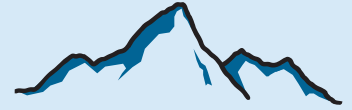




Center for Bright Kids
Academic Talent Development



Western Academic Talent Search

2019-2020 WATS Registration Bulletin



Grades 3-9

a bright spot for bright kids...

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Center for Bright Kids (CBK) Academic Talent Development

You Are Invited to Participate in the Western Academic Talent Search (WATS)!

Welcome to the **37th year of the Western Academic Talent Search!** WATS is offered through the Center for Bright Kids, one of several national non-profit Regional Talent Development Centers. WATS enables **academically talented 3rd through 9th graders to take the ACT, SAT, or PSAT 8/9 test at a much earlier age.** This above-level testing experience allows students to:

- better evaluate their strengths
- practice taking a more challenging test
- compare their scores with other high achieving students
- qualify for special summer or academic year opportunities or scholarships
- receive recognition of their outstanding abilities

We look forward to your support and participation in this year's academic talent search, as it is an excellent opportunity for your students to learn about and gain recognition for their academic abilities. ***While testing is one mere snapshot of academic ability, in this day and age, it has become a tremendous advocacy tool for educators and families of bright kids.***

Please discuss the WATS program with personnel at your school – we want to assure you that the academic talent search has a long-standing national reputation for excellence, advocacy, and educational purpose at one of the four national Regional Talent Development Centers. Please do not hesitate to call us with any questions or concerns about **WATS and CBK at 303-428-2634 or email us at cbk@centerforbrightkids.org.**

Let's recognize our kids for their academic accomplishments and open some additional doors for educational opportunities and scholarship. **Please share the program** and distribute full WATS Bulletins to counselors, teachers, parents and qualified students as soon as possible. Just give us a call if you need more copies, as the information here is as important as the application itself. Thank you so much for your participation – we hope to talk with you soon!

PLEASE NOTE: ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE.
www.centerforbrightkids.org/wats

I Just Found Out My Student Qualified for WATS—What Is This Program?

The practice of conducting searches for students who reason extremely well mathematically and/or verbally began with the work of Dr. Julian Stanley at Johns Hopkins University in the early 1970's. Since then, Talent Search has developed into a national program, with over 150,000 students participating annually.

The national Academic Talent Search is a **research-validated opportunity** for students to take **“above-level” testing** typically not available until college entrance. These tests offer a **“higher ceiling”** than standardized state or other national grade-level tests on which these talented kids are already receiving top scores. While **Talent Search test scores offer only one snapshot of students' abilities**, they are an excellent means for helping kids evaluate their academic strengths in order to advocate for their educational needs, to access academic programming, or to design individualized educational plans. Talent Search is a great tool for bright kids and families looking for a resource to learn more about their students' abilities and options.

How Do I Know If My Student Is Eligible?

PARTICIPATION IN A SCHOOL GIFTED PROGRAM

Students currently in **3rd-9th grade** who qualify for their school's gifted program are encouraged to apply. Documentation of identification must be included with the application. If students have skipped grades or are home-schooled, they are then being measured against grade-level peers in an academic setting. No age-level adjustments are made for students in these situations.

ACADEMIC ABILITY

Must **score at or above the 90th%** on a nationally normed academic achievement test. This percentile can be a composite/total score or one of the overall scores for verbal or mathematical reasoning or may be represented as “advanced” criterion **on any subtest**. Students have used scores from tests such as: ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), Stanford Achievement Test, WISC-IV, Terra Nova, CogAT, NAEP, PARCC, CRT, MAP, or SBA scores at the “advanced” level **or previous Talent Search scores**. Qualifying scores are good for two years. WATS certificates and the WATS bulletin are NOT acceptable proof of eligibility.

RECOMMENDATION

A school counselor, licensed teacher, or home school association official (who must not be the student's parent) may provide a **letter of recommendation** based upon a full year of outstanding performance in a core subject area (**the letter you may have received from school**).

Why Would We Do This? Aren't We Testing Kids Too Much Already?

This is a very reasonable concern that many of our new families share, and a very real worry about the current testing craze. However, WATS really isn't, in the end, about the test itself and the score the student receives. It IS about the benefits students receive from participating in this program, and even our most wary families come back after several years of participating grateful for the opportunity their student had to practice these tests without penalty, open doors for new programs and opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise been aware of, and most common in our feedback, families are happy that they have the necessary tools to be heard and have their students be visible in their schooling environments. Yes, we are testing a lot. But at least, hopefully, these scores can mean something real.

Many of our kids are asked to just "float." The assumption is that if they are just given more assignments when they finish early, or they are asked to tutor another student who is struggling with the material, or they are allowed to "do something else" while everyone catches up, that they'll be just "fine." We are interested in more than "fine." We are interested in what's next. What new level could students achieve if they actually were allowed to move ahead? What new level of inquiry might be achieved if students actually were allowed to ask questions that "shouldn't be asked" until the next year in school or next level of curriculum? What new level of skill sets might be accomplished if students were challenged rather than coasting along? The academic talent search is a passport of sorts to beginning these conversations at home. Plus, kids tell us they actually like it when they can go into a testing site and watch those graduating seniors get nervous!

Unfortunately, in today's educational world, we still often need "proof" in the form of a score report to demonstrate that you and your student are ready for these conversations. This is especially critical for those students who may be developing "asynchronously" - that is, their academic achievement is very, very high, while their social skills are challenged daily by their peers. As a nationally recognized program with nationally understood testing rigor, Talent Search provides a means to advocacy in healthy, supported ways for families, a means for accessing courses, programs, schools, or scholarship opportunities that require this "proof," and a means for building the self-confidence and comfort that ultimately are necessary for students to be successful on these tests when they, as our students often state, "take it for real."

So, What Are the Benefits? "Your kid deserves to learn something new, every day..."

- Grade level testing often does not reveal the upper limits of student abilities. Participants gain **early experience** taking an above-level or college entrance test, reporting increased comfort with standardized testing and significant score gains that can make the difference when applying to college. **The more times students participate, the more steady increases in success.**
- With permission, **schools receive information** about talent search results. School officials are better able to accommodate students' course choices or curriculum modifications with this information.
- Scholarship opportunities become available and many **gates are opened and qualification requirements met** for higher level programming, advanced opportunities, scholarships, grade-level adjustments, or schools for gifted. Talent Search is an outstanding **resume-builder**, especially when 150,000 other very bright students are participating (see our web resources!).
- Students are invited to participate in the **CBK Summer Programs**, designed to provide an optimal match and allow students entering 4th-12th grades to develop a socio-emotional network of peers in a living/learning community. Many students age through these programs with lifelong CBK friends.
- Top scoring participants are invited to a state **Recognition Ceremony**, if one is offered in your state, or can travel regionally.
- During the spring, participants receive the **Interpretive Guide**, which provides information needed to interpret test scores in relationship to other grade-level Talent Search participants across the Western region.
- **Young students** are not otherwise able to take these tests.
- **Scores are archived** by WATS but can only be reported by families, meaning there is **no risk in participating**. **9th grade students** have the scores included as part of their testing company personal account which only you can access. In the event that your student did well, you may choose to report them for early decision or access. Scores are part of a comprehensive score report that some universities require. The goal is a positive student experience, regardless of the final test score. Why not sign up?



"My family learned about WATS from my son's GT teacher when he was in the third grade and we were trying to find a summer camp program that would be a good fit. All three of my kids are now active WATS (and CBK Summer!) participants, and they all appreciate the opportunity to take a test that truly challenges the limits of their abilities. Mandatory grade-level testing doesn't adequately measure the abilities of students who are working above grade level, and there is value in taking a test where you DON'T already know all the answers. We have seen steady growth in both test scores and confidence over several years of WATS participation, and I know my kids will be unfazed by the magnitude of the SAT when they are taking the test as a high school graduation requirement or for college admission and National Merit recognition. We have WATS to thank for that."

- The Mitchell Family

Isn't This Just Another Membership Organization? What's This WATS Fee For?

WATS does not offer memberships. WATS is just one of the programs offered by the Center for Bright Kids Regional Talent Development Center, a non-profit 501(c)3. Your nonrefundable \$50 fee does not pay for membership and does not renew. It covers, for this year: the cost of printing and distributing program materials; mailing costs for SAT/ACT/PSAT 8/9 score reports and data files; printing envelopes and paper for the program materials themselves; access to CBK staff for assistance on completing the application; processing registrations; working with the testing companies to coordinate student files transfer and establish testing sites; working with school districts to identify and recruit students; development of the website resource page; data processing of all scores; student file information; recognition ceremony qualifying criteria; and Interpretive Guide data collection, aggregation, and assessment. The cost of Recognition Ceremonies or materials is not covered by WATS family fees. So rest assured, while it is important to be vigilant about the many opportunities that are available to your student, you are not “buying your way” into anything by participating in WATS. This is not a school, community, or marketing-driven decision. It is yours and your student’s about whether the program is the right fit for you and your needs. And again, students really do enjoy it!

Why Doesn't My School Know About This? Do I Have to Participate Through School?

Academic talent search is not a school-based program; however, Talent Development Centers work closely with schools and districts to make sure that families are aware of this program and can make an educated choice about whether it is a good fit for them. WATS is bound by FERPA regulations, just as schools are, so we rely on a coordinator at your school or in your community who understands the value of Talent Search to identify qualified students, inform them of the program, and get you a letter stating that your student is qualified or provide a score report. Hopefully, you know who this person is in your school or district. However, if you don't have someone helping you out, please let your school know that we are happy to work with them to set up a presentation and brief training for a new coordinator. For families who are struggling more with school cooperation, **no school representative is necessary to participate**. Participation is a family decision. Many schools work directly with Talent Search to advocate for participation due to school benefits in gaining information about top-achieving students' abilities and how they can be better met with curriculum/programs, all of which are heavily researched resources.

Which Test Do I Select?

YOU MUST APPLY ONLINE!

WATS does not recommend one test over another. Any of the three tests are appropriate for Talent Search participants. When choosing a test, families should also consider which date and location will be most convenient, as again, some tests in some locations will require travel in winter weather. Students taking the SAT or ACT will likely test alongside high school students who are testing for college admission. WATS students do not receive a different version of the ACT or SAT. WATS students are also not encouraged to spend time studying for these tests, other than to become familiar with the format and types of questions.

SAT

Grades 6-9

The SAT is a 3-hour test with four sections measuring skills in reading, writing, and math (with/without calculator). The essay section is optional for all students and is not part of Talent Search recognition ceremony or interpretive guide data. SAT is typically taken in 11th grade and is more popular on the Coasts, though all 4-year colleges take SAT scores. Guessing is not penalized and scores range from 200-800 on each area test, with a composite of 400-1600 possible. SAT is now mandated in many states as a high school completion assessment, including Colorado.

ACT

Grades 6-9

The ACT is a 3-hour test that focuses on core curriculum knowledge acquired in school. There are four sections: math, English, reading, and science. The essay section is optional for all students and is not part of Talent Search recognition ceremony or interpretive guide data. Guessing is not penalized and scores range from 1-36. ACT is typically given in 11th grade and is mandated in many states as a high school completion assessment, including Montana, being most popular in the Midwest and South, though all 4-year colleges take ACT scores.

PSAT 8/9 (8th/9th grades)

Grades 3-6

The PSAT 8/9 is a 2 1/2-hour test written in the same format as the SAT. There are three sections: reading, writing, and math. Guessing is not penalized and scores range from 240-1440, easily comparable to SAT scores. PSAT 8/9 is typically administered to students in the 8th and 9th grades as a precursor to PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT.

Where Can I Take the Test? Can I Take More Than One Test? How Do I Find Sites By Date?

Yes, depending on grade level you can take more than one test—you still pay only one WATS fee. Talent Search testing is available across the country, though not every community. For some tests and in some rural areas, travel may be required to access a test site. **Available sites will be listed on the application once you have selected your date, but you might check ahead on options — NOT EVERY SITE OFFERS EVERY DATE.**

SAT 866.756.7346 <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/find-test-centers> (search by date, then state)

ACT 319.337.1270 <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/test-center-locator.html> (choose state)

PSAT 8/9 844-806-7817 with sites listed through CBK WATS registration

Fee Reduction, Waivers, and Special Accommodations

Students who qualify for the free/reduced lunch program at school are eligible for one test fee waiver and a reduced WATS fee. *To qualify, documentation of free/reduced lunch program eligibility must accompany the WATS application at least two weeks before the registration deadline.* Payment of the \$25 reduced WATS fee is made after your waiver is approved.

PSAT 8/9 accommodations may be requested through CBK at application. ACT and SAT accommodations must be requested through the test company with documentation. Request accommodations at least 7 weeks before your test date.

APPLICATION DEADLINES and TESTING DATES (deadlines are ONLINE PAYMENT by 11:59pm)

FINAL DEADLINE MAY 1	TEST DATE	WATS DEADLINE	LATE DEADLINE (+\$40)
ACT	OCT 26	SEPT 20	SEPT 28
Grades 6-9	DEC 14	NOV 8	NOV 15
\$55	FEB 8	JAN 3	JAN 10
	APR 4*	FEB 28	MAR 6
	JUN 13*	APR 24	MAY 1
SAT	NOV 2	SEPT 20	SEPT 27
Grades 6-9	DEC 7	OCT 25	NOV 1
\$55	MAR 14	JAN 31	FEB 7
	MAY 2*	MAR 20	MAR 27
	JUN 6*	APR 24	MAY 1
PSAT 8/9	JAN 18	NOV 29	DEC 6
Grades 3-6, \$50	FEB 8 or 9	DEC 20	JAN 3

*Test dates after March 14 are not eligible for Recognition Ceremony consideration.

Incomplete/unpaid applications will not be processed. CBK is not responsible for missed deadlines due to incomplete applications.

HOW TO APPLY

- Talk to your school counselor, G/T coordinator, or teacher about the benefits of participating in the program.
- Use a score report for eligibility. OR if you got a letter telling you about the program from school, use that instead of a score report, provided it says “you qualify.” OR provide documentation of participation/identification in school gifted program.
- **Create a new family account for 2019-2020 at:**

www.centerforbrightkids.org/wats

upload your eligibility, select a test date and site, and make a payment

- Watch the mail several weeks before the test for your test site confirmation letter, admission ticket, and information about the nature of the test. Do not study! But do prepare yourself for what to expect. **CBK will send a reminder email with a link to photo ID waiver forms for ACT or SAT (if necessary) on the Monday before your scheduled test date.**
- The evening before the test, make sure you have your identification and the appropriate materials for the test—do you get to use a calculator? Have your pencils? Make sure your student sleeps the night before. On the morning of the test, eat breakfast. Then, get to the testing site allowing ample time for registration lines and prompt arrival—proctors will not admit students late. Bring proper Talent Search student identification, a family member, and materials. Family members, you then have to leave—see you in 3-4 hours depending on the test. After the test, go out for a big lunch to celebrate. Maybe have some ice cream.
- Don’t worry about the score report. In 5-7 weeks when it comes, if you can, stick it in a drawer until you have the Interpretive Guide. In January, think about registering for CBK Summer Programs. Then, watch your family email in April for the Interpretive Guide and maybe a Recognition Ceremony invitation.



Center for Bright Kids

Academic Talent
Development

Colorado Nonprofit Development Center

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Your 2019-2020 Western Academic Talent Search Bulletin Has Arrived!

Summer Programs 2020

CBK SHINE

**(Students Headed Into New
Enrichment)**

Students take one accelerated enrichment course of interest, with a full residential program to support social and emotional growth

grades 4-6 in fall, 2020

August 2-8, 2020

CBK GLOW

**(Gaining Leadership,
Obtaining Wisdom)**

A transitional program between SHINE and Luminary, students take one accelerated course of interest, with a full residential and weekend program to support social and emotional growth

grades 6-8 in fall, 2020

June 14-27, 2020

The CBK Luminary Project

An intensive acceleration program, students take one course of interest with potential for equivalency credit, with a full residential and dual weekend program to support social and emotional growth

**Mature 8th graders—12th grade not
older than 17 in fall, 2020**

July 5-25, 2020

Summer Programs Catalogue available at the end of January -
Email your USPS address in order to receive a copy!
(WATS students automatically receive the Catalogue)



University of Colorado **Boulder**

Summer Programs are held on the campus of the University of Colorado Boulder, nestled against the Rocky Mountain flatirons. All programs are fully residential experiences offering students the opportunity to be intellectually challenged by top instructors while living in a community of bright peers. Full recreational and weekend programs are included.

a bright spot for bright kids...

Check out our website at www.centerforbrightkids.org!

Also, you can check out CBK Summer Programs, open to students across the country and internationally!



Like Us at www.facebook.com/CenterForBrightKids