



Center for Bright Kids
Regional Talent Development Center



Western Academic Talent Search

2015-2016 WATS Registration Bulletin



Serving Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, New Mexico,
Montana, and Wyoming since 1982

Grades 3-9

COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

2014-2015 WATS Coordinators Guide

We welcome back coordinators whom we've worked with for years, and welcome new coordinators or potential coordinators who are interested in getting more students involved in the national academic talent search at your school. This Coordinators Guide is intended to help you identify and notify students who qualify for talent search about this program. We ask that regardless of whether you might sign up your own son or daughter, you still allow families the opportunity to make a personal choice about the fit of academic talent search with their own children's educational needs and goals. The Guide also provides tips and hints that our veteran coordinators have thought you'd find useful, as well as frequently asked questions that families may have for you, or you often have for us.

Please discuss the WATS program with families at your school – in an age of phishing and scams, we want to assure you that the academic talent search has a long-standing national reputation for excellence, advocacy, and educational purpose as one of the four national Regional Talent Development Centers. We need the help of schools and districts to provide families with information about the benefits of this national program.

If you are new and you feel uncomfortable with your understanding of the program and its benefits, please give us a call. We are happy to walk through the program with you in your own regional contexts, or perhaps we can arrange to come out and offer a family night to educate those who have qualified about the program—you can sit in and experience a mini-training. Please do not hesitate to call us with any questions or concerns about **WATS or CBK at 303-428-2634 or email us at cbk@centerforbrightkids.org**. **The process of identifying students and providing families with a choice regarding this program is relatively quick and simple.** Let us help you make this an opportunity at your school!

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 the application bulletins to counselors, teachers, parents and qualified students as soon as possible. Deadlines creep up quickly! Just give us a call if you need more copies of the Bulletin. Thank you so much for your participation – we hope to talk with you soon!

How to Get the Process Rolling

WATS seeks the assistance of schools in order to identify academically talented and highly motivated students who qualify for this special opportunity. Here are the ways your school or family liaison can participate in assisting us in this process:

- 1) Carefully read the full 2015-2016 WATS Registration Bulletin** as part of this Guide.
- 2) Identify whether a coordinator already exists** or did exist at your school or in your district – make sure you touch base with your district or school personnel for gifted and talented. Please email us this updated information at cbk@centerforbrightkids.org!
- 3) Identify students with qualifying criteria** – many states, such as Colorado, have gone to a proficiency measurement rather than a percentile. Any student with an **“advanced” on any section** of the state standardized test (such as CMAS, SBA, or CRT) qualifies for WATS – otherwise, you are looking for a 90% or higher. GPA or Honor Roll lists are sometimes also helpful – **one recommendation letter from you including a list of qualifying students can serve in place of qualifying test score reports. Or, you can issue a standard letter that states, “you qualify,” which can serve in place of a family submitting a score report. If you call us with your overall identified number of students, we will ship you copies of the Bulletin to distribute to your students. We can also send a template letter for you to edit.**
- 4) Invite qualifying students to participate** – please email us if you would like us to send you an electronic sample letter template that you can edit to make this process simpler. Prior participants will have already been invited back by WATS. **Students already participating in an existing school gifted program automatically qualify** with a letter.
- 5) Call the WATS office at 303-428-2634** or email us to request additional copies of the Bulletin (students must apply online unless seeking financial aid!). You are welcome to copy any of these materials as needed, or we can send you a box if we have ample advance notice. Also, call us or email as a liaison for your school, district, or community with any recurring questions or feedback so that we might continue to improve the program materials.
- 6) Post the test dates** and deadlines in a convenient location – you might run a copy with your invitation letter .

7) Hold a family information meeting prior to or following sending out the invitations for participation. **Let us know if you would like us to join you to present the program and answer questions.** We also can hold school district or community large group meetings for staff and/or families if this is more effective in your area. For communities outside of Colorado, we can coach you through this presentation and provide materials. For larger presentations, we may also be able to travel and provide this service for your large group.

8) Assist families with the application process, ensuring applicants **meet the appropriate deadlines and applications are completed correctly – ALL APPLICATIONS NOW OCCUR ONLINE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE!**

9) In early May, **you will receive a list** of all of those students who elected to test and release score information to schools. Many of these students will be invited to the state recognition ceremony if one is available in your location. Scores and recognition will be noted on your list. **We invite you to also attend the ceremony to share in your students' recognition.** If you have multiple schools you work with, make sure your families all fill out the same address!

10) Distribute participation certificates that will be sent to you with your list in May to students who registered with WATS (**certificates and score info only for students who released info to the schools will be included in this mailing**). You might include distribution of these certificates in your school's end of the year ceremony.

Tips and Hints Regarding Academic Talent Search Registration:

- It is important for each family to have the WATS Bulletin for families to receive complete info. Please let us know if we can send you copies.
- The Western Academic Talent Search (WATS) fee to process the application is a **one time nonrefundable amount of \$46 per applicant made payable to CNDC CBK, which is included in the overall testing fee.** No matter how many tests the students plan to take it is still one \$46 WATS fee, which means for kids taking multiple tests, the amount due will be less than just adding the totals of multiple tests. Families also pay testing fees included at this time and payable to CNDC CBK. The fee does not renew and must be paid each year—there is not a WATS membership. Multiple students within the same family should submit separate checks for clarity, with the student name and test listed on the memo line.
- Families MUST include a late fee if applicable.
- Each applicant needs to have copies of a **score report, a letter of recommendation, or documentation of gifted identification** attached to the application. The application **cannot** be processed without this information.
- Our website will have a lot of great information, including program descriptions, test dates and test sites, deadlines for applying and the **ONLINE WATS application** at: www.centerforbrightkids.org.
- Please have the families call us at 303-428-2634 or email us at cbk@centerforbrightkids for more information or to have additional questions answered.

Other Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1) **Can I take more than one test?** YES – still one \$46 WATS fee no matter how many tests you choose to take. 6th graders can take all three. You will only pay WATS ONCE.
- 2) **Which test should I take?** Depends on the kid. ACT and EXPLORE kids tend to be content-driven, do well in school, absorb content knowledge easily, and watch educational programs; SAT kids tend to be problem-solvers, puzzlers, pattern-finders, and critical thinkers. Kids who have never taken a long test should start with EXPLORE if they are 6th graders and can't decide. Keep in mind many states now mandate the ACT for high school graduation, so this is great practice for initial testing. Students can participate again and take SAT.
- 3) **What about financial aid?** WATS does offer reduced fees, as well as full test fee waivers for ACT. **Families must include free and reduced lunch documentation or income tax forms with a PAPER application for consideration** and a check for \$36. The program can be free or low-cost. EXPLORE and SAT do not offer test fee waivers.
- 4) **How do I find a local test site?** Go to www.centerforbrightkids.org and click on "WATS Test Site Codes." This code is necessary in order to complete the application. Some schools with larger numbers of participants like to send their kids to the same location on the same date.
- 5) **Can my school be a testing site?** Local high schools are probably already sites for ACT and SAT testing, and we cannot establish new sites due to test security. However, if you are interested in your school being a testing site for EXPLORE and have at least 10 kids who will be registering, please contact us prior to November so that we can get you set up. This process requires a school official contact who will help complete the paperwork and find test day proctors.
- 6) **Is this the "real" ACT or SAT?** Yes, this is the same ACT and SAT test given to kids preparing for college admission. This is not the NEW SAT, which becomes available in March 2016, nor will we be using the NEW SAT this season for comparison consistency.

Center for Bright Kids (CBK) Regional Talent Development Center

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

Welcome to the **33rd year of the Western Academic Talent Search!** WATS is one program offered through the Center for Bright Kids, one of the national non-profit Regional Talent Development Centers. WATS enables **academically talented 3rd through 9th graders to take the ACT, SAT, or EXPLORE 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 as one of the four national Regional Talent Development Centers. We ask that you 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 the application bulletins to counselors, teachers, parents and qualified students as soon as possible. Just give us a call if you need more copies. Thank you so much for your participation – we hope to talk with you soon!

PLEASE NOTE: ALL APPLICATIONS NOW OCCUR ONLINE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE.

If you absolutely need a paper copy, or are applying for financial aid, please go to our website or drop us an email.

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 register. 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

1) 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, CMAS, PARCC, CRT, MAP, or SBA scores at the "advanced" level or **past participants in Talent Search use score reports (which still must be included) from the prior year's SAT, ACT or EXPLORE. Qualifying scores are good for two years.**

OR

2) A school counselor, licensed teacher, or home school association official (who may not be the student's parent) must provide a letter of recommendation based upon a full year of outstanding performance in a core subject area **OR** notifying WATS as to the student's qualifying scores instead of submitting a score report (**the letter you may have received from school**).

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

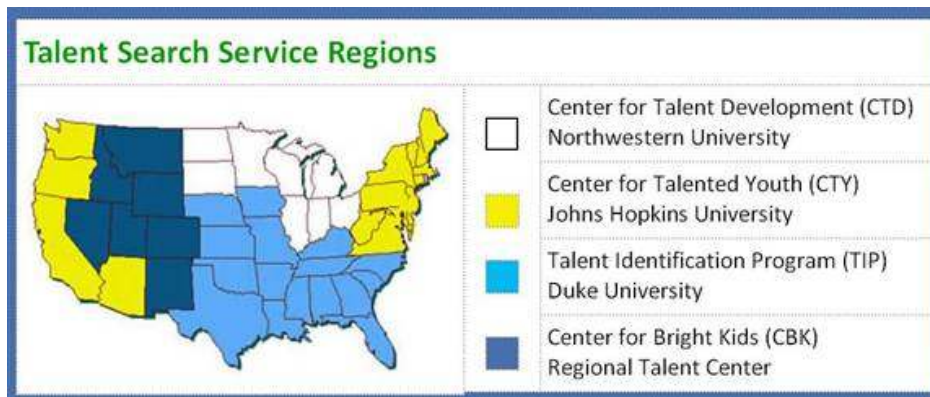
This is a very reasonable concern that many of our new families share, and a very real worry about the current testing craze. However, WATS really isn't, in the end, about the test itself and the score the student receives. It IS about the benefits students receive from participating in this program, 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-11th 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 regional **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 and you choose to report them for early decision or access. The goal is a positive student experience, regardless of the final test score. Why not sign up?



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 \$46 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/EXLORE/ACT 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, and 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 (this is not yet the NEW SAT)

Grades 6-9

The SAT is a four-hour test with three sections measuring reasoning skills in mathematics, critical reading, and writing. The writing test is now part of recognition ceremony and interpretive guide data and is required. SAT is typically taken in 11th grade and is designed as admission criteria to universities on the Coasts.

ACT

Grades 6-9

The ACT is a three-hour test that focuses on core curriculum knowledge acquired in school. There are four sections: math, English, reading, and science. The writing section is optional for all students and is not part of Talent Search recognition ceremony or interpretive guide data. ACT is typically given in 10th grade and is mandated in many states as a high school completion assessment, while also being used as admission criteria to universities, particularly in the Midwest and West.

EXPLORE

Grades 3-6

The EXPLORE is a two-hour test written in the same format as the ACT. It was typically given in 8th grade as a career assessment for high school placement.

The Specifics	EXPLORE	ACT	SAT
Grades Included	3-6	6-9	6-9
Testing Dates	Nov 7, Jan 23, Feb 20	Dec 12, Feb 6, Apr 9	Nov 7, Dec 5, Jan 23
Fees	\$85	\$90	\$105

Where Can I Take the Test? Can I Take More Than One Test? How Do I Find Site Codes?

Yes, depending on grade level you can take more than one test—you still pay only one WATS fee. Talent Search testing is available in every service region we serve, though not every community. For some tests and in some rural areas, travel may be required to access a test site. [To find the testing site and code closest to you, go to www.centerforbrightkids.org](http://www.centerforbrightkids.org) or to the company sites—

YOUR TEST CENTER CODE MUST BE ON YOUR APPLICATION, SO PLEASE WRITE IT DOWN WHEN YOU SEARCH!

SAT 866.756.7346 <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-code-search> (search by test centers, then state)

ACT 319.337.1270 <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/centers.html> (choose state)

EXPLORE 319.337.1369 <http://www.act.org/exlore/ests/centers.html> (choose state)

Fee Reduction, Waivers, and Special Accommodations

Students who qualify for the free/reduced lunch program at school are eligible for both an ACT fee waiver and WATS reduced fee, available based upon date of registration. *To qualify, documentation of free/reduced lunch program eligibility must accompany the WATS application with a \$36 WATS fee. Only one waiver can be distributed per student. EXPLORE and SAT do not offer test waivers.* For special accommodations, forms must be completed through the testing company and documentation provided for necessary accommodations. This is a lengthy process, so please contact us to start now. WATS does not set up these arrangements.

APPLICATION DEADLINES and TESTING DATES (deadlines are ONLINE APPLICATION by 6pm)

	TEST DATE	WATS DEADLINE	LATE DEADLINE (+\$30)
	DEC 12	NOV 3	NOV 18
ACT	FEB 6	JAN 6	JAN 13
	APR 9	JAN 13	JAN 20
	NOV 7	OCT 7	None—test Dec
SAT	DEC 5	NOV 3	None—test Jan
	JAN 23	DEC 16	Not available
	NOV 7	OCT 7	OCT 14
EXPLORE	JAN 23	DEC 16	DEC 28
	FEB 20	JAN 13	JAN 20

HOW TO APPLY

- Talk to your school counselor, G/T coordinator, or teacher about the benefits of participating in the program.
- Get 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.
- **GO TO:** www.centerforbrightkids.org
click the “APPLY NOW” link
create an online account and register your student by selecting “Apply Now” in the menu
upload your **eligibility**, select a **test date and site** (have your code in hand!), and make **payment**
- Make payment online for the appropriate test(s) - **Please make sure to note student name on the payments receipt for more than one student for clarity. Include a late fee for EXP or ACT at this time if appropriate.**
- 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. See our website for photo ID waiver forms.
- 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 around 7:45am. Bring identification, a family member, and materials. Family members, you then have to leave—see you in 2-4 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.



A Project of the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center

7765 Wadsworth Blvd, #746679
Arvada, CO 80003

Nonprofit Org
US Postage
PAID
Permit #1675
Denver, CO

Your 2015-2016 Western Academic Talent Search Coordinators Guide!

Summer Programs 2016

<p>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</p> <p>grades 4-6 in fall, 2016 July 31-August 6, 2016</p>	<p>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</p> <p>grades 6-8 in fall, 2016 June 12-25, 2016</p>	<p>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</p> <p>Mature 8th graders—11th grade not older than 17 in fall, 2016 July 3-23, 2016</p>
--	--	--

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)



COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES
EARTH • ENERGY • ENVIRONMENT

Summer Programs are held on the campus of the Colorado School of Mines, nestled in the Rocky Mountain foothills in Golden, Colorado. 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!
ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW REQUIRED!
Also, you can check out CBK Summer Programs, open to students across the country and internationally!

 Like Us at www.facebook.com/CenterForBrightKids