

SPECIAL MESSAGE ABOUT PRIVATE KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

We do not test incoming first graders for high ability (giftedness). The main reason is that we want to be consistent in our identification and it is not possible for us to duplicate the multi-faceted and lengthy process we use to identify the students who attended kindergarten in Zionsville Community Schools.

All of our kindergarten teachers have been trained in the Kingore Observation Inventory (KOI) and are qualified to identify characteristics of giftedness. They each conducted a six-week observation period of their students using the KOI procedures during the winter months. The data collected during the KOI was used to nominate students district-wide for high ability consideration.

Those kindergarten students who were nominated then took the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test which is regarded as a reliable standardized measure of a child's achievement levels in math and reading. Students also took the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT) which is sometimes referred to as an IQ test. In addition, the kindergarten teachers completed the SIGS (Scale for Identifying Gifted Students) which is another research-based measure for giftedness and the parents completed the Kingore Parent Observation form.

All of these tests and forms were examined by a committee of licensed high ability elementary teachers who determined which children qualified. The small number of kindergarten students who were identified in February will be placed in first grade "cluster groups" in each of our four elementary schools. (Cluster groups are small groups of students who have similar academic needs. We cluster group high ability students in classrooms with students of mixed ability levels. We also cluster high achieving students in the other classrooms.)

Each first grader will take the NWEA within the first month of first grade and again in the spring. All first graders will also take the OLSAT ability test in January. In addition all first graders will be assessed using AIMSweb in the fall, winter, and spring which measures reading levels. Reading instruction will be differentiated based upon these assessments. During the 90-minute reading block next year, each student will be instructed in small groups within his or her classroom at the appropriate instructional level. Math instruction will also be differentiated within all of our classrooms. We are implementing a very challenging math program, Everyday Math, district-wide.

We believe that all of our first graders will all receive the appropriate level of challenge whether they are identified as high ability or not. Next spring we will once again consider all first graders for high ability identification.