

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF OVERSEAS SCHOOLS



WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT to find in Overseas Schools for your GIFTED CHILD?

Prepared by the Advisory Committee on
Exceptional Children and Youth

2023

INTRODUCTION

Every year, United States Government families must make career-related decisions about when and where to look for posts overseas. This guide is designed to help families consider these decisions in the context of facilitating their child's transition to the most appropriate school setting possible when the child is gifted and talented. It is important to first decide what is right for your family, and then be proactive in developing a collaborative relationship with the Office of Overseas Schools and international school leaders who support you and your children.

DEFINING GIFTS AND TALENTS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

Definitions of giftedness vary across contexts, but most definitions include high achievement in specific areas. In the three-ring conception of giftedness, for example, Renzulli (1978) expanded the idea of giftedness from exclusive notions of "schoolhouse" or lesson learning giftedness with the addition of creative production giftedness, as well as including the capability of developing gifted traits and behaviors. The interaction of above-average ability, task commitment, and creativity produce gifted behaviors/traits (Renzulli, 1978; Renzulli & Reis, 2021). Being gifted, however, doesn't necessarily occur with evidence of motivation or creativity. There are many highly gifted children who think differently and more deeply in a single subject than their age peers in school subjects, but without accelerated support from a teacher or counselor, will make no effort to advance their learning. It becomes easy in classrooms where effort to advance their learning. It becomes easy in classrooms where teachers know little about giftedness to let these children sit back and be "average." The National Association for Gifted Children ([NAGC], 2019) notes that students with gifts and talents come from all cultural populations and economic backgrounds, may have multiple diagnoses in one or more domains including disabilities or mental health diagnoses, and require modified educational experiences to reach their potential. That definition states:

Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential.

Students with gifts and talents:

- **Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.**
- **Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.**

Are as likely as their typically achieving peers to also have learning and processing disorders that also require specialized intervention and accommodation.

TWICE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

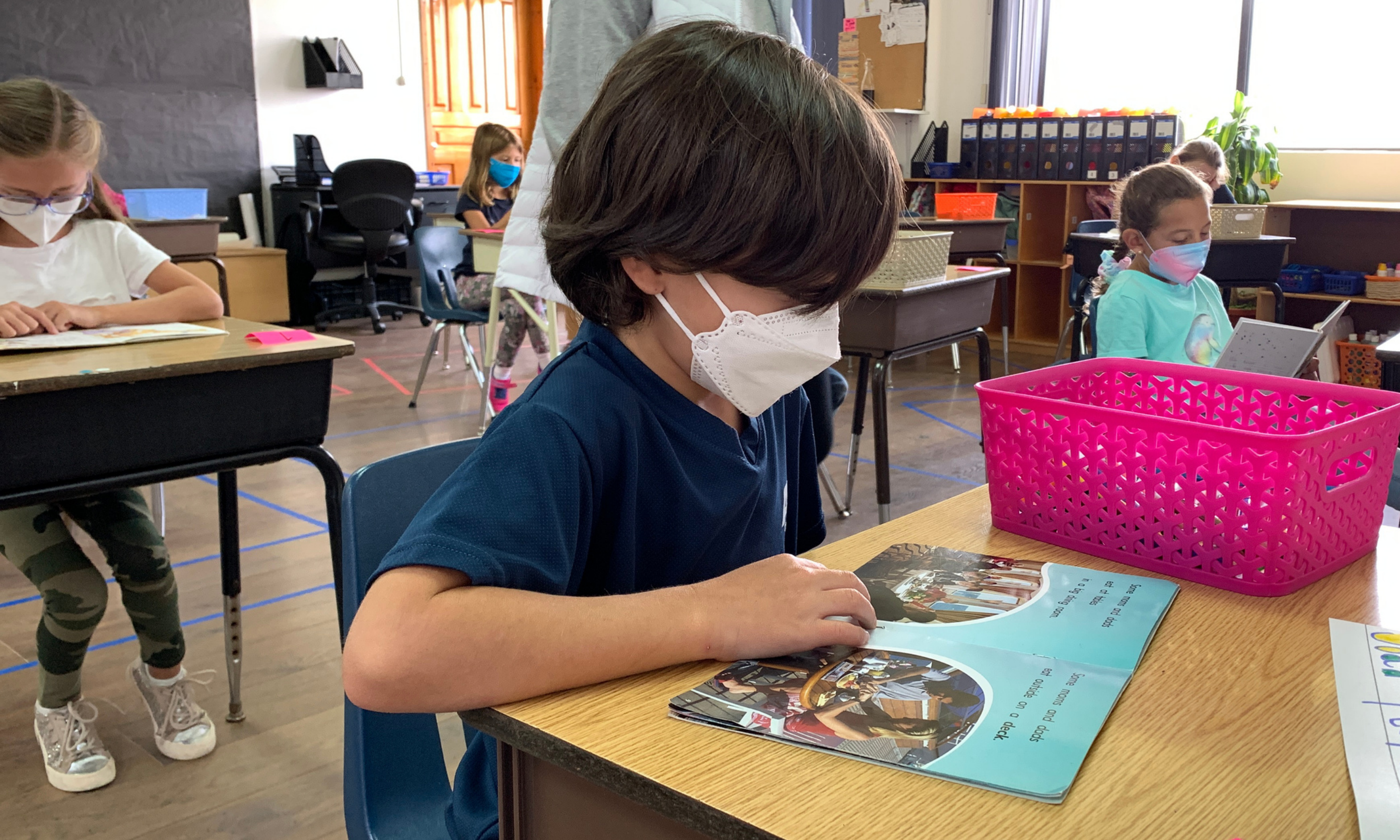
Over the past few decades, several definitions have emerged to describe individuals who display both gifts/talents and disabilities.

A commonly cited operational definition of twice exceptional, also known as 2e learners is:

- **students who demonstrate the potential for high achievement or creative productivity in one or more domains such as math, science, technology, the social arts, the visual, spatial, or performing arts or other areas of human productivity AND who manifest one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria (Reis et al., 2014).**

When educators understand that students may have both high potential and a disability, this knowledge may help educators avoid misunderstandings and misdiagnoses. Additional sources of confusion may include that high ability sometimes masks a disability and that development across areas (such as reading or math) may be asynchronous or uneven. These developmental differences contribute to difficulty identifying children who are twice exceptional and may complicate identifying and implementing support strategies. So, parents are advised to carefully consider existing regulations and characteristics of programs for high ability students, before completing the post application process recommended on page 8 of this booklet.





CURRENT STATUS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMMING

In the United States there are no Federal requirements to fund Gifted and Talented programming, but most individual states do mandate identification and many fund programs for gifted and talented students. The U.S. State Department's Office of Overseas Schools encourages schools and families to find creative solutions to supplement strong educational excellence while families are posted overseas. However, similar to independent schools in the United States, very few overseas schools have special programs for gifted children.

In part, educators believe the curriculum is sufficiently demanding because:

- International schools are often highly selective,
- Independent schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and/or
- Independent schools offer International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

We suggest that parents **keep an open mind** and remember to find schools that value curiosity, creativity, enrichment, and subject or grade acceleration to challenge all students.

This booklet includes strategies that have been found to be effective in a variety of educational settings serving diverse ethnic and socioeconomic populations and may even reverse underachievement. Some of these strategies may benefit gifted and talented students longitudinally, by helping students determine postsecondary and career plans, develop creativity and motivation, and achieve more advanced degrees.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN OVERSEAS SCHOOLS

Look for programs that offer a range of services that address the diverse learning and affective needs of these students. For example, some benefits have been found for grouping gifted students in advanced classes to increase their academic achievement. Gifted and talented students also respond well to a broad range of enrichment and acceleration opportunities. Advanced learners need opportunities for advanced content to continue to make progress in all content areas. They need availability of opportunities for individualized research, creative outlets, and the chance to pursue advanced interests.

For students who are underachieving or who have gifts and talents, but also learning disabilities, counseling and other services may help address their social-emotional needs. The needs of gifted and talented students are varied and students often thrive if teachers have specialized training in differentiating curriculum and instruction and extending gifted education strategies and pedagogy across content areas. A key in educating 2e students is to teach to the child's gifts/strengths, incorporating remediation in the area(s) of the disabilities first, followed by special education support once the child is engaged. This avoids frustration for the child who wants to learn more in their areas of strength and interest.

GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES

CURRICULUM DIFFERENTIATION

Teachers may differentiate the curriculum experience of the students. Ideally, this will be accomplished by curriculum compacting (Reis, Renzulli & Burns, 2016) by eliminating segments your child has already mastered, and shortening others that can be learned quickly. Then, with the time saved, teachers may extend and deepen assignments. Extending and deepening assignments to match the level and pace of your child's learning can support their growth. This can sometimes be accomplished by substituting assignments (e.g., reading a different text or novel, modifying a project), or by enabling the student to work ahead independently in the text or in the next grade's text, or in a more challenging unit of study not usually covered by the class. Often, curriculum compacting frees time for either enrichment or accelerated learning, described below.



ENRICHMENT

Enrichment in gifted education usually include learning activities that are:

- interest-based;
- integrate advanced content, processes, and products;
- include broad interdisciplinary themes;
- foster effective independent and autonomous learning;
- provide individualized and differentiated curriculum and instruction;
- develop creative problem-solving abilities and creativity; and
- integrate advanced tools and content in the development of products.

For information on various resources associated with enrichment, visit:

gifted.uconn.edu/schoolwide-enrichment-model,
education.wm.edu/centers/cfge, tip.duke.edu, cty.jhu.edu/programs,
education.purdue.edu/geri, to mention a few excellent resources for parents.

ACCELERATION

Acceleration is a well-researched educational programming option for academically talented students. Research supports acceleration as an excellent learning strategy for many talented students, and the Belin-Blank Center at the University of Iowa has identified over 20 forms of acceleration from which to choose. For example, gifted students who are reading several grade levels above their chronological grade can spend part of the day in a higher grade, read independently but at an appropriate level, have their curriculum compacted, develop their own projects and share them with the class, and even complete on-line courses to substitute for or supplement their regular activities.

For additional information on academic acceleration, visit:

belinblank.education.uiowa.edu/research/research-focus.aspx#acceleration.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In addition, participation in cross-age after school enrichment opportunities such as extracurricular activities can both stimulate and enhance your child's education. These may include chess or Junior Great Books, coding camps, art lessons, science fairs, robotics, regional contests or debate leagues, after-school language instruction in the host-country language and culture, or career options in the community.





IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Identification of giftedness varies widely but certain key research-based principles apply. Policies and procedures for identification usually include a review of multiple criteria including, ability measures, performance measures, nominations, and screenings. As gifted behaviors and traits are expressed differently, experts suggest a combination of objective and subjective identification tools be used. The process for evaluating whether a child is eligible for gifted and talented programming varies across international school, but it usually follows the steps summarized in the next section.

SCHOOLS AT POST APPLICATION PROCESS

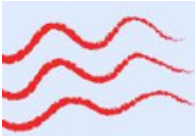
Every move is an opportunity to find the right fit—school, grade level, program—for your child.

Parents should:

- 1. Contact administrators at the school they are considering.
- 2. Follow the general application process.
- 3. Negotiate grade level placement upfront. Otherwise, give your child a few weeks to settle into their assigned grade.
- 4. Create a portfolio of your child’s previous work, to demonstrate academic achievement, special talents, and evidence of high potential.

The portfolio provides documentation to support a request that your child can receive acceleration, enrichment, and/or differentiated instruction. However, it is important to keep in mind that many of the schools overseas are known for their academic rigor, and your child may be sufficiently challenged in the regular curriculum.

To receive services if your child is already eligible, you may need a letter from the child’s previous school documenting that the child qualified for and participated in a Gifted and Talented (GT) program.



STANDARD PORTFOLIO



Transcripts/Report cards



Grade level projects



Previous accommodations



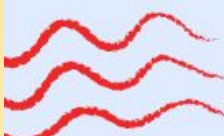
Essays/Art projects



Recommendation Letter from Teacher



Departing school contact information



GIFTED & TALENTED PORTFOLIO



Cognitive assessment



Academic achievement, including standardized tests



Previous accommodations



Talent-search information



Participation in special programs



Awards



TESTING AT POST

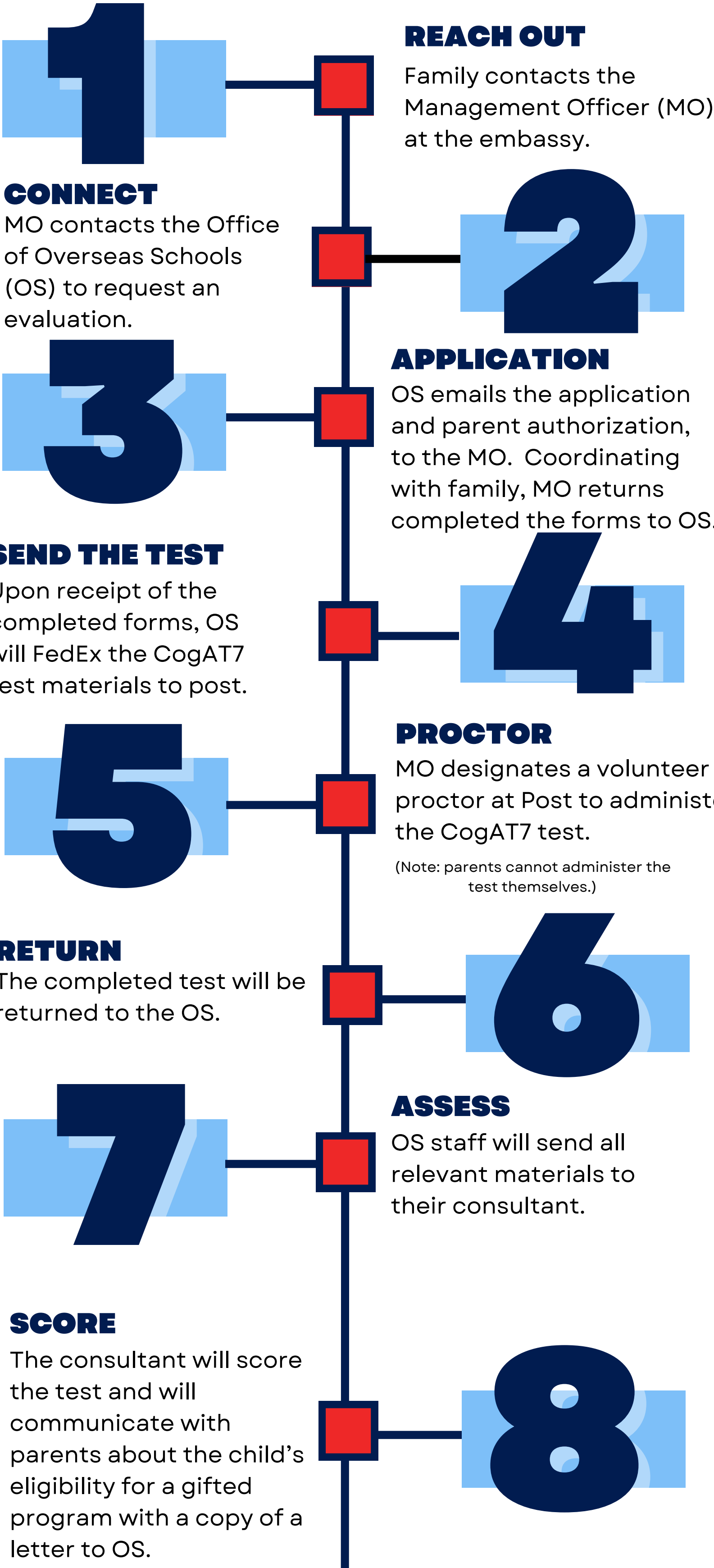
If your child does not currently have documentation, you should follow the procedures listed below.

If teachers indicate, or as parents you feel, that your child may need more challenging coursework to engage them, then please consider going through the testing process. In the United States, the Cognitive Abilities Test, Form 7 (CogAT7) is given in public schools and is a reasoning-based assessment to understand which students may benefit from Gifted and Talented supplemental education. Parents should keep in mind that this is only one type of identification information and other cognitive tests may also be used in combination with the information outlined above to document academic abilities.

The Office of Overseas Schools can support families in accessing this testing from post. This process is outlined in the following protocol. Please work with your post's Management Officer and the Office of Overseas Schools to administer the CogAT7 while at post.

COGAT7 ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

for families under Chief of Mission at post.
Please email OverseasSchools@state.gov with any questions about Gifted and Talented testing.



CERTIFY

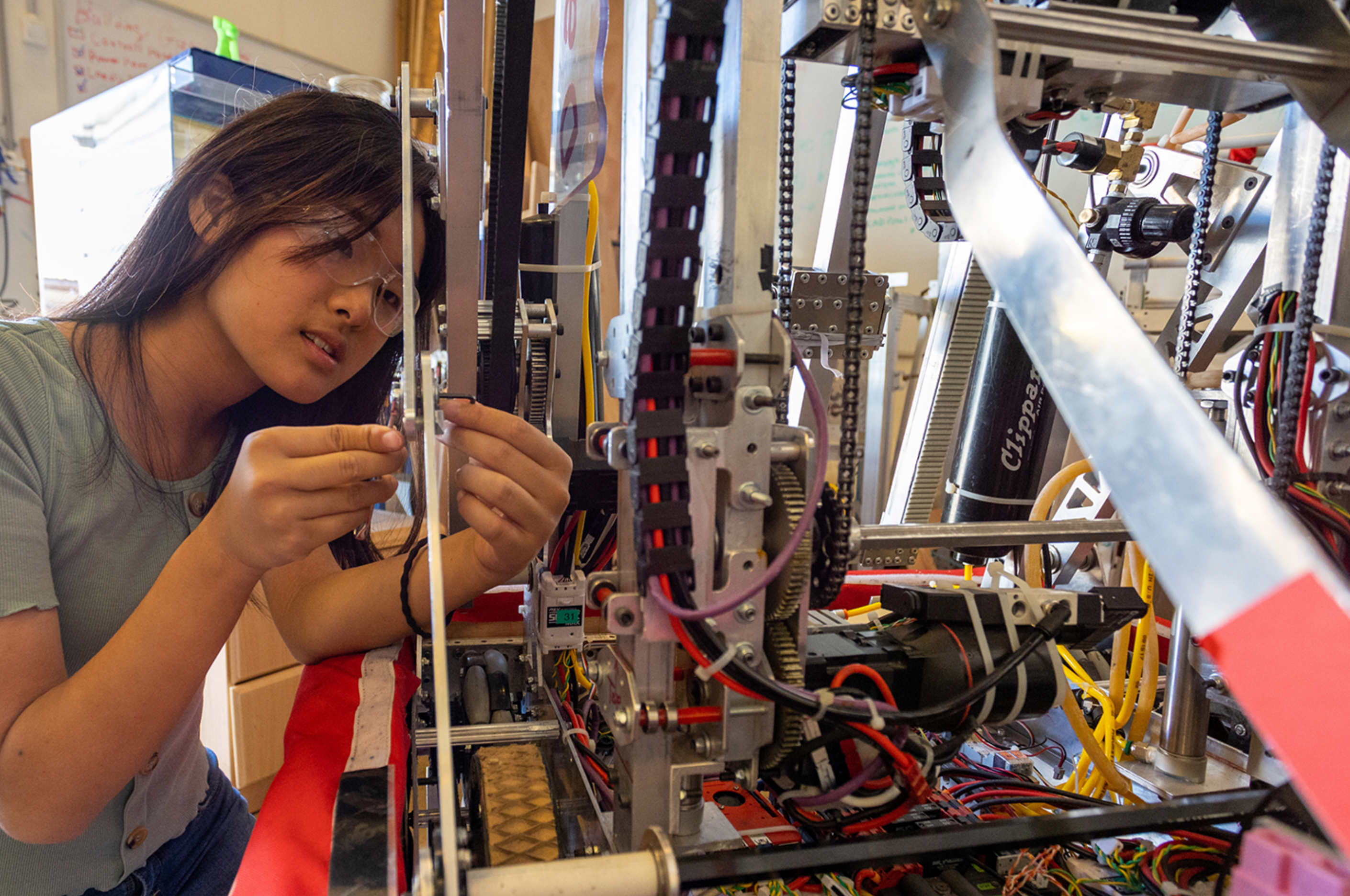
If test scores indicate that the child is eligible for a gifted allowance, the MO acts as a certifying officer and has parents apply to the FMO for Supplemental Funding on the Reimbursement Basis.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AS YOU TRANSITION POST TO POST

Transitioning from post to post can be taxing on its own, but with children who are Gifted and Talented or 2e Learners not having clear outlets for their additional learning needs can challenge their emotional resilience as well. The Office of Overseas Schools encourages parents to seek help needed for their children’s social emotional care. Many international schools incorporate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into their curricula and the School Psychologist or Counselor can be a good resource. We encourage you to also work with the Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist (RMOP) at post for other therapies and resources that could be available to you and your family.

Finally, if there is an issue with the school at post that is impacting your family’s ability to remain there, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Regional Education Officer (REO). While the REO may not be able to “fix” the problem, they can advocate and help you brainstorm options. Their awareness of issues helps them to better advise future families and understand where to provide support to schools in existing gaps. REOs know overseas school leaders and can further discuss your child's needs directly with the school.





SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTION ALLOWANCE

Although gifted children do not qualify for the Special Needs Education Allowance (SNEA), under the Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR), the families of most United States Government civilian employees overseas who have gifted children who are not sufficiently challenged in their overseas school may avail themselves of up to \$4,100 per school year to supplement the education in academic areas (mathematics, science, languages, and social studies). Information about obtaining such allowances can be accessed through post's Management Officer. Information is also available in the [DSSR 276.9 \(e\)](#).

To receive the allowance for Supplementary Instruction, the parent must present to the Management Officer ONE of the following:

- A letter from the child's previous school that the child qualified for and participated in a Gifted and Talented (GT) program, OR
- A letter from the child's current school which endorses that the child's performance qualifies for a GT program which the school cannot provide, OR
- The results of a standardized GT test which shows the child eligible to participate in a GT program. On request of the family, the Office of Overseas Schools will facilitate the administration at post of an instrument instrument (the Cognitive Abilities Test – CogAT, at present, see page 10) to evaluate the child's academic level.

The supplementary allowance can be used to pay for several activities as outlined below:

- Enrollment in classes at a local college (or high school, if the student is in a K-8 school) for advanced instruction in classes the student has “outgrown” at his or her own school.
- Purchase of books, online textbooks, and materials to support or supplement a coherent, above-grade course of academic study designed by the school or by the student.
- Enrollment in online instruction and tutoring at grade levels K-12.
- Among useful sources are courses provided by:
 - [Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Talented Youth](#) .
 - [Northwestern University’s Center for Talent Development](#) .
 - [Stanford University’s Educational Program for Gifted Youth](#) .
 - [Advanced Placement \(AP\) classes offered by Apex Learning](#).
 - Enrichment in math
 - [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#)
 - [Challenge Math](#) a series of intriguing books designed to enhance a love of math).
 - [Khan Academy](#) also has enrichment and content enhancement materials for all grade levels.
 - [Renzulli Learning](#) a profile of interests and talents, with related enrichment activities which could be incorporated into both differentiated learning and independent study period.
- Purchase of advanced academic curriculum units. For example, rigorous mathematics and language arts unit across all grade levels are available such as:
 - Primary and Elementary Advanced Math --
 - [Project M3](#) Mentoring Mathematical Minds- for grades 3-6
 - [Project M2](#) : Mentoring Young Mathematicians Project- for grades K-2
 - [College of William and Mary](#) provides curriculum units available through Kendall Hunt Publishers in ELA, Social Studies and Science.
 - Several other publishers offer research-based programs, such as Royal Fireworks Press, Prufrock Press, and KOI units





Please keep in mind the allowance for Supplementary Instruction (DSSR 274.12a and 276.9) can only be used for core academic programs (i.e., math, science, languages, or social studies) for Eligible Family Member (EFM) students enrolled in schools at post.

You CANNOT use the allowance for Supplementary Instruction for:

- Physical education or sports,
 - Arts or music,
 - Summer-time instruction (must be used during the academic year),
 - Purchase of computers or similar devices, printers, electronic devices, and furniture,
 - Courses designed to prepare for Gifted and Talented or Honors testing, and/or
 - Augmenting Home Study/Private Instruction/Virtual Schooling or Boarding Schools.
- If you have additional questions about the allowance for Supplementary Instruction, please reach out to the Office of Allowances (AllowancesO@state.gov) or the Management Officer at post.**

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

- [Office of Overseas Schools](#), provides many resources on quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for dependents of American citizens carrying out the programs of the U.S. Government abroad. The office assists U.S. sponsored overseas schools in the operation and expansion of programs that embody the best educational practices employed in the United States and promotes a mutual understanding among peoples through education.
- [Transitioning to and from a Foreign Assignment with a Child with Special Learning Needs Booklet \[19 MB\]](#) developed by the Office of Overseas Schools and its Advisory Committee on Exceptional Children and Youth, is designed to help families think through such decisions and contains links to useful Internet and publication resources for children with special learning needs.
- [Office of Allowances](#), Department of State Standardized Regulations (DSSR) on education. This site contains information on educational allowances available to civilian employees of the U.S. Government and their families.
- [Global Community Liaison Office, Education and Youth](#). This site contains a variety of information specifically related to educating the Foreign Service child, including gifted education, homeschooling, special educational needs, relocation, and third culture kids.
- Information on the role of Bureau of Medical Service's [Child and Family Program](#) and questions and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.



RESOURCES CONTINUED

ADDITIONAL OUTSIDE RESOURCES

- [2e News](#) 2e stands for twice-exceptional. A newsletter dedicated to children who are gifted and have learning disabilities, learning disorders, attention difficulties, or just plain learning differences. ([2enews.com](#))
- [American Academy of Achievement](#) Great Resources for Discovering and Encouraging Interests. ([achievement.org](#))
- [Art of Problem Solving Online](#) courses take place weekly in interactive online classrooms. Expert instructors lead cohorts through engaging and rigorous challenges, and students work with peers to creatively problem solve together. ([artofproblemsolving.com](#))
- [The Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#) is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. ([exceptionalchildren.org](#))
- [The Davidson Institute for Talent Development](#) has extensive resources for highly gifted students (and their parents). You can access articles by selecting “Browse by Topic” or “Search GT-Cybersource” from the “Resources” header in the pull-down top bar menu bar. ([davidsongifted.org](#))
- [Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page](#) is a resource guide for the education of gifted children with links to many gifted education resources available on the Internet. ([hoagiesgifted.org](#))
- [The National Association for Gifted Children \(NAGC\)](#) is an organization of parents, educators, other professionals and community leaders to address the unique needs of children and youth. ([nagc.org](#))





RESOURCES CONTINUED

ADDITIONAL OUTSIDE RESOURCES CONTINUED

- [The National Research Center on Gifted and Talented \(NRC/GT\)](#) successfully competed for a series of federally funded grants (1990-2013) under the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act. The research that we have conducted for over 2 decades required the cooperation and collaboration of administrators, teachers, and students from all over the country and is free online. (nrcgt.uconn.edu)
- [Neurodiversity Podcast](#) introduces you to brilliant, quirky, amazing people, and brings you thought-provoking conversations with leaders in psychology, education, and technology, as we work to broaden the definition of normal. (neurodiversitypodcast.com)
- [Smart but Scattered](#) school psychologist Peg Dawson and neuropsychologist Richard Guare have developed a program that parents and teachers can use to strengthen kids abilities to plan ahead, be efficient, follow through, and get things done. (smartbutscatteredkids.com)
- The mission of [Summer Institute for the Gifted \(SIG\)](#) has been a leader in gifted education since 1984. SIG provides summer academic enrichment programs for gifted, academically talented, creative, and high potential students in grades K-12. (giftedstudy.org)
- [Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted \(SENG\)](#) focuses primarily on the adults (parents, educators, etc) in the lives of gifted children. SENNG provides information on identification, guidance, and effective ways to live and work with gifted individuals. (sengifted.org)
- [The Association for the Gifted \(TAG\)](#) organized in 1958 by The Council for Exceptional Children, helps professionals and parents work with gifted children. (cectag.com)



RESOURCES CONTINUED

ADDITIONAL CITED RESOURCES

- Renzulli, J. S. (1978). What Makes Giftedness? Reexamining a Definition. Phi Delta Kappan, 60, 180-184.
- Reis, S.M.; Renzulli, S.J.; Renzulli, J.S. Enrichment and Gifted Education Pedagogy to Develop Talents, Gifts, and Creative Productivity. Educ. Sci. 2021, 11, 615. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100615>.
- Reis, Sally & Baum, Susan & Burke, Edith. (2014). An Operational Definition of Twice-Exceptional Learners. Gifted Child Quarterly. 58. 217-230. 10.1177/0016986214534976.
- Reis, Sally M.; Renzulli, Joseph S.; Burns, Deborah E. (2016) Curriculum Compacting: A Guide to Differentiating Curriculum and Instruction Through Enrichment and Acceleration, Second Edition.
- Rogers, K. B. (2002). Re-Forming Gifted Education: How Parents and Teachers Can Match the Program to the Child.

OFFICE OF OVERSEAS SCHOOLS CONTACT INFORMATION

The Office of Overseas Schools is staffed with a Director, Administrative Staff, and Regional Education Officers, each assigned oversight of a geographic region. All are well-informed about schools attended by U. S. citizen school-age dependent children. For information about overseas schools, you are encouraged to contact The Office of Overseas Schools as early in your bidding and assignment process as possible.

The Office of Overseas Schools
U.S. Department of State
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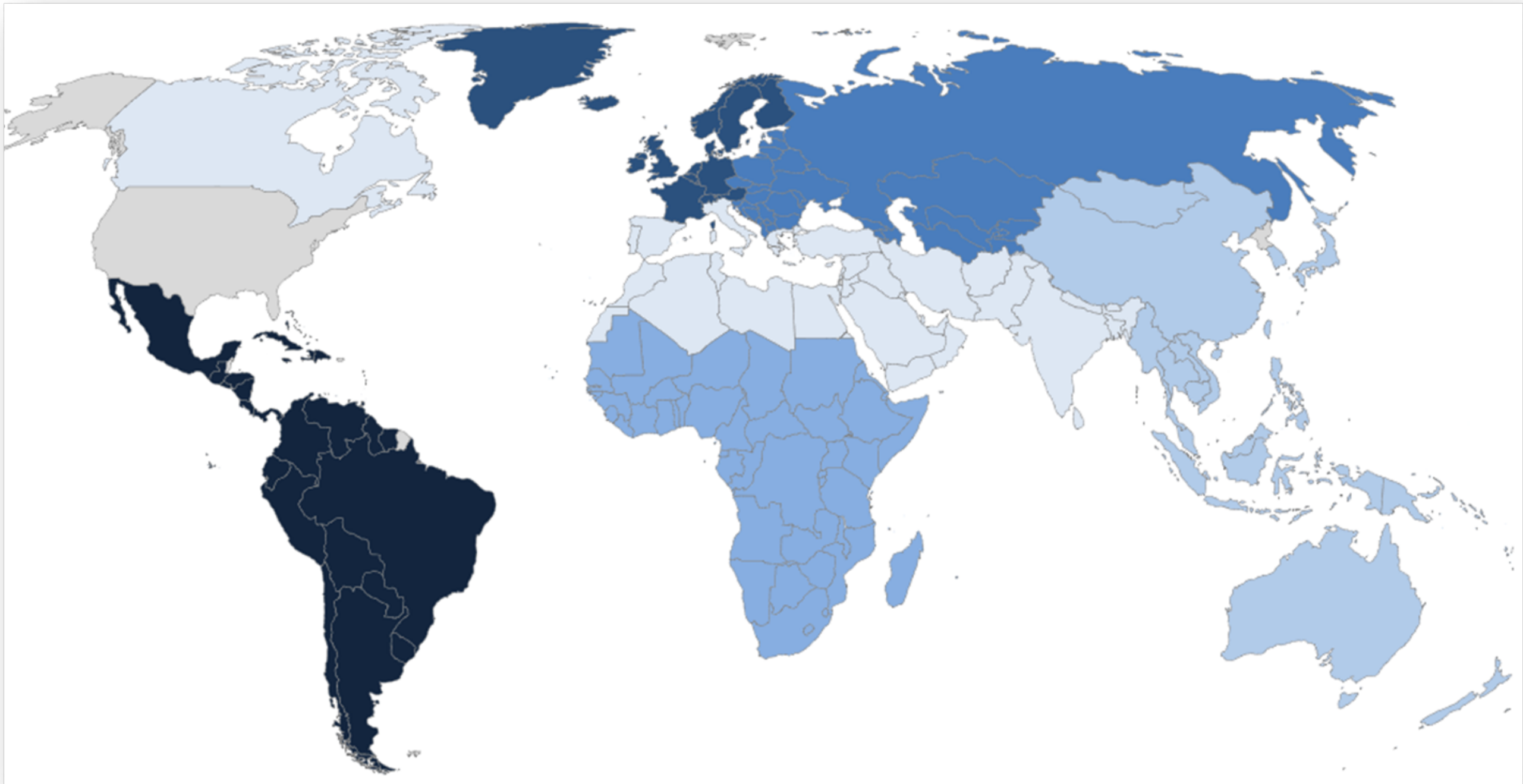
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The Office of Overseas Schools is pleased to work with the esteemed group of experts in the area of special needs education who are members of the Advisory Committee on Exceptional Children and Youth. To learn more about this committee please visit www.state.gov/transitioning-to-an-overseas-assignment-with-a-child-with-special-needs/advisory-committee-on-exceptional-children-and-youth.

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