

November, 2016



Dear Parent/Guardian:

In every decision RMS-CES makes, we strive to use staff and school resources to their fullest potential. In the case of our Excel Gifted and Talented Programming, the end of 3rd grade marks a transition to a more formalized approach because the way that resources are used to serve 4th-8th grade students is different than during the primary years.

However, we know from the research on giftedness that gifted potential does not follow the typical stages of human development. Life conditions can either assist or block personal growth. If potential is blocked early on, and school opportunities fill in the gap, later screening could reveal more gifted potential missed by early testing. For this reason, all 6th grade students will be participating in the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) screener on November 8th, 2016. It is a short, 30 minute, test. It is well supported in research studies as a very successful way to measure student reasoning abilities.

Obtaining scores from a full grade level (instead of a selected group of students) will allow us to use local norms to identify gifts and talents of our students. While it is interesting to look at how students compare at the national level, national norms are not the most useful information for making decisions for a local school program. None of the art, music, or athletic activities at Rockford Area Schools accept participants based strictly on national norms and we want our students' academic talents to be treated in the same way. Having an entire grade level take the test in 3rd grade gives us important insight into which students at Rockford would benefit most from the various EXCEL program services. Doing the test again in 6th grade honors the developmental process.

If you have questions or concerns about this programming decision, please feel free to contact me.

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