

FAQs: Westmount Mid-High Intake Procedures 2017 – 2018

General Questions

1. How do we define giftedness at Westmount Charter School?

- Students are gifted when they perform, or show potential for performing, remarkably high levels of accomplishment in learning rate, depth of knowledge, and reasoning and problem-solving abilities when compared to others of their age, experience, and environment.
- Giftedness is *asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally (Columbus Group, 1991).

2. Why Westmount Mid High (MH) adopted an intelligence test as part of its multiple criteria in the intake procedure?

- Individual IQ tests provide better information for high-stakes decision making for gifted students than group tests (Silverman, 2013). It is estimated that group intelligence tests, such as the CCAT, formerly included in Westmount's multiple criteria assessment, may fail to identify more than 50% of students who are gifted.
- An appropriate IQ test for the gifted should be an excellent measure of abstract reasoning (Silverman, 2013). Individually administered intelligence tests such as the WISC-V, WAIS-IV and SB5 provide a student's profile of verbal and performance problem-solving abilities. They also provide the opportunity for skilled observation, by a qualified psychologist, in a controlled situation with exposure to stimulating materials.
- IQ (intelligence quotient) tests are important tools for recognizing the special education needs of intellectually gifted students. Using a standardized intelligence test as a valid instrument, and one of several broad range criteria, ensures Westmount's identification procedure is compatible with its definition of giftedness and programming services offered.
- The intelligence scale provides a more objective picture of a child's intellectual abilities than teacher judgment, parent recommendations, grades, achievement tests, and other measures (Silverman, 2013).

3. What do acronyms such as the WISC-V, WAIS-IV, SB5, and CCAT mean?

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC): an intelligence test administered by, or under the supervision of, a psychologist to an individual student from the age of 6 years to the age of 16 years. **The WISC-V is required as of January 2015.**

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS): an intelligence test administered by, or under the supervision of, a psychologist to older adolescents and adults. It is currently in its fourth edition (WAIS-IV).
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (SB5): an intelligence test administered by, or under the supervision of, a psychologist to individuals from the age of 2 years to adult. It measures cognitive abilities as well as the overall level of an individual's cognitive development. It is currently in its fifth edition (SB5).
- Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT): an ability test administered by, or under the supervision of, a qualified person, not necessarily a psychologist, to a group. It assesses the development of cognitive abilities in the verbal, quantitative and non-verbal reasoning areas.

4. What are the subtests included in an intelligence test?

- WISC-V & WAIS-IV are comprised of subtests in the following areas:
 - Verbal Comprehension (VCI)
 - Perceptual Reasoning (PRI)
 - Working Memory (WMI)
 - Processing Speed (PSI)
- The subtests are scored on how accurately and, for timed subtests, how quickly questions are answered. Sometimes students who are thoughtful and perfectionistic or who have learning disabilities, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or mood disorders may take longer to complete the answers to test questions.
- Scores can be lowered because it takes gifted students longer to answer on the timed subtests than other students. As a result, gifted children may obtain a Full Scale Intelligence Score (FSIQ) that doesn't truly reflect their actual ability. This may prevent these children from qualifying for gifted programs.

5. What is a Full Scale Intelligence Quotient (FSIQ)?

- Full Scale Intelligence Quotient (FSIQ) describes a person's complete cognitive capacity. The WISC-V, which generates a Full Scale IQ (FSIQ) score, is the most commonly used test to measure a student's cognitive capacity for our mid-high age group (grades 5 – 12).
- Intelligence testing is further described on websites such as the following:

<http://www.school-psychology.com.au/blog/wechsler-intelligence-scale-for-children-wisc-iv/>

6. What is a General Ability Index (GAI)?

- The General Ability Index (GAI) is an excellent indicator of abstract reasoning ability. It is derived from the 6 core subtests of the WISC-V comprising the VCI (Verbal Comprehension Index) and the PRI (Perceptual Reasoning Index). Working memory and processing speed, timed subtests, are eliminated in the calculation. The GAI and the VCI serve as the best measures of giftedness (Silverman, 2013, p. 178).

7. What are the differences between a GAI and FSIQ?

- The GAI does not replace the FSIQ. It should however be reported, if relevant, and interpreted along with the FSIQ and all other index scores including the Working Memory Index (WMI) and Processing Speed Index (PSI).
- FSIQ includes measures of working memory and processing speed, neither of which is highly correlated with general intelligence "g."
- GAI includes only reasoning ability measures, which is the best measure of "g" and more indicative of giftedness than the FSIQ.

8. How can we best identify twice-exceptional students in our intake procedures?

- Gifted children are asynchronous in their development. How much asynchrony is to be expected for the gifted population and when is the degree of asynchrony sufficient to suggest the need for further evaluation of a learning disability?
- The most frequent and pronounced pattern of discrepancy is between the Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI) and the Processing Speed Index (PSI). In recent studies the VCI has emerged as the best representation of giftedness and the PSI as the weakest (Silverman, 2013).
- The condition of twice exceptionality is giftedness combined with a learning disability. Because coexisting gifts and disabilities mask each other, making the student appear less able and less disabled, individual assessment of twice exceptional children is strongly recommended (Silverman, 2013, p. 13).

9. What is the cost of a psychological assessment?

- The Psychologists' Association of Alberta's (PAA) published fee schedule currently recommends \$180.00 per hour for assessment services.
- The intelligence test will provide the FSIQ and/or the GAI required by Westmount as one of its criteria in the application process. The approximate cost is \$900.00.
- The cost of a cognitive & academic assessment or a full assessment will vary according to hours billed.
- Please discuss cost with the psychologist who may be testing your son or daughter.

10. Could the cost of the psychological assessment be covered by a family's health insurance provider?

- Yes, often this cost is covered by health insurance providers. Please check your family's personal health insurance plan or ask your carrier's advisor. Some plans cover part or all of an assessment.

11. Does Westmount recommend specific psychologists for its intake procedure?

- We hold a list of psychologists who have provided psychological assessments for possible entry to Westmount. You may wish to consult your physician or go to the following website for a list of Calgary psychologists:
<http://www.yellowpages.ca/search/si/1/Psychologists/Calgary+AB>.
- For further information please contact Wendy Cole, Student Services Coordinator at 403.217.9427, extension 2020 or at wendy.cole@westmountcharter.com.

Admission Procedures and Criteria

November 2016 - February 28, 2017 – Applications and Assessment Process

- The assessment process at the mid-high campus differs from that at the elementary campus due to the age of the students. However, both processes require an individual intelligence test as one of several broad range criteria.
- Applications for grades 5 - 12 will be accepted until February 28, 2017.
- Completed applications of all suitable candidates submitted after February 28th will be placed at the bottom of the wait list until September 2017 only.

Admission Process

- In early March 2017, families will receive an email with the recommendation of suitability for the Westmount Mid-High program. **This letter is not an offer of a space for the 2017/2018 school year.**
- Offers for placement will be sent to families once available space has been determined at each grade level.

Admission Criteria

- Completed application form.
- Parent Inventory for Finding Potential (PIP) (Rogers, 2002)
 - Parent checklist based on behaviours of 5 major domain profiles of giftedness which focus on students' learning strengths and personality characteristics relevant to learning.

Admission Criteria continued

- Teacher Inventory of Learning Strengths (TILS) (Rogers, 2002)
 - Inventory provides information on personal characteristics that may indicate various levels of success for gifted learners.
 - This form can be completed by your child's teacher, coach, or community member who understands your son or daughter. *If these individuals are unavailable, please write N/A on the TILS and return it with your application.*
- How Do You Like to Learn? (Rogers, 2002)
 - Student questionnaire to help determine learning preferences of a gifted child.
- Intelligence test minimum requirement is a FSIQ and/or GAI
 - WISC-V or WAIS-IV: 130 (+/- 5)
 - SB5: 125 (+/-5)
 - Parents are encouraged to include all assessment information of twice-exceptional children to ensure a complete student profile. The cognitive assessment should be no older than three to five years for students applying to the mid-high campus.
- When using the WISC-V, either the GAI, which emphasizes reasoning ability, or the Full Scale Score (FSIQ), are acceptable for selection to the Westmount Mid-High program.
 - Please refer to AP-300 regarding Student Selection for further information.
http://www.westmountcharter.com/charter_board/policies_procedures.html

References

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- Rogers, K. B. (2002). *Re-Forming gifted education: how parents and teachers can match the program to the child*. Scottsdale, AZ: GPP.
- Silverman, L. K. (2009c). Searching for asynchrony: A new perspective on twice-exceptional children. In B. MacFarlane & T. Stambaugh (Eds.). *Leading change in gifted education: the Festschrift of Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska* (pp.169-181). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Silverman, L. K. (2013). *How to use the new IQ tests in selecting gifted students*. Boulder, CO: GDC.
- Silverman, L. K. (2013). *Giftedness 101*. New York, NY: Springer.