New Jersey Association for Gifted Children

IDENTIFYING K-2 ADVANCED LEARNERS

NJDOE Definition

Those students who **possess or demonstrate** high levels of ability, **in one or more** content areas, when **compared to their chronological peers in the local district** and who r**equire modification of their educational program** if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

Appropriate Measures

Measures should assess student performance or potential in content areas in which services are offered. Identify learners for whom the grade level content area curriculum is not "enough"

- District assessments: DRA, writing prompts, work samples, benchmark math assessments
- Teacher and/or parent rating scales, observation scales.
- Gifted "Screeners": SAGES and TOMAGS
- Measures of potential and aptitude: CogAT, Naglieri which can be used as universal screeners

Match Students to Services

- Adopt an attitude of matching learners to the services they need each year in each content area.
- Identify early readers for advanced literacy instruction using literacy assessments. Identify students with advanced numeracy abilities for advanced math opportunities using math assessments.
- Adopt a language of need for services rather than labels."We believe your child would benefit from advanced learning opportunities this/next school year in *specific content area* …"

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Resources

Gross, M. U. M. (1999). Small poppies: Highly gifted children in the early years. Roeper Review, 21, 207–214

- Jackson, N. E. (2003). Young gifted children. In N. Colangelo & G. Davis (Eds.), Handbook of gifted education (3rd ed., pp. 470–482). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Moon, T. & Brighton, C. (2008) Primary Teachers' Conception of Giftedness. Journal for the Education of the Gifted. 31, 4, 447–480.
- Sankar-DeLeeuw, N. (2004). Case studies of gifted kindergarten children: Profiles of promise. Roeper Review, 26, 192–207

Identification Challenges K-2

Fewer schools administer standardized testing to K-1 students, so the burden of identification often falls to untrained teachers. *Without training*, primary teachers often conceptualize giftedness traditionally: more general knowledge, early reading behaviors and strong vocabulary. This may limit consideration of non-traditional advanced learners.

Parent perceptions are ignored or met with skepticism Parent referrals or observations about young learners' advanced abilities are seldom considered. Parent information about a child's advanced ability in literacy and/or numeracy is often met with disbelief or judgment. Educators may believe that parents "taught" the child to read, despite the reality that children develop reading skills only when they are ready and able. Parents may be judged for focusing attention on academics rather than "play." When teachers don't "see" advanced learning behaviors in school, they might mistrust parent perceptions despite the reality that students may not have had opportunity to display advanced abilities in school.

A lack of recognition of the *need* for services in K-2 Teachers of gifted feel stretched and K-2 is often squeezed into an already busy schedule. When formal services are not planned, they may be inconsistent and inadequate for advanced learners. Districts often rely exclusively on classroom differentiation for service delivery in K-2. Without teacher training and support, differentiation alone is not adequate.

Perception that there are not valid tools to identify young advanced learners. Existing benchmark measures combined with asessments designed to screen young learners for services are valid and reliable. *(See Appropriate Measures*)

Fear of identifying "too early" can limit access to services for young advanced learners. Adopting an attitude of providing the educational services that students need each year, rather than labeling students as "gifted" at an early age, will eliminate that limiting thinking.