

October, 2018

Dear Parents:

I am pleased to be able to send you some information about a program from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY). This program is designed to identify, recognize and challenge young people who are academically talented and highly motivated. Some of your children may have participated in this program when they were in fifth grade. In this letter I will try to address many of the questions that parents and students have.

The formal eligibility criteria are:

- Achievement at the “Standards Exceeded” proficiency level in English/Language Arts and/or math on the California Smarter Balanced testing.
- Achievement at the 95th percentile or higher in the reasoning portions of a nationally normed test (e.g. Iowa Test of Basic Skills, ERB – National Norms)

Based on our testing data your child may be eligible for this program.

This year information about and registration for the CTY contest and program is online. You can go to cty.jhu.edu/start. You can also request more information about the program online.

The Talent Search procedure involves taking the SCAT (School and College Ability Test). This is a difficult and challenging above grade level test, designed not so much to measure your child’s achievement, but reasoning abilities. This test takes about 75 minutes (22 minutes for each of two sections, plus direction time) and is administered on the computer at specific sites, where you may register for the test. If children perform at a high level on this test, they will be recognized and eligible for accelerated and enriching summer programs. For further information concerning CTY program eligibility please refer to this link, <https://cty.jhu.edu/talent/eligibility/index.html> (you may have to type this if the link doesn’t work from this document).

Parents and students often have questions about this program. I will try to answer many of them here.

What are the advantages of participating in this contest?

Some advantages are:

- Practice in taking the kinds of tests that students will have to take when they get older, for private high school, if that is a consideration, or for college. Taking this test may build confidence and feeling less scared of such tests (“oh, I did that when I was 11 or 12”)
- Information about your child’s intellectual strengths and what s/he really can show on tests that are above grade level
- Local or state recognition if they score well enough

- Opportunity to enroll in accelerated and enriching summer programs at universities (e.g. Stanford) with other high achieving students, again, if they score high enough. These programs are entirely optional.
- Access to educational information and opportunities through the CTY program.

How can we decide whether my child should participate (VERY IMPORTANT)?

If you are going to consider the Smarter Balanced results, look over the results carefully. Check to see if his/her proficiency scores were towards the high end of the English/Language Arts and/or Math ranges. If s/he took another state proficiency test, make sure that s/he scored in the high “commendable” or “advanced” level on that test. I would suggest that unless the scores are in the middle to high “advanced” levels on both parts, the SCAT may be too difficult. If s/he took a nationally normed test, the scores should be at least at the 95th percentile in verbal reasoning, reading comprehension, math reasoning, or total math to have a good chance at doing well on the SCAT.

If the scores are at these levels, then your child has a good chance of being able to answer some of the questions on both parts. If s/he was very strong in one area, but not the other, s/he will still have to take the entire test, but will probably do better in the stronger area. If s/he scored very high (near the top of the range) on one section, then it may be worth it to try the SCAT.

If you consider report card grades, your child should have a “4” on the Reed District rating system, in addition to very positive feedback from his/her teacher.

I do not recommend studying for this test. Nor do I recommend that your child take it if they are not really interested, if they don’t like academic challenges, or if they would feel defeated if they don’t do as well as they usually do on tests (they probably won’t get all of the answers correct). On the other hand, if your child can look on this as a “fun” challenge, enjoys intellectual activities, wouldn’t mind giving up a Saturday morning, and wants some practice on a similar test to one they will be taking eventually to get into college, then, by all means, try. Parents and children should make this decision jointly.

If you are thinking about having your child take the test go to the following link on the CTY website: <http://cty.jhu.edu/talent/testing/about/scat.html>. This provides a “mini SCAT” test with 20 sample questions. Before making a decision have your child give these questions a try. If they don’t seem too hard, then s/he can probably answer some to many of the questions on the “real” test.

You might ask why, with all of these cautions, I’m providing this information to you. I do like to make opportunities available to all eligible students, and give you the choice whether or not to participate. It is completely your voluntary decision whether to have your child participate or not.

Can I do anything to help my child prepare, so s/he’ll know what the test is like?

If you decide to have your child take the test, make sure s/he reviews the sample questions on the “mini SCAT” test, mentioned above. (Please note: I will not be doing anything at school to prepare the children for the test.)

If my child doesn't take the test, will s/he miss out on any opportunities at school?

No. All school activities and opportunities are either available to everyone or based on classroom performance.

When should my child take the test?

Students may take the SCAT test any time from the fall through late spring, but you must sign up at least one month in advance to take the test. I recommend taking it after the winter break, just so that s/he will have had more school instruction prior to taking the test. It is suggested that if one is interested in a summer program then the student should take the test before February 1st. All testing through June 30, 2017 will be considered for state awards and recognition. The following link provides information about fees and deadlines: <http://cty.jhu.edu/talent/fees/index.html>.

Where can I find out what summer courses are offered?

You can go on the CTY website: www.cty.jhu.edu for detailed information about application procedures, eligibility criteria for the summer courses, and course offerings for 2018 (2019 courses are not available yet, though dates are listed). The website will also address many of your questions. It is my strong suggestion that if your child is eligible for a summer course that s/he use the opportunity for exposure and learning in an area of interest that would not normally be available in middle school, rather than acceleration in math.

If my child doesn't do that well, will the scores go on his/her record and will they hurt his/her chances of getting into a private high school, if we consider one?

Only parents and I will see the scores. When you apply to high school, your child's scores on the entrance examinations will be what count. High schools generally do not require the SCAT test as part of their entrance criteria.

Is this just a gimmick for Johns Hopkins and the College Board to get money out of us?

I like to think not. This program has been going on for over 45 years and students seem to benefit from the experience. I've known numbers of students who have taken courses during the summer and have been pretty uniformly pleased.

The two steps in the application process (to CTY and then to apply for the test itself) cost a lot of money (\$43 + \$60). Is there any financial aid, if I can't quite afford this but my child and I would still like to participate?

Yes, you can apply online for financial assistance.

I would hope that this answers all of your questions. **Again, you may register on line at the CTY website.** Remember this is a two step process; first apply to CTY and then apply for the SCAT test. **Our School Code is: 9492066. For "Qualifying Test" you'll have to leave that blank, unless your child has taken another achievement or**

ability test in another state. Leave “Percentile Rank” blank unless available, from another test.

Please contact me by email (agold@reedschools.org) only if you have a question I haven't addressed. You may also contact the CTY California Outreach Coordinator, Jason Toraldo, at jtoraldo1@jhu.edu or 410-735-7129.

I'm sorry that I can't have a lengthy discussion with every parent to decide if taking the test would be a good idea or not, though I would appreciate your informing me if you are planning to have your child take the test.

Allan Gold, Ph. D
District Psychologist