

# CMUSD Gifted Education Parent Handbook



**S.P.I.R.I.T.**

**(Seeking to Provide Individual  
Release of Intellectual Talent)**

## Gifted Education

SPIRIT (Seeking to Provide Individual Release of Intellectual Talent)

### **What is SPIRIT?**

The Columbus School District provides a program of enrichment for intellectually gifted students in second through eighth grades. This program is called “SPIRIT”, (Seeking to Provide Individual Release of Intellectual Talent). Students in grades 2-6 spend a minimum of 4 hours per week in the gifted “pull-out” program and the rest of the week in their general education classrooms. Students in grades 7-8 participate in the SPIRIT program one class period per day as one of their scheduled classes. The S.P.I.R.I.T. curriculum is centered around the following 6 criteria: creativity, thinking skills, communication, research, group dynamics, self-directed learning, and behavioral attitudes. Social and emotional development, as well as career exploration, are also incorporated into the program.

### **What is the SPIRIT Mission?**

The mission of the Columbus Municipal School District program for intellectually gifted is to create a learning environment that fosters and encourages thinking, creativity, metacognition, healthy enriching relationships, and appropriate expectations and understanding of self.

### **What are the SPIRIT Goals?**

To provide qualitatively, differentiated and challenging learning beyond the regular curriculum through in-depth enrichment in order to develop and maintain our students’ commitment to the love of learning as a lifelong process.

To help students through self-awareness, better understand themselves, develop social interest, and a

feeling of belonging in order to assist them in reaching their full potential.

To help students develop independence and self-direction, to challenge them through various activities and mentors to help them become productive citizens of society.

**What are the SPIRIT Objectives?**

To develop skills in creativity, thinking, communication, research, group dynamics, self-directed learning, career exploration and life choices, and the visual/performing arts.

**What is the definition of a gifted student?**

According to the state of Mississippi, “gifted children” are children who are found to have an exceptionally high degree of intellect, and/or academic, creative, or artistic ability.

CMSD provides an intellectually gifted program for students in grades 2-8.

CMSD follows the Mississippi Department of Education’s guidelines that require a minimal score at the 91<sup>st</sup> percentile on an individual intelligence test.

**Who is eligible for gifted services?**

CMSD provides an intellectually gifted program for students in grades 2-8.

A Mississippi eligibility ruling for gifted MUST be secured on all students served.

**My child is bright and makes good grades. Does that mean my child is gifted?**

Not necessarily. Grades and/or achievement test scores are more appropriately an indicator of academic

giftedness. Some intellectually gifted students are not honor roll students. The chart below highlights some of the differences between the characteristics of a bright child and a gifted child.

<b>Bright Child</b>	<b>Gifted Child</b>
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail (Beyond the group)
Listens with Interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good memorizer	Good guesser
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Enjoys sequential, straightforward, presentation	Thrives on complexity

### **How are students in CMSD identified for the SPIRIT program?**

A student may be referred by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted.

Assessment for new students and students in grades 2-8 is ongoing, year-round.

The annual referral of first grade students begins in January of each school year. Notification of the test results will be included in the May report card. First grade students who are eligible will begin classes in the fall of their second grade year.

### **How are students in CMSD referred for the SPIRIT program?**

There are two types of gifted referral processes: mass screening referral process and individual referral process. A student shall satisfy minimal criteria on at least three measures before moving forward to the assessment stage.

A Mississippi eligibility ruling for gifted MUST be secured on all students served. Students with documented evidence of previous participation in a gifted program in another state or country must be assessed according to Mississippi criteria. Once a student has been recognized as gifted, there is no need to be reevaluated to benefit from gifted programs offered at other grade levels.

### **How is eligibility determined for students in CMSD who are referred for the SPIRIT program?**

The district uses its own Local Survey Committee to determine gifted eligibility. This committee is a district committee that meets regularly. The committee adheres to the MDE's required criteria (evidence of at least three

of the required criteria PLUS an individual norm-referenced intelligence test with a minimal score at the 91st percentile) to warrant a ruling of ELIGIBLE.

### **Can a student who has previously been referred for the SPIRIT program be retested?**

A student may be retested within the same referral period on a different intelligence test if the required score is within the confidence intervals on any of the IQ scores of the first intelligence test administered. A required waiting period of at least three (3) months must expire before a student who was previously ruled ineligible may be referred again.

Students may be tested a maximum of two times at the expense of the school district. A child who has been found to be ineligible twice through district-administered testing may be tested privately, at the expense of the parent. Test results showing evidence of eligibility as a result of a private administration of testing will be accepted if (1) the child met all referral and assessment criteria within the accepted timelines and (2) there is proof that the person administering the test possesses the proper licensure.

### **What is the policy for students who transfer into CMSD from another district in the state where the child was considered gifted?**

The gifted student may be enrolled in and begin attending the SPIRIT program once the district's gifted coordinator has received a copy of the student's Gifted Pupil Personal Data Sheet (GPPDS) indicating an intellectually gifted eligibility ruling from the child's previous school.

It is the parent's responsibility when enrolling their child in a CMSD school to inform school personnel of a gifted eligibility ruling so that the appropriate paperwork may be requested.

**What is the policy for students who transfer into CMSD from another state where the child was considered gifted?**

As each state has a unique set of eligibility criteria for placement in a gifted program, a student moving to Mississippi with a gifted eligibility from another state must satisfy Mississippi eligibility criteria before being considered for placement in the gifted program. The eligibility ruling from another state may be used to initiate the referral process in Mississippi. There is no temporary placement in the gifted program while the student goes through the eligibility process within district.

**What type of gifted program does CMSD provide?**

CMSD provides a program of enrichment for intellectually gifted students in second through eighth grade called SPIRIT. Students in grades 2-6 spend a minimum of 4 hours per week in the gifted “pull-out” program and the rest of the week in their general education classrooms. Students in grades 7-8 participate in the SPIRIT program one class period per day as one of their scheduled classes.

The activities in the gifted class develop and enhance the gifted process skills suggested by the Mississippi Department of Education. Some of the activities introduce students to ideas and concepts not normally covered in the regular education program. The activities are planned around student’s interests and learning styles to foster and encourage critical thinking, creativity, relationships with others, and appropriate expectations and understanding of self.

**Is my child responsible for learning regular classroom instruction missed while in the SPIRIT classroom?**

Yes, your child is responsible for mastering material missed while in the SPIRIT classroom. However, it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to ensure that your child is given instruction on any material covered while in

SPIRIT. The gifted resource teacher and the classroom teacher will take necessary steps to help your child understand any instruction that was missed.

**Is my child responsible for classwork missed while in the SPIRIT classroom?**

No, your child may not be not responsible for completing all mastered classwork missed while in the SPIRIT classroom. Your child is held accountable for showing understanding of the material, but she/he does not have to make up every assignment missed. Your child will be held accountable for demonstrating mastery on their tests.

**Can my child be denied permission to attend SPIRIT?**

Eligible students are entitled to gifted instruction. Your child’s teacher cannot deny your child permission to come to SPIRIT because of classroom behavior, incomplete classwork, or not turning in homework. However, in the event that a child is having difficulty keeping up with her/his regular classroom work, a conference may be held with the parent, classroom teacher, teacher of the gifted, and/or building administrator to discuss the problem and to determine an appropriate course of action.

The gifted teacher and building principal meet annually to reassess each student’s continuation in SPIRIT for the upcoming school year. If the student is not progressing in the SPIRIT program, they can recommend the student be removed from the program. The student’s parent must be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the decision before any action is taken.

Your child’s gifted teacher is available to meet with you about your child’s performance in the gifted classroom. If you would like to arrange a conference you may contact your child’s gifted teacher.

### **How is my child graded in SPIRIT?**

In grades 2-6, your child is evaluated twice a year on her/his progress in the gifted program. A gifted progress report is sent home with your child's report card at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> nine-weeks. Students are evaluated on their performance using the gifted process skills as compared to their gifted peers.

In grades 7-8, students receive a grade on their report card each nine-weeks since SPIRIT is one of their elective classes.

### **What are the benefits of gifted services for eligible students?**

Gifted and talented students and those with high abilities need gifted education programs that will challenge them in regular classroom settings and enrichment and accelerated programs to enable them to make continuous progress in school.

Gifted students benefit from receiving instruction from a teacher who has in-depth training on how to teach intellectually gifted students.

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of gifted education programs and curriculum in raising student achievement, as well as helping students to develop interests, creativity, productivity, and career goals.

Gifted students need to be with their intellectual peers for a portion of time each week to develop their social skills with people who are on their intellectual level rather than their age level.

### **Who can I talk to about gifted services in CMSD?**

If you have additional questions about the gifted program in CMSD please contact the district gifted coordinator or the SPIRIT teacher at your child's school.

District Gifted Coordinator:

Dawn Dawkins  
662-241-7160 ext. 2115  
[dawkinsd@columbus.k12.ms.us](mailto:dawkinsd@columbus.k12.ms.us)

Columbus Middle School  
662-241-7300

Cook Elementary  
662-241-7180

Fairview Elementary  
662-241-7140

Franklin Academy  
662-241-7150

Sale Elementary  
662-241-7260

Stokes-Beard Elementary  
662-241-7270