

Frequently Asked Questions Excel Program

Can you tell me about the Excel program?

The Monroe Public Schools provides a continuum of services to meet the learning needs of students. The Excel program is a self contained, full time placement that provides an accelerated curriculum for students. The program is designed for students who demonstrate high capability in intellectual and/or creative areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic areas. Students in grades 3 – 6 are served in this program.

How do I know if my student is a good candidate for the Excel program?

Aside from high academic performance, there are a number of typical intellectual characteristics of highly capable children. These characteristics include unusually large vocabularies for their age; ability to read earlier than most children, often before entering school; greater comprehension of the subtleties of language; longer attention span, persistence, and intense concentration; ability to learn basic skills more quickly and with less practice; wide range of interests; highly developed curiosity and a limitless supply of questions; interest in experimenting and doing things differently; tendency to put ideas or things together in ways that are unusual and not obvious (divergent thinking); ability to retain a great deal of information; unusual sense of humor. Your child's teacher and you know your child's learning needs and school performance best. Having a conversation with your child's teacher about his or her abilities and performance in school is one way to explore whether or not the program would be a good fit.

How does a student qualify for the Excel program?

Monroe Public Schools uses a three-phase process for qualification into the Excel program. Students must successfully complete each phase before being invited to participate in the next phase of the qualification process. The scores are weighted. The tests are listed below:

Phase	Domain	Name of Test	Qualifying Score
1	Cognitive	CogAt	120 +
2	Achievement	Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) Reading & Math or Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Reading & Math	Level 3 or 4 in both areas or 90%ile in one area and 85%ile in other area
3	Creativity	Renzulli Scales	130+ for learning, creativity and motivation scales

Can a child who did not achieve a score of 120 on the CogAt last year take the test again this year?

No, the validity factor of the CogAt is weakened when it is administered in consecutive years. A student may take the test no more than twice while in grades 2 – 5. Your child may retake the test if two years have passed since the test was last taken.

Once a student qualifies and enrolls in the Excel program, will he/she be allowed to continue through grade six?

Students may remain in the Excel program once they qualify and are enrolled. There may be factors that impact the placement decision, and parents or staff members may initiate a process to review any placement decision. A waiting list will be created if the Excel classes become full. Students currently in the program will continue in the program and then newly qualified students will be placed on the list according to their weighted scores and the date that their application was received.

My child has high achievement results in one academic area, but not the other. Can we apply anyway?

No, the Excel program is designed to serve highly capable students with high ability in verbal, quantitative and nonverbal skills, and high achievement in total reading and total math, not one or the other subject area.

My child is in a private school. What should we do?

You may pick up an application form at any of our elementary school offices or from the District Office. If your child has recently taken an ITBS or a WASL test, please include the test results with your application. Please note that a letter of recommendation from your child's teacher is not necessary.

When are the assessments given?

The CogAt test will be administered by the counselors in each elementary school. These will be given the week of January 22 – January 25. Please contact your school counselor to arrange a date and time. Students who qualify for phase two and who do not have a WASL score will be invited to take the ITBS test on one of two Saturday mornings. The dates are

- Saturday March 8
- Saturday March 22.

Please reserve one of these dates now, in case your child will be invited to participate in the Phase 2 assessment.

Are these Saturdays the only days you are testing?

Yes. These are the only dates that we are scheduling ITBS tests. If your child has recently completed an ITBS, or if your student has a recent WASL score, it is not necessary to take the Saturday ITBS test. In this case, we will use the scores from the tests already completed as Phase 2 of the application process.

When will we know the results of testing?

The results of the CogAt test will be available 6 – 8 weeks after the test is completed. Results will be mailed to parents. The results of the ITBS test will be available by mid April for those students completing Phase 2 of the application process.

When will we know if our student qualifies for the Excel program?

Families will be notified in writing after scores from all three phases are evaluated. We hope to have all applications evaluated by the week of April 21. If a student qualifies for the Excel program, parents will be sent an offer of placement. The offer must be accepted or rejected in writing within one week of receipt.

What if my child doesn't get into the program?

Excel assessment criteria are applied equitably to all applicants, and appeals to assessment determinations will be scheduled and addressed by an appeals review team. Placements are also made on a space available basis with priority given to students already in the program, and this information is not available until all testing and enrollment projections have been completed. Students who do not qualify for the program should be encouraged to apply in a future year, if appropriate. No student should feel badly for not qualifying, and parents can help with this by encouraging a positive student attitude toward testing and by not putting undue stress on students to be accepted into the program. Almost all students who apply to Excel are very bright, do well in school, and will continue to do well, whether or not they get into Excel.

Will there be an information meeting for parents?

Yes. An informational meeting will be held in the spring for all families of newly qualified Excel students. This meeting is typically organized by current students and their parents.

How do I get an application?

Application forms are available in all elementary and middle school offices. The deadline for completed applications to be returned is **Friday, January 18, 2008**.

What if I have another question?

If you have read through the above questions and you are unable to find the answers that you need, please contact Jeanette Sobon, Excel program coordinator. She may be reached at 360-804-3103 or at sobonj@monroe.wednet.edu.