

San Tan Learning Center Gifted Program Mission Statement

The Governing Board and Staff Members of San Tan learning Center are committed to educational excellence for gifted students provided in self-contained classrooms.

Self-Contained Gifted Program

The Self-Contained Gifted Program is a full-day 1st – 5th grade program for designed for qualifying students who need the support and challenge that a peer group of students with similar academic interests and abilities provides. The goal of this program is to provide students who have advanced intellectual, academic, and/or creative thinking skills the opportunity to dynamically interact with teachers who specialize in gifted education as well as peers of similar aptitude within a rigorous, interdisciplinary learning environment in order to reach their highest levels of learning and accomplishment. Students that are identified as gifted in kindergarten receive individualized instruction in the advanced kindergarten class, and gifted middle school students are placed in appropriate content classes according to their ability while having a choice of electives classes.

Classroom instruction expands and accelerates the traditional curriculum to accommodate the unique needs and interests of the students. Differentiation in environment, instructional methods, course content, process, and product provides appropriate educational experiences for these students. Students are provided with a rigorous interdisciplinary core curriculum of language arts, social studies, science, and math. Standard curriculum is compacted for students who demonstrate mastery and proficiency in basic skills. Students also have an opportunity to explore areas of interest in depth through independent research.

Educational interventions and appropriate modifications are provided in the learning environment through the use of Individualized Learning Plans (ILP). ILPs are used to create learning groups and tailor instruction within the classroom. The learning environment includes flexible grouping, homogenous grouping, and/or heterogeneous grouping, and differentiation. Students learn through inquiry, active exploration, creating projects that demonstrate learning, and self-evaluation. Teacher evaluation is based on criteria established through rubrics, standards of excellence, and program goals.

San Tan Learning Center Gifted Testing Process

The Governing Board of San Tan Learning Center has adopted a research-based approach to screening and identifying gifted learners (Davidson Institute)(ARS 15-779.02) . Prior to being given tests to determine gifted program eligibility, students may be given routine hearing and vision screening tests. San Tan Learning Center administers a state-approved test (Cognitive Abilities Test) periodically throughout the school year and as a screening process all second

graders, unless they decline testing, are tested mid-year to determine qualification for the self-contained gifted program.

Students in kindergarten and first grade, as well as third grade and above may be recommended for gifted screening by school personnel. Due to the unpredictability of test scores in preschool and kindergarten, San Tan Learning Center meets the needs of advanced /gifted students in the advanced kindergarten class through the use of ILPs and ongoing teacher observation and assessment. These students will have the opportunity to test into the program at the end of the school year. (Lohman, D., Hagen, E. (2003), *CogAt Interpretive Guide for Teachers and Counselors*, Rolling Meadows, IL, Riverside Publishing, pg. 10 & 66) (Smutny, Joan F. (May 2000), *Teaching Young Gifted Children in the Regular Classroom*, Retrieved March 24, 2012 from: www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e595.html) (Brainbridge, Carol, *Do Abilities "Even Out" in Third Grade*, Retrieved March 24, 2012 from About.com: http://giftedkids.about.com/od/schoolissues/i/even_out.htm)

Parents are welcome to request their child be tested for a \$50.00 fee. Referrals for students with handicapping conditions or limited English proficiencies may be processed by a school level multi-disciplinary team. Formal evaluation may occur only after the administration has received written approval from a student's parent or guardian.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What test does the San Tan Learning Center use and how is admission into the gifted program determined?

Students who are identified by the screening process as qualifying for evaluation will be assessed with the Naglieri (NNAAT) as a screening test, and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), which is state approved test. Students will be tested in verbal (reading), quantitative (math), and non-verbal (spatial/reasoning) areas. Students who score at or above the 97th percentile (ARS 15-779.02) on any of the three sections of the test, and have a full composite score above the 85th percentile, will be offered placement in the gifted program in the area of qualification. The administration and gifted team will meet to determine offering placement in the gifted program for a probation period of one school semester for students who score at or above the 97th percentile on any of the three sections of the test, but have a full composite score below the 85th percentile. Continuation in the gifted program will be re-evaluated by the administration and gifted team, and determined at the end of the semester. Transferring a student from the gifted program into a mainstream class will depend upon availability. If the mainstream classroom is full, your child will be put on a waiting list and will remain in the gifted classroom until space becomes available.

If my child did qualify in a previous school district, how can I transfer the records to the San Tan Learning Center?

Gifted records are typically not sent with your child's regular file. You should request gifted documentation be sent to San Tan Learning Center from the previous school/district. Copy of records must be presented to the administration before a student can receive gifted services. If gifted scores are from other state approved tests San Tan Learning Center reserves the right to retest the student using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) (ARS 15-779.01). San Tan School for the Gifted will accept CogAt scores from other schools, or a WISC from a licensed psychologist.

Do students have to retake the test each year?

Students who are already qualified for services in a specific area do not need to be retested in that area if they are currently enrolled in a Gifted Program. Students who transfer into San Tan whose CogAt scores were recorded prior to three years will be required to take their grade level CogAt test.

What is the Cognitive Abilities Test?

It is a timed, multiple choice test with a bubble answer sheet on which students indicate their choices. The choices are assigned letters A through N, so that students cannot accidentally skip a question and invalidate the test results.

The Verbal Battery is made up of three sub tests: VERBAL CLASSIFICATION (students select the word that belongs to the same category as the sample words), SENTENCE COMPLETION, and VERBAL ANALOGIES (hat is to head as sock is to foot). This battery provides a reliable measure of verbal abstract reasoning and problem solving skills.

The Quantitative Battery is composed of QUANTATIVE RELATIONS (comparison of two quantities as greater, lesser or equal involving money, measurement, time, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and geometry), NUMBER PATTERNS (2, 4, 6, 8, _) and EQUATION BUILDING (students are given several numbers and signs in random order and are instructed to put them in a sequence that will result in one of the multiple choice answers). To a large extent, a student's performance on this battery is dependent upon flexibility in using quantitative concepts.

The Nonverbal Battery is composed of FIGURE CLASSIFICATION (students select from three sample figures the one that has a common attribute), FIGURE ANALOGIES (*A big square is to a small square as a big triangle is to a _____ triangle*), and FIGURE ANALYSIS (students look at pictures of a folded piece of paper with holes punched in it, then visualize what it would look like unfolded). The items on these sub tests involve neither words nor numbers. This portion of the test provides an opportunity for students who process information in a holistic way to show how well they reason. This test is *not* designed to identify students who have high aptitudes in the areas of athletics, leadership, creativity, fine arts, performing arts, music or interpersonal skills. Many students who score high on this test have these aptitudes, as do many students who score low on this test.

What is the testing environment like?

This is a group testing environment. Students who follow directions well and have good listening skills have an advantage over those who do not. Working conditions will be quiet and without interruptions. Students who disrupt the testing environment will be asked to leave in order to ensure optimum conditions for the rest of the group.

When and where does gifted testing take place?

Please see “San Tan Learning Center Testing Process”. Contact the administration for testing dates.

How long does the testing take?

Each section (verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal) takes 30 minutes. Total testing time is 90 minutes but additional time is allotted for testing instructions and transitions.

What if my child is absent during testing?

Absent students may need to wait until the next testing period to take the test.

How can I register to have my child tested?

If you are interested in having your child tested, please obtain a Parent Consent for Evaluation packet from your child’s school. This must be done prior to the testing dates. The parent is responsible for submitting the Parent Consent for Evaluation packet to the office.

When will I find out my child's scores?

The test results for grades three (3) and up will be communicated in writing to you within three weeks from completion of testing. The results for the blanket testing of second grade students using the NNaT will be communicated to the parents within three weeks of testing. Students that qualify with an 80% or higher will then take the CogAt in order to determine eligibility into the self-contained gifted program. If you do not receive your scores, please call the administration at your child’s school.

What if I have questions about the test or the test scores?

Please call the administration at your child’s school.

What if I would like a second assessment?

You have some options:

1. Wait twelve months and have your child retested on the Cognitive Abilities Test at school.
2. Take your student to a licensed private psychologist at any time for evaluation with one of the tests approved by the State of Arizona for identification of giftedness. If the scores are at or above the 97th percentile, bring them into the school office. (You pay the testing fee.)

If my child qualifies for services, when will services begin?

You will be contacted to sign a “consent for services” form. Services will begin within two weeks of the gifted services teacher receiving the consent form. If the gifted class is full, your child will be put on a waiting list and placed in a mainstream classroom until space becomes available. Current San Tan Learning Center students that are on the wait list will be offered a place into the gifted class prior to a student that does not attend the school.

How can I prepare my child for this test?

This is an interesting question since there is a strong relationship between a stimulating enriched environment and high scores. Many children who attain high scores come from homes where math, verbal and spatial puzzles (crossword puzzles, board puzzles, analogies, Rummy Tiles, Chess, Scattegories, Memory, computer logic games, mazes, etc.) are played for family recreation. There is a spirit of adventure and fun surrounding these activities, and the children have a positive view of cognitive challenges. CogAT practice materials are also available for purchase on the internet.

Do high scores on this test predict future success?

It is also interesting to note that high scores on this test are not necessarily a reliable predictor of future academic success. There are many variables that can affect the relationship between a child's ability and actual performance. Achievement scores tend to be better predictors, because they identify how well the child is actually using his/her potential. In order to achieve academic success, a child should use effective learning strategies, demonstrate perseverance and develop a positive attitude toward learning.

Research studies have shown that parents are excellent identifiers of giftedness. It is very important that you *trust your own instincts* in your evaluation of your child's potential talents, regardless of the test scores. Whether or not your child qualifies for gifted services at the elementary level, continue to support your child in identifying and exploring high interest areas, developing a positive attitude towards learning, learning self discipline and good work habits and nurturing a strong, realistic belief in his/her own *unique* human potential.

Many students who are successful in high school and college did not qualify for gifted services in elementary school. Some students who did qualify for gifted services in elementary school are not particularly successful in high school or college. The results of any intelligence test are somewhat questionable considering the complexity of the

human mind. Current brain research indicates that intelligence is not a fixed measurable phenomenon, but is instead, multifaceted and changeable. Please keep this in mind as you support your child's interests and talents.