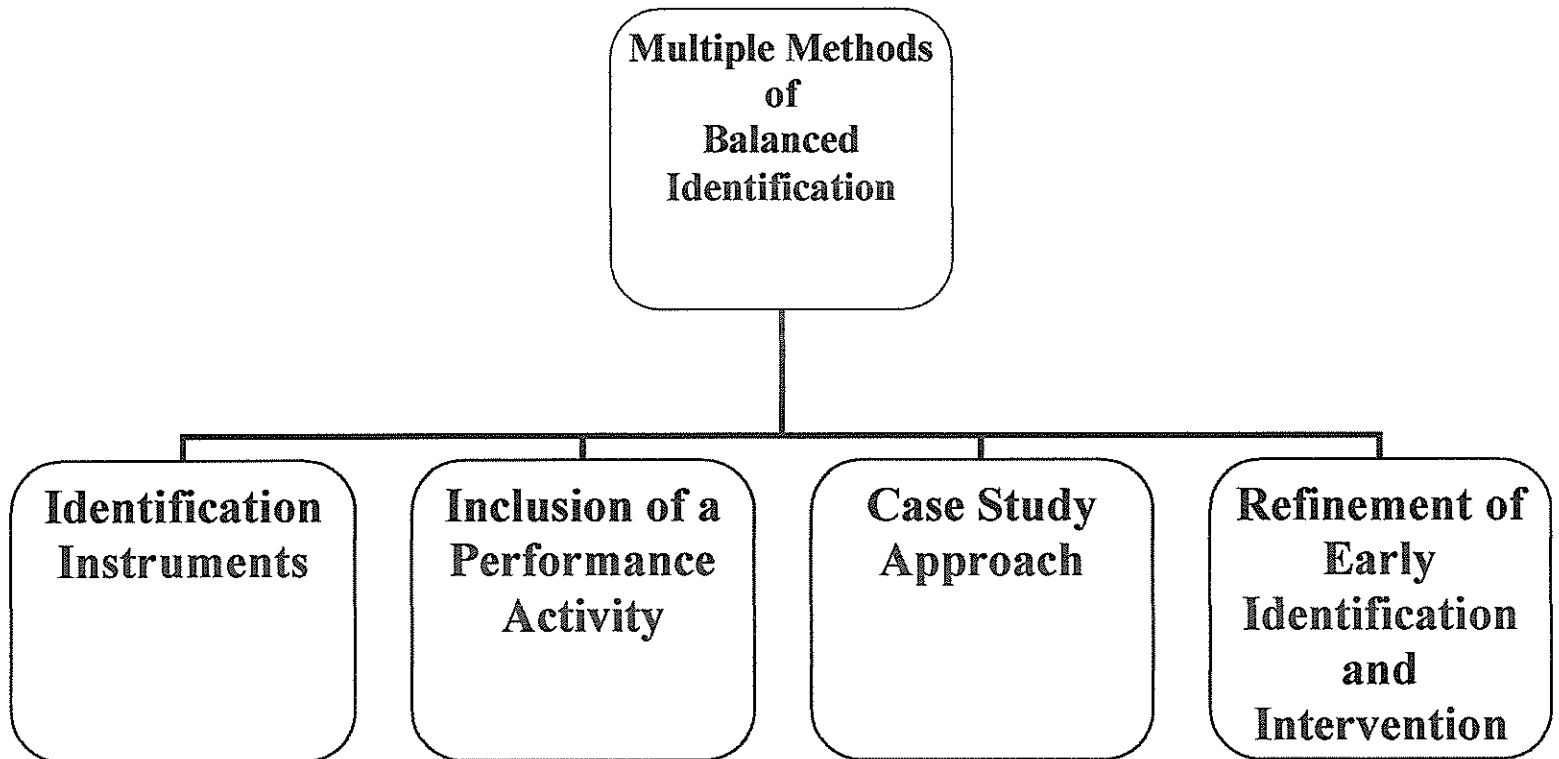
| <b>Instrument and Type</b>  | <b>Publication Date</b> | <b>Type</b>                 | <b>Age Group</b>                     | <b>Purpose</b>   | <b>Time to Administer</b>                |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Bracken (BSRA)-<br>Individual   | 2007                    | Assessment                  | 2yrs, 6<br>mos to<br>7 yrs 11<br>mos | Assess academic<br>readiness                                 | 10-15 mins                               |
| Brigance-<br>Individual   | 2005                    | Screening/<br>Diagnostic    | K                                    | Identify strengths;<br>Assess school readiness               | 10-15 mins<br>for screening              |
| CogAT-6 (Cognitive<br>Abilities Test)<br>Group  | 2002                    | Assessment                  | K-12                                 | Appraise cognitive<br>development and<br>reasoning abilities | 120-170 mins<br>for entire<br>instrument |
| Developmental Indicators<br>for Assessment of<br>Learning- (DIAL-R)<br>Individual       | 1990                    | Screening/<br>Instructional | 2- 5yrs<br>11mos                     | Identify potentially<br>advanced children                    | 20-30 mins                               |
| Early Screening Profiles-<br>(ESP)- Individual  | 1990                    | Screening                   | 2-6 yrs<br>11 mos                    | Identify potentially<br>gifted children                      | 15-40 mins                               |
| Naglieri Nonverbal<br>Ability Test<br>(NNAT-1)<br>Group                                 | 2003                    | Screening                   | 5- 17<br>YOA                         | Measure of non-verbal<br>reasoning skills and<br>ability     | 30-40 mins                               |
| Otis-Lennon School<br>Ability Test (OLSAT 8)-<br>Group                                  | 2003                    | Screening<br>Assessment     | K-12                                 | Evaluate student<br>thinking and reasoning<br>skills         | 60-75 mins                               |
| Stanford-Binet- Early<br>SB5-<br>Individual   | 2005                    | Assessment                  | 2 yrs to 7<br>yrs 3 mos              | Assess intelligence and<br>Cognitive abilities               | 15- 50 mins                              |
| Woodcock-Johnson- III-<br>Individual  | 2001                    | Diagnostic                  | 2-90<br>YOA                          | Measure cognitive<br>ability                                 | 35- 115 mins                             |
| Wechsler Preschool and<br>Primary Scale of<br>Intelligence (WPPSI-<br>III)- -Individual | 2002                    | Assessment                  | 2 yrs 6<br>mos- yrs<br>3 mos         | Assess intelligence and<br>general aptitude                  | 60- 75 mins                              |
| Wechsler Abbreviated<br>Scale of Intelligence-<br>(WASI)                                | 1999                    | Assessment                  | 8-89<br>YOA                          | Test of intelligence   | 15-30 mins                               |

**Table 1. A Comparison of Potential Identification Instruments**

*For individual test reviews go to: Buros Institute Test Reviews: <http://buros.unl.edu/buros/jsp/search.jsp>*

\*Reference: Niemeyer, J. & Scott-Little, C. (2002). *Assessing kindergarten children: A compendium of assessment instruments*. Washington, D.C. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, (Contract no. ED-01-CO-0015.)

## **AGATE Recommendations for Balanced Identification of Gifted Students**



**Table 2: Summary of AGATE Recommendations**



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#### GENERAL WEB SITES FOR GIFTED EDUCATION

**The following web sites are general references on gifted children. Many of them contain information on research and practice concerning the identification process:**

National Association for Gifted Children

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

Advocacy for Gifted and Talented Education in New York

[www.agateny.com](http://www.agateny.com)

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

University of Connecticut: Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>

Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth Resource Page

<http://www.jhu.edu/gifted/imagine/linkW.htm>

World Council of Gifted and Talented Children

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>

**Council for Exceptional Children- Association for the Gifted**

<http://www.cectag.org>

**The Davidson Institute**

<http://www.ditd.org/public/>

**NYS Gifted & Talented Education Policy overview from The Davidson Institute:**

<http://www.gf-cybersource.org/StatePolicyDetails.aspx?StateCode=10035&NavID=>

**Online Gifted Conference**

<http://www.neiu.edu/~ourgift/pages/Conference.htm>

**Genius Denied**

<http://www.geniusdenied.com/>

**Report on US schools holding back America's brightest kids:**

<http://www.nationdeceived.org/>

#### **UNIVERSITY AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR GIFTED EDUCATION**

**The Center for Talented Youth at the The Johns Hopkins University**

<http://www.jhu.edu/~gifted/>

**Duke University Talent Identification Program**

<http://www.tip.duke.edu/>

**Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University**

<http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu>

**Vanderbilt University Programs for Gifted Youth**

<http://pty.vanderbilt.edu/speakers.html>

**Education Program for Gifted Youth at Stanford University**

<http://www-epgy.stanford.edu/epgy/>

**Connie Belin & Jacqueline N. Blank International Center  
for Gifted Education and Talent Development (CBJNB International Center)**

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~belinctr/>

**Center for Gifted Education Policy, American Psychological Association**

<http://www.apa.org/ed/egep.html>

**Gifted Development Center**

<http://www.gifteddevelopment.com>

**Mensa**

<http://www.mensa.org/>

**National Consortium for Specialized Secondary Schools of Science, Mathematics, and Technology (NCSSSMST)**

<http://www.ncsssmst.org>

**National Foundation for Gifted and Creative Children**

<http://www.nfgcc.org/>

**SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted)**

<http://www.SENGifted.org/>

**TAGFAM's home page**

<http://www.tagfam.org>

**World Council for Gifted and Talented Children**

<http://www.WorldGifted.org/>

**Testimony**

**of**

**Aminda Gentile  
Vice President for Education Issues  
United Federation of Teachers**

**Before the**

**City Council  
Education Committee**

**on**

**The Gifted & Talented Program**

**December 16, 2008**

Good afternoon. My name is Aminda Gentile and I am the Vice President for Education Issues for the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). Thank you, Chairman Jackson and members of this distinguished committee, for the opportunity to share our views on the gifted and talented program admissions policy.

Gifted and talented children seek challenging engagement with their teachers and peers, and educators take great joy in working with children who are intellectually curious and possess special talents. Everyone can agree these students deserve appropriate programs.

We have concerns with the current Department of Education (DOE) program and policies around gifted and talented children, which we believe relies too heavily on test scores and is beset with implementation issues that frustrate parents and hamper opportunities for their children.

The UFT is here today to recommend a responsible approach that takes into account both the need to have clearly defined admissions criteria and our fervent commitment to providing gifted children, especially in traditionally underserved areas, with exceptional and accessible programs.

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In the spirit of collaboration, I'd like to outline several specific issues we have with testing timelines, parental support, inclusion and program criteria, as well as some recommendations on how these areas could be improved.

The DOE's work to fine-tune its policies and standardize admissions criteria was, in theory, designed to increase program access to underserved neighborhoods and promote diversity. We supported that philosophical approach, but we raised concerns about potential harm to existing successful programs.

As the DOE moved forward with its program implementation, we became even more concerned with the uneven parent outreach and community collaboration.

We recognize the need for clearly defined criteria for entrance into gifted and talented programs. Nevertheless, it's clear that an admissions policy that relies solely on scores from the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) and the Otis Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT) standardized test scores is somewhat shortsighted. Instead of accomplishing the DOE's goal of expanding access, the opposite occurred. The numbers increased in some

districts while in others access to and participation in gifted and talented programs sharply diminished.

We were pleased to see the DOE's mid-course correction expanding the score requirements from 95% to 90%, but this change has not eliminated those disparities.

Parents are very concerned about the loss of successful gifted programs in schools and neighborhoods, and we have heard from parents who feel left out of decisions regarding their own children. On Staten Island parents and educators lobbied vigilantly for years to get gifted and talented programs into their schools, finally obtaining a minimal program with one class in each early elementary grade in three schools. Once the new policies took effect, they saw long and hard fought for gains diminishing just as their gifted program was emerging. Unfortunately, the DOE does not manage waiting lists; and consequently, seats have stayed empty.

Even in those areas that have a history of offering gifted and talented programs there are often not enough of them. Historically, PS 193 in District 22 in Brooklyn embodied the best of what you would want in a gifted and talented curriculum. The parents, teachers and administrators were fierce advocates for the program. Teachers utilized creative instruction via portfolios and thematic learning techniques. But since the introduction of the new BSRA and OLSAT entrance criteria, PS 193's gifted classes have not only lost seats, they are turning into test preparation mills yielding to high stakes tests.

In District 26 in Queens the new policies have reduced seats. And with programs offered at only select schools, several parents are left with choosing to send their very young children out of the neighborhood to crowded gifted classes or not entering them in the programs they sought.

Currently there must be at least 15 children qualified for a program to exist in a grade in a district. If an insufficient number of students meets the quota, there is no program. For example, there are no gifted and talented programs in District 9 in the South and Central Bronx, and few programs in District 5 in Central Harlem.

Cultural disadvantages and economic circumstances should not hinder deserving kids who may benefit from these programs. Nor should geography restrict a child's access to gifted programs. Young children should not have to travel to another neighborhood, district or even borough to participate in gifted and talented programs. We may lose these young children to an outcome far worse than lowered academic achievement.

It would make sense to add children who neared the testing cutoff, so there could at least be a program. It's worth noting that the rigid cutoffs fail to take into account professional judgment, parental involvement and fairness. In fact, we recommend an approach to admissions that mandates 10 percent of class seats in every school district for these gifted and talented programs. Relying solely on the BSRA and OLSAT tests has shifted the gifted and talented programs overwhelmingly to certain parts of the city at the expense of others.

For the kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade tests, parents can begin requesting testing materials in December, with tests offered in January and February and admittance offers due in mid-May. Last year, unfortunately, offers did not reach some parents until the weekend of June 13<sup>th</sup>. Parents had only one week to make this important decision in the life of their child. The DOE must take steps to ensure this does not occur again.

In several instances, there were insufficient application materials packages delivered to schools. Additionally, there were competing tests on some of the test dates for other special programs offered by the DOE. The DOE should take steps to improve its delivery procedures and coordinate its central assessment calendar with other timelines.

In District 20 in Brooklyn, there were instances where applications included both kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade where only 1<sup>st</sup> grade was available. The DOE overbooked some kindergartens, resulting in classrooms above the 25 student cap. Besides the obvious class size issue that overbooking causes, it has a negative impact on a principal's budget because they must hire an aide. Once again, the DOE must provide better implementation.

Parents in some neighborhoods and school districts, notably in the Bronx, had difficulty obtaining testing information. Parents needed time, knowledge and ability to navigate the confusing information when it was available, and only then if it was in an appropriate language.

Teachers and parents must have a voice in the creation of gifted and talented programs in collaboration with Community Education Councils (CECs). The DOE needs to fully engage CECs on all policy decisions and roll-out plans for gifted and talented programs and translate all program advisories as necessary for parents where English is a second language.

Our union president, Randi Weingarten made UFT's position clear as far back as 2005. "Our goal is to see that every neighborhood and every school have programs that meet the needs of gifted and talented children." We believed that then and we believe that now. Thank you.



**Testimony of Christopher Spinelli, President, CDEC 22 before the Committee on Education, Council Chambers, City Hall, New York, NY, December 16, 2008**

Good afternoon, my name is Christopher Spinelli, and I am the President of Community District Education Council for District 22 and I represent the neighborhoods of Brooklyn that include Marine Park, Gerritsen Beach, Sheepshead Bay, Bergen Beach, Mill Basin, Flatbush, Ditmas Park, and Manhattan Beach. District 22 is a very diverse district. Based on the last District report card, District 22 is a demographically diverse district of over 37,000 students composed of African American students (46%), White students (26%), Asian students (14%) and Latino students (13%). It has historically been one of the highest performing districts in the city and is currently the only district in Brooklyn, and one of only five in New York City that are “Districts in Good Standing” regarding No Child Left Behind (NCLB). District 22 is not a District in Need of Improvement. It is against this background of achievement that I want to outline a brief history of the Gifted and Talented Programs in District 22 as well as illustrate the impact of the current changes to the G&T admissions policy.

The G&T program in District 22 was started back in the late 1970’s. At the time, the program was developed to enrich the current curriculum and provide for accelerated and more in depth studies. The district hired content area specialists in areas such as: Early Childhood, Science, Foreign Language and Dance. Content specialists were responsible for writing an enrichment curriculum that was then shared with classroom teachers. Also, Cultural institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum, MOMA and others were partnered with to create both in-class and outside of classroom experiences and trips. To get into the program, the district used a standardized test, the Structure of Intellect (SOI) and created a cutoff score based upon seat availability. Teachers could also recommend students be admitted to the program in later grades based upon their achievement and could be tested at any time for entrance into the program. The G&T Program in District 22 which eventually developed into the current Eagle II program and the CIG program (Center for Intellectually Gifted), became very popular in the district and were eventually rolled out to all schools in the district. I will again highlight the extremely diverse district that District

22 is and reiterate that G&T programs existed in all corners of the district. There were approximately 4,000 children in the G&T program at its height. Incoming classes of Kindergarten students brought approximately 625 new students into the program with a class size of 25 students in each of the 25 G&T programs in the district. Under the current centralized admissions process, the total number of incoming G&T students in District 22 for 2008/2009 is approximately 110, with class sizes as low as 8. Under the new policy, if children miss the cutoff score, they cannot be recommended later by a teacher for a demonstrated ability. The test has now become the sole arbiter of whether a child gets into the program or not. The impact on District 22 schools has been dramatic in the first year of the new policy; we went from an incoming class of 625 at 25 sites to a class of 110 at 8 sites for 2008/2009.

The DOE had set its sights on "improving" the G&T program, making it more fair and standardizing the program. Back when Carmen Farina was Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning she voiced much criticism of G&T programs as a program for the elite and well connected. In 2005, based upon my personal fears that there were changes brewing to the G&T program, I introduced a resolution at a CEC meeting calling on the DOE not to make any changes to the existing program without full cooperation of parents, districts, and Education councils and to allow for a public hearing and a six month time frame for any proposals to be fully reviewed. No response to this resolution has ever been given by the DOE. However, in December 2006 the current Director of G&T programs, Anna Commitante came to District 22 at my request to discuss what were rumored to be changes to the G&T program. Given the high population of students in G&T programs in District 22, which had pioneered this program in the 70's and developed it over the past three decades, Ms. Commitante remarked, "There must be something in the water to have all these gifted students" here in District 22. Apparently, in the view of the DOE, there were too many students in G&T and they were going to change that to be more fair. On many occasions, the current Chancellor Joel Klein has voiced his opinion that G&T programs were set up for the mostly, non-minority elite, and parents who knew how to contact their legislators could get their children into the program. This was not only a slap in the face to all of the children currently in the program demeaning their achievements, but was also

incorrect. It was with those prevailing sentiments and at time outright contempt for G&T programs by the DOE that the current revision to the admissions policy was developed.

The current admissions policy by the DOE consists of two tests which are combined with different weights and then a cutoff score of 10% is applied. According to the original DOE press release, it trumpeted the new admissions policy as a way to correct the unfairness of the past and to serve traditionally underserved neighborhoods and reach children that were previously left out of the program. It was heralded as an expansion of access to G&T programs which would “build on the progress in recent years that have brought more consistency and quality to programs for gifted and talented students.” This policy would rectify the problem of the elite non-minority students taking up all those G&T seats. What actually happened? The current G&T incoming class is whiter and less minority than ever. Again, in District 22 we went from having over 600 students from all corners of our very diverse district to now having just over 100 students which are primarily located in the least minority neighborhoods in the district. My corner of Brooklyn lost 17 programs and where did they go? The Upper East and West Sides of Manhattan saw substantial gains in G&T seats. That was quite an expansion for the communities I represent in Brooklyn; maybe “Everyday Math” can justify a drop of 500 seats as an expansion. We went from serving everyone to just serving some. How is that fair? District 22 had made this program available across the district to students from all backgrounds and walks of life. Today, it is offered to just a few, and this has all been done in the name of fairness. When I questioned the outcome of the new admissions policy and the inherent unfairness, especially given its stated objectives, I was told in an e-mail by the Chancellor, that “to describe the District 22 Gifted and talented program as successful in previous years is inconsistent with the facts”. I will again highlight District 22’s extremely high standings in the Brooklyn and in the city as a whole. District 22 has had a remarkable record of achievement over these past four decades, and the G&T programs developed there played a large role in their success. The data is there on the DOE website to review, District 22 has built one of the strongest records of achievement in the city; however, we were never consulted regarding changes to the program before the press release went out hailing how it was going to reinvent the process.

As President of the CEC, I was trying to be proactive when I introduced the resolution back in 2005 calling on the DOE to involve us in any discussion of G&T programs that were developed in my district. Not only were we not involved, but I found out like every else did, when the press release hit the street. At the time the new changes were proposed, of course there was a series of town hall meetings announced to get public input. I question exactly what public input was considered since the final policy looked exactly like the proposed policy and it was voted on the day after the public comment period ended by the Panel for Educational Policy. I attended the Brooklyn Town Hall at Brooklyn Tech where there were hundreds of people in attendance and the town hall went on for about two hours. This did not include all of the written testimony that people were sending in throughout the public comment period. It seemed to be a fairly enormous amount of information and this was just one borough. I am still stunned by the extreme speed at which this moved through the process. Few things seem to move with this speed, I can only hope that the legislation for tolls on the East River Bridges doesn't move at the same speed. Never was it part of the process to come out to District 22 and see why things were working and possibly use the model developed over the past three decades as a best practice for the city. G&T programs may not have been working in many districts. Some districts didn't even have a G&T program. Amazingly, under the new policy, which was structured to serve the underserved neighborhoods, some districts still don't have a program and there are some districts with just one. That kind of service we can do without.

G&T programs may not have been working universally across the city, but where they were working, such as in District 22, they should have been maintained, not dismantled. Other districts could have been brought up to the level of sophistication that existed in the G&T programs that were developed here. Instead, in the name of fairness, the baby went out with the bath water and we are left with a very unsustainable situation. How so? As previously mentioned, District 22 went from 625 incoming Kindergarteners to just over 100. We used to keep those classes close to 25 students per class, because class size has always mattered to District 22. Under the new admissions policy, we have only 8 programs for the district, and some have as few as 8 children in them. Most have about 12. This of course is going to have a ripple effect of overcrowding in other classes in those schools because the school is not receiving any additional funding for the G&T class, so it means more students in the non-gifted classes.

How long are these classes going to be allowed to exist before they are further consolidated, leaving even fewer options for parents? And how is it feasible that a school could develop and maintain a program that they may not have next year? When asked at a current inter-governmental meeting at Tweed recently I asked the question of what happens in year 2 of the policy. How were children going to be allocated to the program- based upon last year's schools that made the cut or based upon this year's test results? What happens if there is a dramatic shift in test scores, and many of the schools that had 10 or more students make the cut, fail to do so this year. Does that school lose the program? Will it be up for grabs every year? If so, what is being created is a very unstable program where a school can have the program this year but not next and then maybe have it again at some time in the future. How can a school train staff and maintain consistency in this type of environment? The answer is, they can't. And what is going to happen to the class of 8 children currently in kindergarten? Are they going to be allowed to stay in a class of eight in a G&T program through the fifth grade? I can't imagine that is going to happen.

The main problem with relying on solely test scores is that you immediately rule out all of those students who might not be great test takers but who may benefit from an accelerated program of study. That is where teacher recommendation came in. Teachers could identify students that would flourish in a G&T program. In the cynical view of the DOE, this must be the "elite" comment that these children couldn't make the cut but ended up in a G&T program. Realistically, no system is perfect and there were undoubtedly some children that did not belong in the G&T program that made it in. Most of those were weeded out, they weren't just passed along. I would be interested to see what percentage of students seated under this new system eventually get weeded out because they may have done well on the test, but were unable to stay in the program. I also do not believe that any child was ever hurt being put into a District 22 G&T program. The Chancellor seems to believe that we were just packing these students in G&T classes to make parents happy and appeal to the elite non-minorities. Nothing could be further from the truth; we had a system to test these students; a system to identify students that showed potential long after the test scores were in. We did not have an all or nothing approach to G&T. To get back to the comment- "There must be something in the water in District 22 to have all these gifted students." There certainly is something in the water, it is the determination of educators that developed a program over three decades to attract and maintain high

performing students and meet their needs. It was also the commitment of the district to expend funds (back when they had funds to expend) to develop curriculum that was truly targeted for G&T students and provided for outside of classroom activities that supplemented their in-class learning. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to bottle that water and export it to other parts of the city that were not as successful. Instead, a decision was made to just flush the program.

What will the final impact be on District 22? I do not know if we will ever be able to gauge which students never came into the public school system because there was no G&T program in a local school, or which parents will choose to move out of the city because they feel their local school will be unable to provide an enriched learning atmosphere for their child. If there is a dramatic dip in test scores in District 22 in a few years, I could see a correlation. District 22 built a record of achievement that is envied by most and the bi-product of that is that the neighborhoods around District 22 schools flourished. Will that continue? Only time will tell.

My recommendation for the future is to return the G&T program back to district control and to provide funds to supplement a truly enriched curriculum. This way, District Superintendents would be able to respond to the unique needs of the communities that they serve, not the current; one-size fits all model that we have. In truth, we know that one size doesn't fit all, and when you have a policy that is supposed to serve underserved neighborhoods and it does the exact opposite, it is time to rethink that policy and not continue to justify fixing what wasn't broken in the first place.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Spinelli  
President, CDEC 22  
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December 14, 2008

Dear City Council Members,

I am honored that you invited me to speak today. I have been following the New York City Department of Education's Gifted and Talented Admission Process for about 8 years now, in my capacity as a private consultant to families researching schools Pre-K through 9<sup>th</sup> grade, both public and private, in addition to having gone through the process with my own children 15 years ago. I now speak with parents about admission processes and help pass along information to the families and pre-schools, with whom I work in Manhattan.

I have watched the process change from one where each district had different criteria for admission, and even sometimes within the same district, to one where there is a uniform policy. I salute the DOE for trying to institute a uniform policy, which sets citywide criteria, making it easier for parents to get the same information and for children to transfer within the school system. I also agree with the DOE's stance on providing Gifted and Talented programs for those children whose level of intellect suggests that such a program would best serve them. Though not falling under the auspices of Special Education, I believe that gifted children need specialized programs in the same way that those with learning challenges do. Based on the experience I have had with Gifted and Talented programs, I believe that the G&T cut-off should always have been at the 90% and thus was in agreement with it being lowered from the originally announced 95%.

Finally, I would like to complement the DOE on its improved communication with parents. Parents can often get their questions answered by staff members at the Department of Gifted and Talented. Both the website and latest handbook presently provide answers to almost all the questions I had last year, many of which could not be found in writing. Some of the language is a bit sophisticated for many parents, especially the technical aspects of the testing measures themselves, but at least it is all there. In terms of outreach, I have also seen improvement over the years, including the Information Nights both in English and other languages, but I know all recognize that more can be done.

The results of the 2007-2008 admission season pleased some families and some districts, but left many others frustrated. While the hope of the DOE was to increase the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of those served by Gifted and Talented programs by increasing outreach and expanding choices, in fact, the results show, in many cases, a decrease. Unless the outreach was significantly improved, this result should have been expected. In the previous year, using the OLSAT/GRS (Gifted Rating Scales) combination, the DOE set no cut-off. Hypothetically, a child could score any percentile and still get a Gifted and Talented placement as long as there was space available in a chosen program. With this year's cut-off, even at the 90% vs. the 95% originally announced, there was still going to be a significant drop in the number of kids who would be served.

So the main questions become are the present Gifted and Talented programs serving all the students they should be? Is the DOE doing sufficient outreach? And how do we define a gifted and talented child-how do we measure a child's giftedness?

In terms of outreach, there needs to be more information sessions per borough. From what I saw at the two overcrowded meetings I attended, the meetings were attended disproportionately by white middle class families. I cannot comment on attendance at the specific language meetings. I am pleased that the DOE is making more use of the Internet, but there needs to be very direct outreach to our underserved

communities, many of whom do not have internet access. I would recommend more intimate information sessions district-wide, outreach to Pre-K public school communities (including CBO's) and to social and religious organizations. I myself have spoken to some of these groups. All of these types of programs should be on the district family advocate's email list and should receive regular communication about Gifted and Talented and other programs. I would like to comment, though, that a few years ago, I attended an information session for CBO's with pre-K's. While all the directors voiced displeasure with testing 4 year olds, the directors of the programs serving economically disadvantaged children voiced skepticism about Gifted and Talented programs themselves. As these directors are often the ones suggesting to a parent that a child should be tested, educational outreach to these referral sources is imperative. Then, after these underserved communities learn about the programs, they have to be kept up-to-date with deadlines, program changes, testing information. It cannot be just the savvy parents, who know how to seek out the information, or who get information from consultants, who are well informed.

Second, we must question whether the testing measures being used are the best indicators of giftedness. It is wonderful that the DOE is using two measures, but the BSRA is a readiness test and the OLSAT is a school ability test; even together, I'm not sure they assess giftedness. While I understand the need for measures that will not bankrupt the DOE, and for wishing to take a child's expressive language skills out of the equation, to me a child's verbal ability, expressive as well as receptive, has a lot to do with giftedness. The BSRA simply asks children to point to a picture identifying letters, numbers, colors, etc. First off there are gifted children who may not be able to identify these items at age four. However, in general, those children with highly educated parents and in private nursery schools will have much more exposure to these types of activities. As for the OLSAT, some of the pictures are hard to decipher, some are life experience oriented, and some have more than one right answer. In asking a child one of the What Doesn't Belong Questions, that child may choose a higher level answer than the accepted answer, but because there is no opportunity to explain answers and exhibit one's verbal skills, the child is marked wrong.

In addition, I stand to be corrected, but I have been told that most of the questions can only be asked once. If a four year old happens to be daydreaming at the time a question is asked, there is not a great probability of answering correctly, without asking it again. I think this may help explain the anecdotal information I have heard that Gifted and Talented classes are disproportionately enrolled with girls. At this age, girls may be more focused.

From what I can tell, the OLSAT is testing a child's ability to focus, to process questions asked verbally and to perceive visual attributes of the tested items. These types of questions may not tap a particular child's intellectual strengths. I have seen innumerable cases of a child scoring in the high 90's on the Stanford-Binet IQ test used by Hunter or the WPPSI IQ test used by the private schools, and that same child scoring as low as 29% on the OLSAT. It is hard to explain to a parent that her child qualified for Hunter or a top private school, but not for a DOE Gifted and Talented Program.

It is not clear to me whether a child's performance on the OLSAT really can improve by prepping, coaching etc. as it seems such a quirky test. I personally am against parents doing more than the practice tests and exposing their children to age appropriate developmental materials. But if there is any advantage, I can assure you that some parents are putting in much more effort than others, and that our economically disadvantaged children do not have the same exposure or resources.

The GRS, Gifted Rating Scale, used the previous year, was a disaster, as it was so subjective and there was no rubric, thus pre-school teacher reliability could not be counted on. While I do not propose going back to the GRS, it was nice to have a measure that did not test children, but observed them instead on gifted behaviors.



In conclusion, I respectfully make these additional recommendations.

1. Provide more comprehensive outreach, especially to underserved communities.
2. Make the process more intimate. Parents miss having someone truly informed in their community who answers questions just about Gifted and Talented. OSE staff members often give out contradictory information.
3. Update the website on a more regular basis. Last year, there were long stretches where there was no new information. "Information coming soon!" gets frustrating when it is up for weeks or months at a time. After test results come back, post a Frequently Asked Question section on the website, even though one appears in the handbook. Parents do not always go back to the handbook and new questions will arise later in the process.
4. Re-evaluate the measures being used and whether they are capturing the multi-faceted attributes of giftedness.
5. Plan to have expansion in the first grade, after kindergarten teachers have assessed children and can make a recommendation that a child be evaluated for Gifted and Talented. However, one obstacle is that many schools do not want to encourage their top students to take the test. Principals fear that they will lose such high functioning students to programs in other schools, leading to possible lowering of high stakes standardized test scores.
6. Spend time assessing what should be taught in Gifted and Talented classrooms. So much time has been spent figuring out who should get into these programs, that not enough time has been spent figuring out what should go on inside the programs. I have heard many parents complain that Gifted and Talented classes are not significantly differentiated from the general education classes in terms of enrichment, acceleration, or depth, and that their children's needs are not being met.
7. Have learning specialists available for gifted children as some of these children do exhibit learning issues, and many are not gifted in all areas of academic work.
8. Clone the citywide schools. There are not enough to meet the needs of the highest achievers. Go back to onsite evaluations. Just because a child scores a 99% does not mean that child can take advantage of the program.
9. Give parents one month's notice about date of testing. It was significantly better this year that parents got to prioritize weekends.
10. Test children in their own districts. Don't make kids from Harlem test in Chinatown and vice versa.
11. Leave sufficient time to mail and/or email test/placement results so hand-delivered letters are not left on apartment foyer floors.
12. Move up the date of notification of test results/placements. It is not clear how SAT scores can be delivered to students in two weeks, but OLSAT/BSRA scores take 6-8 weeks.
13. Do a better job of promoting new district options or less desirable options, simple because not enough parents are willing to take a chance on them, rather than any realities about the school programs. Parents need time to tour new programs or ones not previously seen in the fall, and a two week allowance between getting back test results and having to rank schools may not be sufficient.
14. Re-evaluate the attrition model, which did not work this year in terms of good estimates of how many families would decline a placement so late in the process (June). Many desirable schools went unfilled.
15. Improve the quality of the zoned schools in each district so that Gifted and Talented is the appropriate educational option for a child, and not just a way out of an unsatisfactory zoned school

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robin Aronow, Ph.D  
Schools Consultant

Date: November 11, 2008  
To: Councilman G. Oliver Koppell  
Re: Draft Proposal for the Expansion of the Gifted and Talented (G&T) Program  
in the Northwest Bronx  
From: Parents of Eligible G&T Students

### Mission and Goals

- (1) Establish a dedicated NYC G&T school to serve the eligible population of children zoned for PS 24 and PS 81.
- (2) The program expansion will begin in the 2009-2010 academic year and include 2 Kindergarten, 2 first grade, and 2 second grade classes.
- (3) Under the authority of PS 24, this school will reside in the Northwest Bronx, the area within District 10 where the vast majority of eligible students reside.
- (4) Provide G&T seats for all first grade children who were eligible for 2008-2009 yet remain outside of the program due to insufficient seats in the established G&T program in their community. In an act of fairness comparable to that extended by Elizabeth Sciabarra, Executive Director of Student Enrollment at the DOE, who will permit Kindergarten students to enter the G&T program in September of 2009 without retesting, these eligible first graders must be allowed to enter a second grade G&T class without retesting.

### Background and Present Challenges

- (1) The children zoned for PS 24 and PS 81 comprise a community within District 10 with an active parent body and a long history of support for gifted and talented programs.
- (2) In the current District 10 G&T program, now in its second year, PS 24 offers no G&T classes in Kindergarten, only one in the first grade, and one in the second grade. PS 24 has plans to form only one G&T class in each incoming first grade. Once formed, each G&T class would continue through Grade 5.
- (3) There are 37 Kindergarten children in the community defined by PS 24 and PS 81 who, in 2008, tested at or above the 90th percentile (the cut-off for G&T attendance) and should therefore already be in the G&T program. This figure excludes the following populations:
  - (a) The current Kindergarten students who accepted seats in one of the city-wide G&T programs—none of which reside in the PS 24/PS 81 community
  - (b) The current Kindergarten students who have yet to take the exam for first grade enrollment.The number of children in the PS 24/PS 81 community eligible for a seat in a first grade G&T class in the 2009-2010 academic year is thus expected to grow substantially.

- (4) PS 24 has insufficient space to accommodate the children in the PS 24/PS 81 community who have met or will meet the criterion for attending a G&T program.
- (5) Despite being promised a seat in a local G&T program, up to 27 eligible first graders were shut out of the 2008-2009 G&T program at PS 24 due to a lack of available seats.
- (a) There is consensus among the parents of these children to unequivocally reject the offer of seats at PS 54 as it is unacceptable to substitute seats in a thriving school in one's own community with seats in a failing, physically remote school.
- (b) Despite the rejected offers of first grade G&T seats at PS 54 that led to the program's closing for 2008-2009, the DOE has announced that the program will reopen there in September 2009.
- (6) There are limited mass transit options for children to reach PS 54 from the NW corner of the Bronx. At best, students would have multiple bus and/or subway transfers from the Riverdale/Kingsbridge area. Essentially, PS 54 is inaccessible to children in District 10, as were the Manhattan schools offered for citywide G&T seats.
- (7) The DOE has publicly committed to provide seats for ALL eligible children. Further, the DOE professes to want to meet the needs of parents in its administration of G&T programs. Yet at the same time, the DOE maintains programs in schools with as few as 8 students while failing to provide local, accessible programs in areas with a high number of eligible students.
- (8) Geographically, District 10 is one of the largest in New York City. A borough-wide comparison demonstrates that the Bronx is underserved by the DOE in G&T offerings relative to its school districts and population:

|   | <b>The Bronx</b> | <b>Brooklyn</b> | <b>Manhattan</b> | <b>Queens</b> | <b>Staten Island</b> |
|---|------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Population</b>                       | 1.4 million      | 2.5 million     | 1.62 million     | 2.2 million   | 470,000              |
| <b>Number of School Districts</b>       | 6                | 13              | 5                | 7             | 1                    |
| <b>Number of G&amp;T programs</b>       | 8                | 38              | 22               | 23            | 5                    |
| <b>Mean number of programs/district</b> | 1.33             | 2.92            | 4.4              | 3.28          | 5                    |
| <b>Number of residents/program</b>      | 175,000          | 65,800          | 72,727           | 95,600        | 94,000               |

Proposal

Establish a G&T school with rigorous standards to accommodate 90% of the eligible children zoned for PS 24 and PS 81 and 10% of children zoned for schools in the surrounding areas of District 10.

*Phase I:* Acquire the Whitehall Annex at 3333 Henry Hudson Parkway as temporary housing for the expanded (ie, 2 classes/grade) program until a permanent location is secured and prepared for use. The Whitehall Annex can accommodate 7 classes (2 first grade, 2 second grade, and 2 third grade classes, as well as a proposed Kindergarten class). The program would outgrow its temporary space after the first year.

*Phase II:* As the Whitehall Annex cannot meet the long-term needs of this expanded community G&T program, the school will require a space in Riverdale to accommodate 2 G&T classes per grade (K-8), to begin in the 2009-2010 academic year. Grades 6 through 8 will be included in stages, as the current second grade G&T class matures.

Two potential sources for acquiring the new location are traditional real-estate acquisitions and alternative partnerships, ie, reciprocal sharing of resources with colleges of Education, such as those at Manhattan College, Mount St. Vincent, and Columbia University. One of the latter institutions might house the G&T classes if they served in the context of the school's learning lab.

The premise of this proposal is in accordance with a statement issued by the DOE:

“All students entering Kindergarten or 1st grade who meet the 90th percentile standard are guaranteed an offer to a gifted program in their district - or in a nearby district, if their district does not have at least 8 qualified students – provided that their parents rank all the available district program choices on the application. To meet this guarantee, it is likely that the DOE will open new gifted classes in several districts for 2008-09.”

Marty Barr  
Executive Director of Elementary School Enrollment  
Department of Education  
April 11, 2008

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Xi Chang (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 3616 Henry Hudson Pkwy, #248

I represent: Bronx, NY 10463

Address: I'm a parent.

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Name: Helen Paradise (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 5700 Utton Ave

I represent: District 10 Parents

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 12-16-08

Name: Joseph Piro (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 80-55 212 Street Hous Hous NY 11427

I represent: Long Island University - AGATE -

Address: Brookville NY Giffen o  
Talented Stud

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 50 Res. No. 10  
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Date: 12/16/05

Name: James Borland (PLEASE PRINT)

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I represent: Teachers College Columbia University

Address: 525 W. 120<sup>th</sup> ST NYC

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Annmarie Hunter (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 3666 Henry Hudson Parkway

I represent: Brooklyn ~~to state park~~

Address: 24/81 parents for enrichment

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/16/05

Name: Roba Annouh (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 155 Riverside Dr. Sub DC, NYC

I represent: St. James NYC 6024

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/16/2008

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHRISTOPHER SPINELLI

Address: 1931 KIMBALL ST

I represent: CDEC 22 PRESIDENT

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Alford

Address: Vice President Elementary

I represent: UFT

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. 497 AND 1541  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 12-16-08

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Name: Livi French

Address: 415 EAST 85th St., NYC 10028

I represent: The Caring Corps - children & animal

Address: NYC advocacy

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Date: 12/16/08

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DR. MARCIA LYLES

Address: DOE - 52 CHAMBERS ST.

I represent: DOE

Address: 52 CHAMBERS ST.

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: 12/16/08

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANNA COMPTON

Address: DOE - 52 CHAMBERS ST.

I represent: DOE

Address: 52 CHAMBERS ST.

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 52 Chambers Street Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/16/2008

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Bell-Elwange

Address: 52 Chambers Street, NY NY, 10007, Rm 320

I represent: NYC Dept. of Ed

Address: 52 Chambers Street

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor     in opposition

Date: 12/16/2008

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Sciabarra

Address: 52 Chambers Street, NY, NY 10015

I represent: NYC Dept of Education

Address: 52 Chambers Street

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