

### Selection Criteria Should Match Program Goals

There is no such thing as a universally useful tool for identifying students for a gifted program. To be useful, identification practices must closely match the skills required to succeed in the specific program. When there is a mismatch, both the student and the program are set up for failure.



If there is a mismatch between a gifted program's selection criteria and its goals, student success is threatened. The best programs align their selection criteria with the skills required for success.

Skills in different *academic* domains can be as varied as skills in different *athletic* domains. Soccer and basketball coaches use different criteria to decide who should make their teams. By matching tryout criteria to the skills necessary to excel in their sport, coaches are better able to identify players who will thrive on the team. Gifted identification should be no different. Identification criteria need to match what the gifted program services will offer. For example, math performance is probably not relevant to placement in an advanced reading or writing program. At the same time, if a program will require advanced verbal reasoning, language skills should play a part in identification.

Without a close match between gifted identification practices and gifted services, there is a greater chance that students identified will not have their educational needs met and lessen the chance for success in the program.

#### Take Action

**Parents:** Ask about the connection between identification practices and program services. If you see required identification criteria that do not align with program services, ask for information on how that criteria helps identify students who will benefit from the program.

**Educators:** Be sure to identify which skills are relevant to student success in the program, and use assessments of those skills as the guidelines for selecting participants.

- 1. Appropriate learning environments, motivation, encouragement, and even luck can all play a role in helping students develop and succeed.**
- 2. Tests, including IQ tests, are good at predicting later life performance.** IQ scores are highly predictive of performance in school, occupation, income, and even physical and mental health. IQ scores from childhood can even predict mortality: smarter people generally live longer, even after controlling for social class.
- 3. Higher scores are related with higher outcomes throughout the full range of ability.** Even within just the top one percent of students, higher test scores are associated with higher adulthood accomplishments and achievements.
- 4. All people have different abilities that are typically positively related and that form an overall general ability.** This means that people who tend to be good at one thing also tend to be good at other things, but they can have strengths and weaknesses in specific areas.
- 5. Early high performance in a domain predicts later educational, occupational, and creative accomplishments in that domain.** People strong in math or verbal domains at an early age tend to achieve extraordinary accomplishments in their domain of strength.
- 6. Non-verbal tests alone will not tell us if students will succeed in school,** especially when success relies on verbal skills. Non-verbal tests are also not necessarily “a more fair assessment” of academic potential.
- 7. Fewer students will be identified as gifted** when participation in a gifted program requires students to have high ratings on all criteria (for example: high test scores and high teacher rating scale scores and a parent nomination) compared to when a single criterion is used.
- 8. Classes grouped by age have huge variations in student learning needs.** This supports the need for differentiated instruction based on student learning needs, not student age.
- 9. The claim that being taught using a student’s preferred learning style leads to greater achievement is not supported by evidence.** However, there is substantial strong evidence that good teaching is effective for all students.
- 10. Current measures do not reliably differentiate academic achievement from ability,** even though we have the verbal skills to create unique definitions for each.
- 11. There is no consistent relationship between acceleration and social-emotional problems.** But the research does show that acceleration can have huge academic benefits for students.
- 12. In general, more education is better, especially if matched with student interests and passions.**

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