Western Academic Talent Search
2019-2020 WATS Registration Bulletin

Grades 3-9
COORDINATOR’S GUIDE
FOR WATS SCHOOL COORDINATORS OR THOSE INTERESTED IN BECOMING YOUR AREA’S COORDINATOR

2019-2020 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 in operation for over 30 years. 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 2019-2020 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 PARCC, SBA, MAP, or CRT) qualifies for WATS – otherwise, you are looking for a 90% or higher. GPA or Honor Roll lists are sometimes also helpful. You can issue a standard letter that states, “you qualify,” which can serve in place of a family submitting a score report. Email us to request a template letter for you to edit. If you call us with your overall identified number of students, we will ship you copies of the Bulletin to distribute to your students, or we can provide a PDF copy of the bulletin for you to email to interested families.

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 or a PDF copy to distribute to interested families. 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 are also happy to travel and provide this service for your larger group (a minimum of 50 is required for travel considerations).

8) Assist families with the application process, ensuring applicants **meet the appropriate deadlines and applications are completed correctly** – ALL APPLICATIONS ARE ONLINE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE. Schools may submit bulk registrations for large numbers of students or if families do not have internet access. Registration fees will be invoiced to the school for bulk registrations. Contact us at cbk@centerforbrightkids.org for more information about bulk registrations.

9) In early May, you will receive a list of all of those students who elected to test and release score information to schools. Students who score in the top 25% of their grade level on any test or subtest 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 work with multiple schools, please make sure your families all list you as the school contact and that we have your preferred mailing address on our mailing list.

**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 additional paper copies or a PDF copy to distribute.
- The Western Academic Talent Search (WATS) fee to process the application is a **one time nonrefundable amount of $50 per applicant** in addition to the test fee(s). Students who register for multiple tests pay only one $50 WATS fee. The WATS fee does not renew and must be paid each year—there is not a WATS membership.
- Each applicant needs to have a **scanned copy of a score report, a letter of recommendation, or documentation of gifted identification** to include with the application. The application **cannot** be processed without this information.
- Our website has lots of great information, including program descriptions, test dates and test sites, deadlines for applying, and the **ONLINE WATS application** at: [www.centerforbrightkids.org](http://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 $50 WATS fee no matter how many tests you choose to take. 6th graders can take all three. You will only pay the WATS fee ONCE.

2) **Which test should I take?** Depends on the kid. ACT and PSAT 8/9 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, though this is not as true with the new format. Kids who have never taken a long test should start with PSAT 8/9 if they are 6th graders and can’t decide. Keep in mind many states now mandate the SAT or ACT for high school graduation, so this is great practice for initial testing.

3) **What about financial aid?** WATS does offer a reduced WATS fee and one test waiver for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch benefits through the school. **Families must include free and reduced lunch documentation or income tax forms with application for consideration.** The reduced WATS fee of $25 is payable after eligibility has been confirmed. The program can be free or low-cost.

4) **How do I find a local test site?** Go to [www.centerforbrightkids.org](http://www.centerforbrightkids.org) and click on Academic Talent Search — Tests and Testing Companies, then click the Testing Sites link for the desired test. Some schools with larger numbers of participants like to send their kids to the same location on the same date or submit student registrations in bulk.

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 have at least 10 kids registering and are interested in your school being a testing site for PSAT 8/9, 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. CBK does not cover the cost of facility or custodial fees associated with testing; schools assume those costs when they elect to become a test site.

6) **Is this the “real” ACT or SAT?** Yes, this is the same ACT and SAT test given to kids preparing for college admission.

7) **Is the PSAT 8/9 the PSAT I am familiar with that kids take in sophomore year for national merit consideration?** No—the PSAT 8/9 is a newer product and is the only product we have been able to identify in two years of research that will function effectively as an above-level assessment for young students. The SAT suite of assessments begins with the PSAT 8/9 as a predictive indicator of future success on the SAT itself.