



***The Parent Guide to  
Gifted & Talented Services***

**St. Vrain Valley School District**

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## **Gifted Children's Bill of Rights**

You have a right...

*...to know about your giftedness.*

*...to learn something new everyday.*

*...to be passionate about your talent area without apologies.*

*...to have an identity beyond your talent area.*

*...to feel good about your accomplishments.*

*...to make mistakes.*

*...to seek guidance in the development of your talent.*

*...to have multiple peer groups and a variety of friends.*

*...to choose which of your talent areas you wish to pursue.*

*...not to be gifted at everything.*

—Del Siegle  
2007-2009 NAGC President

## Introduction

Welcome to Gifted Services in St. Vrain Valley School District. This guide is designed to help parents navigate protocols of identification through Gifted Services, and access information about the general education system as it pertains to gifted students in St. Vrain.

It is our goal that Gifted Services help support you, your student, teachers, and administration in providing rigorous, differentiated instruction and effective options to help your child grow and thrive in their strength areas.

Our role in the Gifted Services Department is to identify students, help schools develop classroom support, and provide professional development building the capacity of teachers in response to the unique needs of gifted students.

We welcome your suggestions/questions, and will use your feedback to increase the effectiveness of this tool for parents. Please do not hesitate to contact us at Gifted Services (303-702-7808) or by email with your thoughts.

## Meet the Team

Jennifer Mayer [mayer\\_jennifer@svvsd.org](mailto:mayer_jennifer@svvsd.org)

Jennifer serves Gifted Services as the Coordinator. She has taught in various grade levels and roles over the past 20 years. Her experience includes gifted cluster classrooms, gifted pull out programs, and honors courses. Jennifer is an endorsed Gifted and Talented Specialist and has earned a Master's degree in Educational Psychology.

Consuelo (Connie) Moreno [moreno\\_consuelo@svvsd.org](mailto:moreno_consuelo@svvsd.org)

Connie serves Gifted Services as the Department Secretary. She supports testing and professional development. Her previous roles include Principal's Secretary and Attendance Secretary. Connie also has experience as a Case Manager for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Connie has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Sociology.

Rebecca Upthegrove [upthegrove\\_rebecca@svvsd.org](mailto:upthegrove_rebecca@svvsd.org)

Rebecca serves Gifted Services as the Finance and Secondary Secretary. She supports secondary testing and professional development, as well as department finances. Rebecca has been with the district for 15 years. Her previous roles include Group Leader Community Schools, Special Ed Paraeducator, Health Clerk, Community School Coordinator, Attendance Clerk, and Secretary Counseling/Registrar.

## Characteristics of Gifted Learners

There are approximately 3 million gifted students in the United States<sup>1</sup>. While that seems a large number, in actuality it is only 6-7% of the student population. What are the signs a student might be a gifted student?

“Identification of gifted students is clouded when concerned adults misinterpret high achievement as giftedness. High-achieving students are noticed for their on-time, neat, well-developed, and correct learning products... Some adults assume these students are gifted because their school appropriate behaviors and products surface above the typical responses of grade-level students.”

How is this different from a gifted learner?

“... while high achievers are valuable participants whose high-level modeling is welcomed in classes, they learn differently from gifted learners. In situations in which they are respected and encouraged, gifted students’ thinking is more complex with abstract inferences and more diverse perceptions than is typical of high achievers. Articulating those differences to educators and parents can be difficult.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Bertie Kingore provides insights into this in her article “[High Achiever, Gifted Learner, Creative Thinker](#)” (2004).

There are many characteristics to consider when asking if your child is a gifted learner, a high achiever, a creative thinker, or a combination of all three. The following chart helps provide a big picture view of these types of students. While in no way definitive, this chart can help open up conversations with your student and his or her educators.

*Gifted learners prefer idea-mates  
rather than age-mates.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nagc.org/index2.aspx?id=548>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bertiekingore.com/high-gt-create.htm>

## High Achiever, Gifted Learner, Creative Thinker

Adapted from work by Janice Szabo<sup>3</sup> and Dr. Bertie Kingor<sup>4</sup>, this chart demonstrates the complexity of comparing high achieving learners, gifted learners, and creative thinkers. There is no one size fits all profile for any of these learners and some students will show strong indicators across the spectrum.

A High Achiever...	A Gifted Learner...	A Creative Thinker...
Remembers the answers	Poses unforeseen questions	Sees exceptions
Is interested	Is curious	Wonders
Is attentive	Is selectively mentally engaged	Daydreams; may seem off task
Generates advanced ideas	Generates complex, abstract ideas	Overflows with ideas, many never developed
Works hard to achieve	Knows without working hard	Plays with ideas and concepts
Answers the questions in detail	Responds through multiple perspectives	Injects new possibilities
Performs at the top of the group	Is beyond the group	Is in own group
Responds with interest and opinions	Responds from multiple perspectives	Shares bizarre, sometimes conflicting opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows	Questions "what if..."
Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master	Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master	Questions the need for mastery

<sup>3</sup> Szabos, J. (1989). Bright child, gifted learner. *Challenge*, 34. Good Apple.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bertiekingore.com/high-gt-create.htm>

Comprehends at a higher level	Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas	Overflows with ideas - many of which will never be developed
Enjoys the company of age peers	Prefers the company of intellectual peers	Prefers creative peers, but often works alone
Understands complex, abstract humor	Creates complex, abstract humor	Relishes wild, off-the-wall humor
Grasps the meaning	Infers and connects concepts	Makes mental leaps: Aha!
Completes assignments on time	Initiates projects and extensions of assignments	Initiates more projects than will ever be completed
Is receptive	Is intense	Is independent and unconventional
Is accurate and complete	Is original and continually developing	Is original and continually developing
Enjoys school often	Enjoys self-directed learning	Enjoys creating
Absorbs information	Manipulates information	Improvises
Is a technician with expertise in a field	Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field	Is an inventor and idea generator
Memorizes well	Guesses and infers well	Creates and brainstorms well
Is highly alert and observant	Anticipates and related observations	Is intuitive
Is pleased with own learning	Is self-critical	Is never finished with possibilities
Gets A's	May not be motivated by grades	May not be motivated by grades
Is able	Is intellectual	Is idiosyncratic

*Additional resources for gifted characteristics*

- [Colorado Department of Education: 12 Traits of Giftedness: A Non-Biased Profile](#)
- [Giftedness and The Gifted: What's It All About?](#)

## State of Colorado Definition of Gifted Learners

Legislation regarding gifted students in the State of Colorado was introduced in 2007's Exceptional Children's Educational Act. Within the law, it is section 2220-R-12.00 through 12.08 that outlines mandates and rules regarding gifted programming in Colorado school districts. Included in these guidelines is a definition of the gifted learner:

*“those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted and talented children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic and ethnic, cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness: general or specific intellectual ability... specific academic aptitude [i.e. reading, mathematics, etc.], creative thinking, leadership, visual arts, performing arts, musical, or psychomotor abilities.*

St. Vrain Valley School District formally identifies and provides programming options in the areas of reading, math, writing, leadership, and visual & performing arts. Criteria are currently being developed for future identification in the areas of creativity, world languages, social studies, science, and psychomotor.



# Identification of Gifted Learners

Identification is a state-mandated process for students in grades K-12 in which a comprehensive **body of evidence** is gathered to determine if the student meets the criteria for formal identification and programming. This process provides data regarding the student's cognitive ability, achievement, learning behaviors/characteristics, and demonstrated performance. Indicators (95th percentile or above) in cognitive ability, achievement, and learning behaviors are required for official identification in the area(s) of reading, writing, math, visual arts, performing arts and leadership. The body of evidence is reviewed by the gifted coordinators and teachers before an official determination is made.

## Identification Process in SVVSD

Gifted Services uses a multi-step process to identify a student. Often the process follows the sequence detailed below, however individual situations may change the order of events.

### Nominations

Within SVVSD, the first step towards potential identification is a nomination. A nomination for identification review may come from a teacher, parent, or even a self-advocating student. Newsletters from individual schools outline the nomination window. Testing typically takes place during the fall or early winter.

In addition to nominations, students are automatically flagged for review based on state testing data. Each fall, the Gifted Services office reviews the district's state testing results and looks for students performing in the *top 5% of their grade level* in the district. These students are reviewed and possibly recommended for gifted evaluation, which may include follow-up testing.

### Evidence Gathering

A body of evidence, comprised of historical academic data and a battery of assessments required to meet state criteria for identification, is collected. The body of evidence typically includes the [Cognitive Abilities Test](#) (CogAT) test, teacher surveys, and possibly additional achievement tests such as the [Iowa Test of Basic Skills](#) (ITBS), Test of Mathematical Abilities of Gifted Students (TOMAGS), and/or the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI).

### Identification Status

Once the body of evidence has been collected, the data is reviewed by the GT teacher or site leader and the elementary or secondary GT coordinator. A status determination is made and parents are notified of the results. Based on the body of evidence, there are three possible outcomes:

- **Does not qualify**
  - The body of evidence does not demonstrate sufficient evidence to warrant gifted identification or programming.
  - The student may be re-evaluated at a future date.
- **Program and monitor**
  - The body of evidence contains flags that might indicate potential giftedness. More data is necessary to meet the required identification criteria. The student will be provided differentiated instruction in the classroom or included in building GT programs that may be available until additional data is gathered or a final status decision is made.
- **Identify**
  - The body of evidence meets mandated criteria for identification in a particular strength area.
  - The school will collaborate with the student and parent to create the Advanced Learning Plan which will outline options to support the student's academic strength area, and affective area of focus.

### **Identification FAQs**

***How will the nomination process impact a student?***

During the evidence gathering process, a student may take one or more standardized tests necessary to build a body of evidence. Often, a group of students will be pulled for group testing. In certain instances, students may be pulled for individual testing.

***Do parents have access to the testing results?***

Parents are notified of the results by letter from the school's GT site leader or teacher.

***Is the identification decision final?***

Once a student has been identified, the current practice in SVVSD is that "once identified, always identified." Students do not need to go through the identification process again once identified, unless another area of strength emerges through assessment and performance. Parents may request a second review of the evidence if there is a dispute as to the status of the student.

***What grade levels are eligible for identification?***

Gifted Services identifies students K-12. For highly advanced preschool students, visit [gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline](http://gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline)

***If my child is not identified, can they be re-evaluated?***

Students may be re-evaluated by nomination request or subsequent top 5% performance on state testing. Gifted Services typically requires a two-year wait between testing in order to preserve the integrity of the testing instruments. More frequent reevaluation may be administered only in special circumstances, and approved by the GT coordinators. It is the protocol of the Gifted Services Department that students are typically not administered a full battery of assessments more than twice during their academic career in the district.

***My child has a disability. Can they be identified as gifted?***

A student with a disability can be identified as gifted. Testing accommodations can occur to coincide with the student's IEP or 504. A student who has both an identified giftedness and disability is identified as [twice-exceptional \(2E\)](#).

***My child was identified or in the process of identification in another district or state. Will they continue to receive gifted programming in SVVSD?***

- **For students identified in another district or state:** Under new state guidelines, if a student has recently been identified in another district, that identification status is “portable” to the new district as long as the identification meets new state criteria. If the identification does not meet state criteria, additional assessments may be required for identification. If the identification is accepted, the ALP (Advanced Learning Plan) will be reviewed and adjusted to reflect options offered within the St. Vrain Valley School District. Should a student be identified in another state, evidence will be evaluated to determine if the student meets St. Vrain Valley School District identification criteria. While this re-evaluation takes place, the student will receive differentiated instruction in their potential strength area. Assessments may be administered to build the body of evidence and a status decision is made.
- **For students in the process of identification in another district or state:** The identification process will begin with review of testing data from the previous school. Additional testing may be administered as the student is taken through the SVVSD identification process.

# Programming for Gifted Learners

When a student has been formally identified in a particular strength area, it is time to develop effective **programming**. To address the programming and affective needs of gifted learners, the State requires school districts to create and implement an [Advanced Learning Plan \(ALP\)](#).

## Myths about Gifted Education

The [National Association of Gifted Children](#) compiled a list of the top ten most prevalent myths about gifted education. Below are links to the myths and their supporting research to help debunk the myth.

The top ten myths of gifted education are:

- [Myth #1: Gifted students don't need help. They'll do fine on their own.](#)
- [Myth #2: Teachers challenge all the students, so gifted kids will be fine in the regular classroom.](#)
- [Myth #3: Gifted students make everyone else in the class smarter by providing a role model or a challenge.](#)
- [Myth #4: All children are gifted.](#)
- [Myth #5: Acceleration placement options are socially harmful for gifted students.](#)
- [Myth #6: Gifted education programs are elitist.](#)
- [Myth #7: That student can't be gifted; he's receiving poor grades.](#)
- [Myth #8: This child can't be gifted, he has a disability.](#)
- [Myth #9: Our district has a gifted and talented program: we have AP/IB courses.](#)
- [Myth #10: Gifted students are usually happy, popular, and well adjusted in school.](#)

## ***The Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)***

The Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is a document that serves multiple purposes for gifted education in SVVSD. The ALP provides:

- Area of strength information
- Documentation of evidence of giftedness
- Tiered interventions, strategies, and accommodations for support
- Affective and behavioral goals
- Progress monitoring and data collection

The ALP is required in Colorado for every identified child. The ALP is a planning guide for making instructional decisions, an accountability record, and a tool for monitoring students with outstanding potential.

The ALP is part of your child's cumulative record in the district and will follow them annually. The ALP is reviewed and revised each academic year and/or as a student's goals and needs change. The ALP is designed to be a "live" document allowing for additions throughout the year. Per state guidelines, an ALP must include information about the student's strengths, goals related to the strengths, recommended differentiation strategies and/or programming options teachers may utilize to help the student meet defined goals, and growth data. Collaboration between parents/teachers/students is a required component when developing the Advanced Learning Plan. Parents have a right and responsibility to play a role in the development of this document.

### **Programming FAQs**

#### ***Do all students have ALPs?***

Only students formally identified as gifted will receive an Advanced Learning Plan.

#### ***My child has been identified as gifted. When will the ALP be developed?***

An ALP for a newly identified student is typically created within a few weeks of the identification. Previously identified students will receive an updated ALP for review and signing at the beginning of the school year, typically during parent/teacher conferences. Students will receive a new ALP within 30 school days after formal identification. The ALP is sent home via email, or hard copy, for review and signature by parents. Parental collaboration is encouraged. Many high school students have their ALP located within their ICAP plan. This is a student driven plan that documents interests and college and career exploration and readiness.

#### ***Who creates the ALP?***

Your child's classroom teacher and GT representative will provide the initial input and collaborate with you/your student to outline best practice strategies and programming

options in response to your child's strength area and affective needs.

***Does the ALP change significantly from year to year?***

Goals are developed annually, dependent upon the student's needs and strengths. The ALP may be adjusted in terms of best practice differentiation strategies and/or programming options if a school change is made, (each school offers various curriculum focus and differentiation options).

***What programming options are available at my school to meet my student's needs?***

Each school in SVVSD has a unique blend of staff, training, and programming options. Parents, teachers, and administrators will participate in collaborative discussions about how best to serve the gifted student at the individual site. The unifying feature that connects gifted services from building to building is the Advanced Learning Plan.

***How do I ensure that the ALP is followed? How are teachers & schools held accountable?***

The Advanced Learning Plan is a legal document. Monitoring growth of goals is a mandated component of the document. If you feel your child goals outlined on the ALP are not being addressed, please advocate with your student by discussing concerns with the classroom teacher and/or the principal. Gifted Services is available to support you.

***Is there a difference between a "gifted program," "receiving gifted programming," and "pull-out classes?"***

**Gifted Program:**

A gifted program is an intentionally designed, stand-alone, or ongoing class (i.e. extension class, interest-based activity, advanced curriculum exploration) at a site. Gifted programs vary greatly across the district, with some schools offering stand alone programs, push-in programs, or enrichment focused curriculum.

**Gifted Programming:**

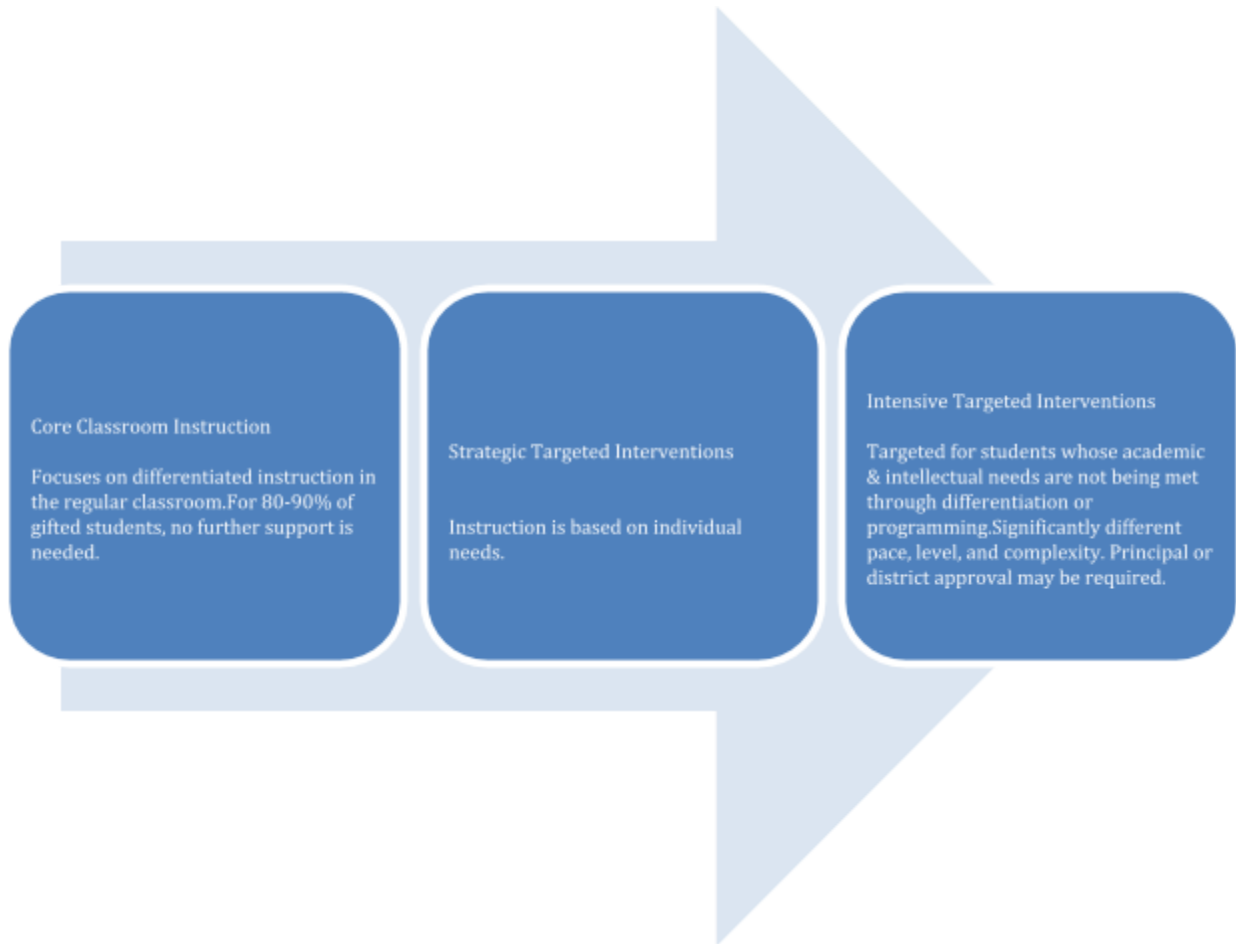
Gifted differentiation and programming, the heart of the ALP, focuses on what the teacher does to accommodate for the gifted student's needs during the regular classroom day. Research demonstrates that more than 60% of all gifted students' needs can be met in the regular classroom with effective and intentional programming decisions by the regular classroom teacher.<sup>5</sup> Gifted programming is a function of the regular school day.

**Pull-Out Classes:**

A school may offer a specific GT pull-out class that serves as a rigorous, curriculum-connected option for gifted learners. These classes are taught by highly qualified gifted teachers and serve to meet the advanced programming needs for the gifted learner.

***Do all gifted and talented students receive the same type of programming?***

Students receive ALPs that focus on the student’s strength area and differentiation techniques to support those techniques. For some activities, a teacher may provide student-focused differentiation, for others the focus may be on whole-group differentiation.



## Affective Skill Development of Gifted Learners

Beyond academic strengths and support, the ALP also includes goals to improve a student's affective skills, which include social, emotional, and academic behaviors. Self advocacy (with support) remains our department's core affective goal.

Gifted Services continues to focus on affective programming in response to needs of gifted students. In the past, Gifted Services presented professional development concentrating on disengagement of gifted students, the gifted brain, perfectionism, and stress management. Many schools provide Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) programs, or specific social/emotional curriculum.

### ***Do gifted students have specific affective, social/emotional needs that I should be aware of as a parent?***

There is a growing body of research pointing to the challenges gifted, particularly the profoundly gifted, face in these arenas. Following are recommended resources:

- [Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted](#)
- NAGC Nurturing Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children
- [The Highly Sensitive Child](#)
- [Hoagie's Gifted Education Page – Social / Emotional Aspects of Giftedness](#)



## Twice Exceptional Gifted Learners

A specific challenge in gifted education is identifying students with disabilities. Often, the disability masks the giftedness or the giftedness masks the disability. There are provisions in both state and federal law to provide services for this population. Students who are identified as twice exceptional will have an ALP designed and supported by both the classroom teacher and a resource professional.

The State of Colorado provides the following definition for twice exceptional students:

1. Students who are identified as gifted and talented in one or more areas of exceptionality (specific academics, general intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, visual, spatial, or performing arts); and also identified with:
2. A disability defined by federal/state eligibility criteria: perceptual communicative disability (learning disability), significant identifiable emotional disability, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, autism, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The disability qualifies the student for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a plan under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### ***Are there different types of twice exceptional learners?***

Generally speaking, there are three groups:

- Gifted Status Identified First
  - Achievements and growth in strength area noticed first
  - Strengths fostered through GT programs
  - Often passed over for special education support because they may be achieving at or above grade level
- Disability Identified First
  - Often failing in school
  - First noticed for what they cannot do
  - Most at risk because the special education label tends to create a focus on deficits
  - Often difficult for them to give themselves credit for their abilities
  - Acquisition of basic skills emphasized over creative productive behavior
- Neither Gifted Status or Disability Identified
  - Disability masks giftedness and giftedness masks disability
  - Gifts may emerge in specific content areas or a particular learning environments where nontraditional methods are used
  - Potential not reach as student struggles to cope with disability that is masked

## Early Access

Recent legislation has allowed school districts to offer “highly advanced gifted children” the option of early entrance to kindergarten or first grade. A child must be four on or before the first day of school to be an eligible candidate for Early Access to kindergarten, or five years of age to be eligible for Early Access to first grade. Highly advanced gifted children may show exceptional academic achievement, reasoning ability, performance and motivation compared to other children. They are highly precocious and ready for school. This option is not recommended for the majority of children. Detailed screening and criteria are used to determine school readiness.

### ***Why are students now allowed to enter school early?***

Some gifted students have exhausted the resources of preschool and/or homeschooling preschool before age five. These students’ needs would best be met by accelerating them into school earlier. Legislation was designed with highly advanced gifted children in mind.

### ***Who can enter school early?***

Children who should be considered candidates for Early Access include those that:

- have highly advanced skills in literacy and numeracy
- have appropriate social readiness
- have exhausted the resources of preschool due to their extensive cognitive abilities
- [have met the academic readiness requirements](#)

### ***How do I know if my child would be a good candidate?***

Gifted Services follows several levels of screening to determine if a child would be a good candidate for early enrollment. Parents are encouraged to visit the website for specific information about appropriate skills and the characteristics highly advanced young children display. [gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline](http://gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline)

### ***Is there a deadline for application?***

Unlike the gifted identification process which is ongoing throughout the year, and concentrated in the fall, Early Access timelines are set by the State of Colorado. For information about the current timeline, visit [gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline](http://gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline)

### ***Are there testing fees for Early Access screening?***

As students are not yet enrolled in public school, there are fees that will be collected for the screening process. View information about fees incurred for the cognitive and achievement test administration, visit [gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline](http://gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline)

### ***Where can I get more information?***

- Please view the Early Access website first. ([gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline](http://gifted.svvsd.org/EarlyAccessTimeline)) Next, contact Gifted Services at 303-702-7808 to request the screening questions. Next steps are shared after the Early Access team has reviewed the screening questions.
- [The Gifted Preschooler](#)

- [The Highly Advanced Gifted Child](#)