

## Frequently Asked Questions Eastern and Takoma Park Magnet Programs

### 1. What data was used to evaluate my child?

The review is a multiple measure process from both system and external measures. The data that was included: Grade 5 report card, school assessments: percentile ranks for the Measures of Adequate Progress in Reading and Math, state assessment: PARCC achievement levels for reading and math data\*, instructional need, student services^, non-scored student questionnaire, and an outside assessment: (Cognitive Test of Abilities Test (CogAT) full battery. \* PARCC is only used to see a pattern of performance of grade level indicators

^ services such as receiving special education services, ESOL- English for Speakers of Other Languages, 504 accommodations plan and Free and Reduced Meals

### 2. What do the CogAT® percentile scores mean?

The CogAT® Test measures the level and pattern of cognitive development of a student compared to age mates and grade mates. CogAT® measures students' learned reasoning abilities in the three areas most linked to academic success in school: Verbal, Quantitative and Nonverbal reasoning

The CogAT® measures three different cognitive abilities.

- The *verbal* section measures a child's ability to remember and transform sequences of English words, to understand them and to make inferences and judgments about them.
- The *quantitative* section measures a child's understanding of basic quantitative concepts and relationships.
- The *non-verbal* section measures reasoning using pictures and geometric shapes. This section reduces the impact of language on the student's score.

The percentiles for the verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal batteries that you received indicate the percentage of students across the nation who are also the same age as the child whose scores fell at or below the score obtained by the child.

The Composite Score is a percentile for all three sections. This number combines all three scores and indicates where your child stands by comparison to other students who took the test. For example, a composite percentile score of 98 indicates that your child did better on all three sections combined than 98 percent of other students in her age group that took the test.

### 3. How did you use the CogAT® scores to evaluate my child for each program?

All of the available data was reviewed by the selection committee. The selection committee was reviewing for a pattern of performance and a demonstrated need for accelerated and enriched instruction using internal and external data on our students. This process also considers the availability of a peer group at the local school.

Each program conducted its own selection process. In review for the Math, Science and Computer Science magnet program, the selection committee reviewed all the data—by looking at performance patterns in the math and quantitative areas. For the Humanities and Communication program, the selection committee reviewed all the data and looked at performance patterns in the verbal and language arts areas.

#### **4. What is instructional need?**

One of the criteria used was student instructional need, or the availability of an academic peer group within their local school. This is demonstrated when there is a cohort of 20 or more students in the same middle school with a comparable academic range for which serves as a peer group. Students who are high performing may or may not be invited to the program based on the availability of a peer group at their middle school.

#### **5. My child scores for the various criteria are in the 90+ percentiles, why did my child not get selected?**

This year, the process looked at all fifth grade elementary students in 80 elementary schools. This changed our examination of student need for magnet programs to considering over 4,000 Grade 5 students – a sharp increase to the previous traditional parent application process which yielded a look at fewer students, 700 to 800 applicants total.

This year's process included looking at the Grade 5 report card, reading level, math enrichment access, MAP-R and MAP-M, PARCC performance in reading and math, student questionnaire, student voice and the outside assessment. An additional variable of looking at students through the lens of comparable academic peer group within a school accessing enriched and acceleration instruction in core content areas, was part of the process.

Your child, while high performing, has an academic peer group within her local school and doesn't present as an outlier within that group. We encourage you to work with your local middle school principal for programming and grouping practices.

#### **6. Are the applicants in the wait pool ranked?**

The wait pool is not ranked. It is a collection of students who are qualified applicants that will be reviewed further if spots in the program become available.

#### **7. How many students are in the wait pool?**

The original screening committee establishes the wait pool at the time of screening. Though it varies from year to year, there are generally about 45-65 students in the wait pool.

#### **8. When will the wait pool students be reviewed again?**

The entire wait pool is reviewed again at the appeals screening in early March. At this time, we will know who has accepted our initial invitations to attend the magnet program. Based on this information, we will offer invitations to students in the wait pool to fill those spots.

#### **9. How many students will be invited from the waiting pool?**

Though it varies from year to year, we are generally able to offer about 5-10 spots to wait pool students at the appeals screening in March. In August, we will do our final student counts before the new school year. At that time we are sometimes able to offer a few additional spots.

**10. How will I know if I am selected from the wait pool?**

Every student in the wait pool will receive a letter by late March with the decision of the appeals committee. The letter will indicate one of two decisions. Either your child is to remain in the wait pool or they are being invited into the magnet program.

**11. Do you take students from the wait pool throughout grades 6, 7 and 8?**

No. We generally do not make any more invitations from the wait pool after the beginning of Grade 6.

**12. Is there a plan for expansion of the magnets to other schools?**

Not at this time. The Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) is working alongside the Secondary Curriculum Office to look at enrichment and accelerated programming in Humanities, as well as in Math & Science at the local schools.

### 13. What is the process for an appeal?

If you wish to appeal the decision(s), submit an appeal letter addressing one or more of the following reasons for seeking review of the decision:

- There is new information that was not available at the time of initial review of student information that significantly changes the academic profile of the student.
- There is a hardship or unique circumstance.

*If your child was initially identified for the wait pool, you do not need to submit an appeal. The appeal committees will automatically review all wait pool candidates as part of the Level I appeals process.*

### 14. What information is useful for an appeal?

The appeals committee is looking for information that shows a significant change in student performance or student services since the close of marking period one in Grade 5. (IEP classification, 504 documentation, hardships...)

### 15. What information is not needed for an appeal?

The appeals committee are not qualified examiners to interpret outside psychological assessments or external assessment reports (e.g. A+ learning or CTY). Additionally, advocacy letters submitted from MCPS staff will not be considered in the appeals process as they were not used a part of the original selection process. Please do not send samples of student class work.

### 16. Where do we send the appeal letter?

Appeal letters should be sent to the program coordinators:

- Matt Kerwin, Eastern Middle School, 300 University Boulevard, East; Silver Spring, MD 20901 and/or
- Scott Degasperis, Takoma Park Middle School, 7611 Piney Branch Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Include your child's student ID number, your signature and telephone number. The letter(s) must be postmarked by **Friday, February 23, 2018**. The appeal decision will be mailed to you by late March.

### 17. Who reviews the Level I appeal?

Members of the original selection committee do not participate on the appeals committee. A new appeals committee is assembled using staff members from different stakeholder groups. The Program Coordinator does not have input on which appeals are approved or denied.

### 18. What are the possible outcomes of an appeal?

- **An appeal may be denied.** For a student in the wait pool or a student not selected for the program, this means that there is no change in his or her status.
- **An appeal may be approved.** For a student in the wait pool, this means the student would be invited to the program. For a student who was originally not selected, this means the student would be placed in the wait pool.