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Resolution urging the New York City Department of Education to Implement Universal Screening and Testing for Gifted and Talented Programs Beginning in Second Grade

Resolution No. 200

Sponsored by: Matthew Crescio

WHEREAS, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and peer-reviewed research define “intellectually gifted” students as those whose cognitive abilities, creativity, and potential for achievement so significantly exceed general education programming that they require specialized instruction and support to reach their potential[1], and clinical research further identifies common traits of these learners – such as high processing speed, advanced language development, and the ability to absorb vast amounts of information – which, if not addressed through accelerated curriculum, can lead to boredom, disengagement, and underachievement[2]; and

WHEREAS, peer-reviewed research in the academic field of gifted education generally finds that approximately 5–15 percent of the student population demonstrates levels of advanced cognitive ability or academic readiness consistent with the need for gifted education services, with many scholars using 10 percent of students as a practical planning benchmark for program availability[3]; and

WHEREAS, both federal and state law recognize and define gifted students as a distinct population requiring services beyond standard educational programming: the federal Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act defines gifted and talented students as those who “give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school,”[4] and New York State Education Law §4452 defines gifted students as “pupils who require educational programs or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in

order to realize their full potential”[5]; and

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Education has operated Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs within elementary schools for nearly five decades[6], providing accelerated instruction for academically advanced students typically in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, and these programs have undergone multiple policy changes in response to evolving educational priorities and debates regarding equity, admissions practices, and program structure; and

WHEREAS, from approximately 2008 through 2021, admissions to NYC G&T programs were determined primarily through a standardized assessment administered to children at approximately age four for kindergarten placement, a system widely criticized because disparities in test participation and preparation contributed to disproportionate enrollment of White and Asian students relative to overall public school demographics[7]; and beginning in 2022, the NYC DOE replaced that system with a framework in which kindergarten eligibility is determined through pre-kindergarten teacher observations and higher-grade admissions are based primarily on academic grades in core subjects, after which offers are made based on application preferences, seat availability, and admissions priorities[8]; and

WHEREAS, research and policy discussions have raised concerns that admissions systems relying primarily on grades or subjective teacher evaluations may fail to consistently identify highly gifted students, particularly those whose advanced cognitive abilities are not fully reflected in classroom performance or early behavioral indicators[9]; and

WHEREAS, educational research, including the findings of the “Rochester SAGE” and various child development experts, suggests that cognitive testing is most reliable and stable starting around the second grade, as “abilities do not even out” but rather become more measurable once children reach age 8[10]; and

WHEREAS, educational researchers commonly recommend that gifted education services begin in the upper elementary grades and continue through middle and secondary school, because advanced learners often require sustained access to accelerated curriculum and intellectually challenging peer groups in order to maintain academic engagement and achieve their full potential[11]; and

WHEREAS, families in New York City seek G&T programs to find a supportive peer community for “asynchronous learners”[12], to provide the “optimal match” between student ability and instructional difficulty, and to foster an environment where intellectual curiosity is not stigmatized[13]; and

WHEREAS, some parents and advocates oppose G&T programs on the grounds that they exacerbate racial and socioeconomic segregation[14], prioritize students with access to private test-prep[15], and create a “condition of separateness”[16] that undermines the goals of a diverse public school system; and

WHEREAS, current policy proposals in New York City reflect a shared skepticism of early G&T identification: the current administration has proposed phasing out separate G&T entry for kindergarten by Fall 2027 in favor of integrated enrichment models to address concerns of “within-school segregation”[17], while some policymakers have separately proposed moving G&T identification to second grade on the grounds that later screening improves both accuracy and equity in admissions decisions[18]; and

WHEREAS, while inclusive enrichment models such as “Enrichment for All” or “Brilliant NYC” provide benefits for the general student population, educational research indicates they may not deliver the curriculum acceleration, faster pacing, and sustained intellectual challenge that gifted students require to avoid repetitive material and stagnant growth[19], as these elements are difficult to provide consistently within heterogeneous classrooms designed to serve students across a wide range of academic readiness levels[20]; and

WHEREAS, research from multiple school districts and gifted education scholars—exemplified by a landmark study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Card & Giuliano, 2016)[21]—demonstrates that universal screening of second graders significantly increases the identification of high-ability students from historically underrepresented groups, including Black, Hispanic, low-income, and English Language Learner students, who are systematically under-referred by traditional teacher and parent nomination systems[22]; and

WHEREAS, NYSED Commissioner’s Regulations (8 NYCRR Part 117) require schools to conduct diagnostic screening of students to identify those who may require specialized educational services, including those who are possibly gifted, and to notify parents prior to further evaluation[23]; and

WHEREAS, research and technical guidance from NWEA identify MAP Growth as an effective first-phase screening tool for gifted identification that reduces reliance on subjective referrals and supports the use of objective performance thresholds—such as scores at or above the 95th percentile—to determine eligibility for further evaluation[24]; and

WHEREAS, the New York City Department of Education already administers MAP Growth as a universal screener within the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework[25] across multiple grade levels, thereby leveraging existing infrastructure to implement gifted screening without requiring additional procurement or cost; and

WHEREAS, for phase two cognitive testing to confirm giftedness, state law requires schools to inform the parent or guardian of such student's screening result and seek their approval to administer diagnostic tests; and

WHEREAS, the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), a standardized cognitive assessment that measures innate reasoning and problem-solving ability through a nonverbal, matrix-based format, without requiring a student to read, write, or speak English, and since there is no verbal component, it is effective for identifying giftedness in English Language Learners (ELLs), students with specific disabilities such as dyslexia, and students from low-income families who may not have had equivalent academic exposure as their peers[26]; and research indicates that a multi-measure approach combining a phase one universal screener (such as MAP Growth) with a phase two standardized ability test produces more equitable and accurate gifted identification than either teacher nominations or any single instrument alone[27]; and

WHEREAS, Gifted and Talented programs are not equitably distributed across New York City's 32 community school districts, and research shows that students in historically underrepresented communities are less likely to attend schools offering such programs, indicating that program availability itself contributes to disparities in access[28]; and

WHEREAS, implementing a universal, research-based, and equitable identification system beginning in second grade would better align New York City's Gifted and Talented programs with established educational research, existing screening practices, and the goal of expanding access to advanced academic opportunities for all qualified students; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, Community Education Council 24 (CEC24) urges the DOE to implement:

- Universal Screening: Administer MAP Growth in second grade as a universal, phase-one diagnostic screen for possible giftedness, utilizing existing MTSS infrastructure at no additional procurement cost.**

- Parent Notification: Notify all parents or legal guardians of students who score at or above the 95th percentile on MAP Growth of their eligibility for second-phase gifted evaluation, consistent with New York State Education Law requirements for parental consent prior to diagnostic testing.**

- **Testing Experience:** Provide sample test questions, produce video recordings explaining the various types of questions in gifted testing, and inform parents or legal guardians of eligible students how to view the recordings.
- **Second-Phase Assessment:** Administer a standardized, minimally-verbal cognitive ability assessment—such as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)—to all students whose parents or guardians provide consent, as a second-phase confirmation of giftedness.
- **Program Seats:** Establish dedicated G&T programs beginning in Grade 3, ensuring sufficient seats to serve the research-benchmarked 5–15 percent of students identified as requiring advanced academic services.
- **Geographic Equity:** Re-evaluate locations of schools with existing G&T programs to determine whether there are convenient locations for gifted programs situated within or close to districts with historically underrepresented populations.
- **Accelerated Pathways:** Ensure identified gifted students have early access to accelerated middle school coursework leading to early completion of Regents-level mathematics and science (Algebra I, Geometry, Earth Science, Biology), specifically by offering Accelerated Regents Pathways earlier than in 8th grade.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, CEC 24 urges the New York City Department of Education to publicly report annually the number and percentage of students identified for Gifted and Talented programs in each community school district and citywide, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, English Language Learner status, socioeconomic status, and disability status, and including the number of students screened, tested, and admitted to Gifted and Talented programs.

Footnotes

[1] National Association for Gifted Children, “About Giftedness,” <https://nagc.org/about-giftedness/>

[2] Exceptional Children: An Introduction to Special Education (12th ed.), ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368450326_Exceptional_Children_An_Introduction_to_Special_Education_12th_Edition

[3] National Association for Gifted Children, “About Giftedness,” <https://nagc.org/about-giftedness/>

[4] U.S. Department of Education, “Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program,” <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/javits/index.html>

[5] New York State Education Law §4452, <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/4452>

[6] VUE, DOI source on NYC gifted education history, <https://doi.org/10.35240/vue.100>

[7] Chalkbeat New York, October 8, 2021, on criticism of the G&T test and segregation concerns, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2021/10/8/22716211/gifted-talented-test-segregation-nyc-overhaul/>

[8] NYC Mayor’s Office, April 2022, announcement on expansion of Gifted & Talented programs citywide, <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2022/04/mayor-adams->

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[9] University of Connecticut, "Gifted Underachievers,"

https://gifted.uconn.edu/schoolwide-enrichment-model/gifted_underachievers/

[10] University of Rochester, Rochester SAGE, <https://www.rochester.edu/sage/>

[11] Acceleration Institute, A Nation Empowered, Vol. 2,

https://www.accelerationinstitute.org/nation_empowered/Order/NationEmpowered_Vol2.pdf

[12] Davidson Institute, "The Profoundly Gifted Brain,"

<https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/the-profoundly-gifted-brain/>

[13] Parents League of New York, "Supporting and Raising High-Achieving/Gifted Students in New York City," <https://www.parentsleague.org/blog/supporting-and-raising-high-achievinggifted-students-new-york-city>

[14] National Bureau of Economic Research, working paper on gifted programs and segregation, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w29546/w29546.pdf

[15] New York City Independent Budget Office, "Inequity in Access: An Examination of the Test-Based Admissions System to the City's Gifted & Talented Program Schools,"

<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/inequity-in-access-an-examination-of-the-test-based-admissions-system-to-the-citys-gifted-talented-program-schools-brief-2022.html>

[16] New York City Bar Association, report on eliminating competitive admissions,

<https://www.nycbar.org/reports/eliminate-competitive-admissions-to-nyc-public-elementary-middle-schools/>

[17] Chalkbeat New York, January 5, 2026, on Chancellor Kamar Samuels and integration priorities, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2026/01/05/nyc-schools-chancellor-kamar-samuels-integration-priorities>

[18] Chalkbeat New York, October 2, 2025, on proposals to move G&T identification to second grade, <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2025/10/02/zohran-mamdani-gifted-and-talented-nyc-school-segregation-cuomo-sliwa/>

[19] Chalkbeat New York, October 21, 2021, on research and NYC gifted reform,

<https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2021/10/21/22739550/nyc-gifted-reform-research-de-blasio/>

[20] ResearchGate, "Research Related to the Schoolwide Enrichment Triad Model,"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254094741_Research_Related_to_the_Schoolwide_Enrichment_Triad_Model1

[21] Card & Giuliano, "Universal Screening Increases the Representation of Low-Income and Minority Students in Gifted Education," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1605043113>

[22] Vanderbilt University News, "Minding the Gap: Does Student Race Affect Gifted Assignment?" <https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2016/01/19/minding-the-gap-does-student-race-affect-gifted-assignment/>

[23] NYCRR Part 117, Westlaw,

<https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I3659e307c22211ddb29d8bee567fca9f>

[24] NWEA, "MAP Growth Can Lower the Cost and Increase the Accuracy of Gifted and Talented Placements," <https://www.nwea.org/blog/2023/map-growth-can-lower-the-cost-and-increase-the-accuracy-of-gifted-and-talented-placements/>

[25] OSEP Partnership, "MTSS-I," <https://osepartnership.org/mtss-i>

[26] ResearchGate, "Addressing Underrepresentation of Gifted Minority Children Using the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT),"

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249826869_Addresssing_Underrepresentation_of_Gifted_Minority_Children_Using_the_Naglieri_Nonverbal_Ability_Test_NNAT

[27] K-12 Dive, "Equity in Gifted and Talented Classes,"

<https://www.k12dive.com/news/equity-in-gifted-and-talented-classes/696648/>

[28] New York City Independent Budget Office, "Inequity in Access: An Examination of the Test-Based Admissions System to the City's Gifted & Talented Program Schools,"

<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/inequity-in-access-an-examination-of-the-test-based-admissions-system-to-the-citys-gifted-talented-program-schools-brief-2022.htm>

Vote: (CEC 24) – Roll Call (Check One Per Member)

Matthew Crescio: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Gina Liberta: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Anna Karwowska: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Felicia McHugh: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Kate Barvels: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Aliya Bonar: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Brian Augustine: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain

Manisha Jain: Support Does Not Support Absent Abstain



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