

FAQs: Westmount Mid-High Intake Procedures 2023 – 2024

General Questions

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

- Westmount Charter School is the only K-12 congregated setting in Alberta for students who are intellectually gifted. To be identified as gifted, students at Westmount have been assessed with a Full Scale IQ (FSIQ) and/or General Ability Index (GAI) at or above the 98th percentile (standard score 130 or above), as measured on an individually administered intelligence test.
- Students are gifted when they demonstrate outstanding levels of aptitude (exceptional ability to reason and learn) or competence (documented performance or achievement) in learning rate, depth of knowledge, and reasoning and problem-solving abilities when compared to others of their age, experience and environment. Alberta Education defines giftedness as “exceptional potential and/or performance across a wide range of abilities in one or more areas.
- 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?

- 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 (Silverman, 2013).
- 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 mean?

- **Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 5th Edition (WISC-5)**: 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.
- **Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 4th Edition (WAIS-4)**: an intelligence test administered by, or under the supervision of, a psychologist to older adolescents and adults (16 years and up).
- **Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, 5th Edition (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.

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

- The WISC-V is comprised of subtests in the following areas:
 - Verbal Comprehension (VCI)
 - Fluid Reasoning (FRI)
 - Visual Spatial (VSI)
 - Working Memory (WMI)
 - Processing Speed (PSI)
- The WAIS-IV is comprised of subtests in the following areas:
 - Verbal Comprehension (VCI)
 - Perceptual Reasoning (PRI)
 - Working Memory (WMI)
 - Processing Speed (PSI)
- The Stanford-Binet 5 provides scores in the following areas:
 - Full Scale IQ
 - Nonverbal IQ
 - Verbal IQ
 - Fluid Reasoning
 - Knowledge
 - Qualitative Reasoning
 - Visual-Spatial Processing
 - Working Memory
- The subtests are scored on how accurately and, for timed subtests, how quickly questions are answered.

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).

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

- The GAI provides an estimate of general intellectual ability, with reduced emphasis on working memory and processing speed relative to the FSIQ. It is a good indicator of overall reasoning abilities.
- The GAI is derived from 5 subtests in the verbal comprehension, visual spatial, and fluid reasoning domains.

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

- The GAI does not replace the FSIQ as the best measure of overall ability. 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).
- A significant difference between GAI and FSIQ scores indicates that the effects of cognitive proficiency, as measured by working memory and processing speed, may have led to a higher overall FSIQ or GAI score.

8. Are we able to support students who are twice exceptional?

- At Westmount, a twice exceptional learner is a student who is identified as gifted combined with another diagnosis or diagnoses provided by a qualified professional.
- Like other gifted learners, 2e students are highly knowledgeable and talented in at least one particular domain. However, their giftedness is often overshadowed by their disabilities, or these students may be able to mask or hide their learning deficits by using their talents to compensate. (NAGC)
- We will consider accepting a twice exceptional student provided that they are identified as gifted, we have the resources available to support the student's needs and there is capacity in any given grade.
- We have a robust Student Services Department with many staff members who are highly qualified in supporting students who present with a variety of needs that may impact academic performance, organization, participation, long-term planning, socialization or other difficulties that may be detrimental to their self-efficacy, self-confidence and motivation.

9. What is the cost of a psychological assessment?

- The Psychologists' Association of Alberta's (PAA) published fee schedule currently recommends \$200.00 per hour for assessment services. This is expected to increase to \$220.00 per hour in 2023.
- Please discuss the total cost for the complete assessment with the psychologist who may be testing your child.
- The intelligence test will provide the FSIQ and/or the GAI required by Westmount as one of its criteria in the application process, along with other index scores and relevant information.

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 families 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?

- Westmount Charter School does not recommend any specific psychologist. We recommend you choose a psychologist you are most comfortable working with. Your child's physician may have information regarding psychological referrals as well.

12. Bursary Application Information

- We appreciate your concerns regarding the fees associated with obtaining a psychological assessment. As a first step, we suggest you contact your benefits provider as these programs often have coverage for this type of an assessment.
- Should you continue to require financial assistance to obtain a psychological assessment, then you may qualify for help from Westmount Charter School.
- Please find your gross combined family income threshold and the number of family members (include parents and children) to determine if you might qualify for this type of assistance. If you believe you qualify for our assistance, both parents will need to provide their Notice of Assessment letter(s) from Canada Revenue Agency for the most recent taxation year. These forms can be scanned and emailed to our Principal, Mr. Graeme Finlay at graeme.finlay@westmountcharter.com. Please ensure your child's name, the grade they are applying to and the parent's names are in the body of the e-mail.

- Following an initial consideration of the information you've provided, we will contact you to let you know if we believe you should move forward with a Bursary Application.

- Family Size (**total** in household)/ Combined Gross Income

2 / \$45,068	6 / \$78,060
3 / \$55,196	7 / \$84,313
4 / \$63,735	8 / \$84,313
5 / \$71,258	

13. Admission Procedures and Criteria

- October 2022 - February 15, 2023 – Applications submitted online through SchoolEngage.
- 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 a standardized individual intelligence test as one of several broad range criteria.
- Application submissions for grades 5 - 12 will be accepted until February 15, 2023.
- Applications submitted after the February 15th deadline will not be accepted unless otherwise indicated on the grade 5 through 12 admissions page on our website.

14. Admission Process

- In early March 2023, the primary contact who created the SchoolEngage account 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 2023/2024 school year.
- Offers for placement from the registrar-midhigh@westmountcharter.com email address will be sent to the primary contact who created the SchoolEngage account once available space has been determined at each grade level.

15. Admission Criteria

- Completed application submission through School Engage.
- Intelligence test minimum requirement: Full Scale IQ (FSIQ) and/or General Ability Index (GAI) at or above the 98th percentile (standard score 130 or above), as measured on an individually administered intelligence test.
- Parents are encouraged to include all assessment information of their child (including social-emotional, academic or behavioural difficulties or diagnoses from a qualified professional) 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.
- **Teacher Inventory of Learning Strengths (TILS)** (Rogers, 2002): provides information on personal characteristics that may indicate various levels of success for gifted learners. When you fill out the application form, you will be asked to provide the email address of an individual who can complete a Teacher Inventory of Learning Strengths (TILS) survey for your child. Our preference would be your child's current homeroom teacher, a resource teacher or guidance counselor who has recently worked with your child or an administrator at your child's current school. However, we understand that some schools will not allow teachers or staff members to complete forms for external schools. While your child will not be penalized if the teacher is not able to fill out the form, you are also welcome to have a coach/piano teacher/tutor (someone other than a relative who knows your child well) complete the form. If you are unable to have a TILS completed, it will not impact your child's application.
- Please refer to AP-300 regarding Student Selection for further information.
http://www.westmountcharter.com/charter_board/policies_procedures.html

References

Alberta Learning. (2000). *Teaching students who are gifted and talented*. Edmonton, AB: Author. (Alberta Education).

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.

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