



Using *i-Ready Diagnostic* to Address Gifted Identification Needs

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Overview

i-Ready Diagnostic is a norm-referenced, standardized achievement test used by more than 10 million students that provides detailed information about student learning in Mathematics and Reading. The *i-Ready Diagnostic* also provides criterion-referenced interpretations of scores that have been developed by educators and subject-matter experts to describe student achievement in terms of standards and learning objectives. Mathematics and Reading results from the Diagnostic reports can be used, along with educator observations, as evidence to support both a gifted identification referral and the determination of giftedness by a Student Search/Eligibility team.

i-Ready Diagnostic: A Rigorous Assessment of Academic Performance for Gifted Identification Referrals

Three important identification questions that Diagnostic scores are used to answer are: “Is this student a high-ability learner?” “Where along the continuum of the curriculum is the student located?” and “What are the instructional next steps for the student?” This information is provided as part of the Diagnostic’s results for every student and can be used as evidence to support the evaluation of high-ability¹ learners for their eligibility to be included in gifted programs.

The Diagnostic has a vast body of validity evidence to support decisions about two things. First, as a standardized test of academic achievement, the total scale score can be used to describe a student’s proficiency with respect to other learners who are on the same learning path. Second, Diagnostic results are designed to provide domain placement categories that describe the status of a student with respect to having achieved the objectives of Grades K–12 learning (in reading or mathematics). With this type of information, important decisions about instruction and classifications of students can be supported.

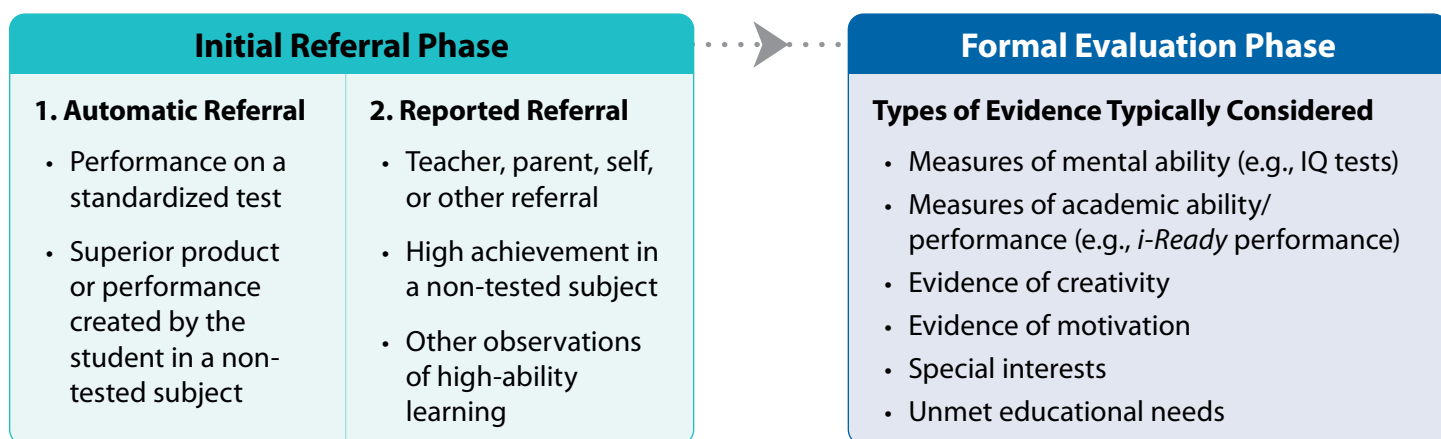
The Diagnostic has two rigorous score types that can be used to gauge a student’s readiness for gifted instruction. One score type is the Diagnostic’s criterion-referenced grade-level placements. Because the Diagnostic’s reports provide an excellent summary of what students who achieve a given Diagnostic placement level (e.g., Late On Grade Level, One Grade Level Above) can likely do after a mathematics or reading assessment, a student’s potential to succeed in gifted instruction can be gauged based on their performance on the Diagnostic.

¹Although results from *i-Ready Assessment*, including *i-Ready* placement levels, usually refer to the “proficiency” of a student, the term “ability” is used in the document consistent with its common use in gifted and talented identification literature and regulations.

The second score type provided by the Diagnostic is norm-referenced scores. The Diagnostic provides a representative national comparison group against which the ability of any single learner or the ability of a group of learners can be gauged using the Diagnostic’s national percentile ranks. For more local decisions, data from district, school, or classroom implementations can be used to develop customized, local reference groups for norming purposes. Different state regulations may specify the use of either national or more local referent groups as part of their gifted identification procedures. The Diagnostic can supply the information that meets the needs of these requirements.

Common Elements of Gifted Identification

Most states’ and districts’ gifted identification policies generally contain two important steps that conclude with a decision made by an eligibility team. The process (1) starts with an initial referral and (2) continues with a collection of artifacts to inform evidence of eligibility that are part of a formal evaluation of eligibility evidence by a Student Search/Eligibility team. The information about students in the *i-Ready* system can be used at each step.



Using the Diagnostic to Support a Gifted Identification Referral

Information from Diagnostic score reports can be used to indicate which students may have a potential for success in accelerated, advanced, or differentiated work. Often, state and district policies provide two pathways for a referral: an automatic referral path and a reported referral path.

1 Automatic Referral Path

Along the automatic referral path, students who qualify for an automatic referral are those whose test scores indicate that they are performing among the top students compared to their reference group. State policy may specify this comparison group to be a nationally representative norming group, the students within a district, or the peers at a student’s school. State policies may also establish a specific percentile rank (e.g., the 95th percentile) that must be met or exceeded on a standardized test.

In addition to high test scores, policies may stipulate that students who produce superior student-generated products or performances may be evaluated to also earn an automatic referral. Examples of the types of products (e.g., academic products, reports, projects, art, computer programs) or performances (e.g., instrumental, dance, speeches, service, theatrical work) that may be considered vary greatly from state to state. This kind of provision is typically included to allow for the use of academic performance evidence in subject areas for which there is no standardized test (e.g., foreign language, science, social studies, health). The use of products and performances may be governed by state policies that specify the manner in which they are to be evaluated to affect an automatic referral.

To serve the purpose of providing evidence for a gifted identification referral, the Diagnostic meets the requirements of the automatic referral path because the tests are normed on a nationally representative sample of students. Percentile scores are presented alongside total scale scores to provide a norm-referenced interpretation of scores by grade. Where comparisons to district or school comparison groups are needed, the necessary data are available from the *i-Ready Diagnostic* reporting system.

Figure 1. Sample Diagnostic Results Report That Features National Norms for Grade 6 Students

Student	Scale Score	Overall Placement	Placement by Domain				National Norms	Date
			NO	ALG	MS	GEO		
Sanchez, Abby	543	Grade 6	Max Score	Mid 5	Late 5	Grade 6	98th	6/15/22
Avina, Zandy	543	Grade 6	Max Score	Mid 5	Late 5	Grade 6	98th	6/15/22
Tan, Melanie	528	Late 5	Grade 6	Grade 4	Grade 6	Late 5	91st	6/15/22
Stanton, Geena	524	Mid 5	Mid 5	Mid 5	Mid 5	Late 5	89th	6/15/22
McDonald, Kal	518	Mid 5	Mid 5	Mid 5	Mid 5	Grade 4	85th	6/15/22
Warren, Santino	509	Mid 5	Mid 5	Grade 4	Mid 5	Late 5	74th	6/15/22

2 Reported Referral Path

Along the reported referral path, state policies may allow that anyone in the student’s life can refer a student for consideration as gifted based on an observation of the student’s academic ability. This is important because the observation can be made outside of subjects that are tested on standardized tests. The student may, for example, be observed to have high learning ability in a world language or in social studies. Within the tested areas of the Diagnostic (i.e., mathematics and reading), the observation of high-ability learning can be made in several different ways in addition to the use of a norms criterion, including:

► Students with Exceptional Performance

The Diagnostic is adaptive and designed to reliably identify a student’s level of proficiency. A student’s achievement of a high Diagnostic performance level on a mathematics or reading assessment can be a factor in a reported referral path. The score reports include a student’s grade-level placement, which ranges from Three or More Grade Levels Below to Above Grade Level. Within a grade, a teacher’s observation of exceptional performance could be supported by a Late On Grade Level or Above Grade Level placement.

Example Evidence for Referral

Because a Late On Grade Level or Above Grade Level placement on the first assessment taken in the fall of a grade meets a high standard of grade-level proficiency at the beginning of a year, this may be seen as evidence of advanced or high-ability learning. Consider the cases of Abby Sanchez and Zandy Avina in Figure 1. If this was the report of a test taken in the fall, an educator may use this as evidence to support an observation that these students have advanced educational needs as compared to peers. Diagnostic placements like these, accompanied by corroborating teacher observations of advanced learning ability, can serve to support a reported referral to the gifted identification process.

Figure 2. Stretch Growth® Targets from the i-Ready Growth Model

Mathematics									
Fall Diagnostic Placement Level	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
On Grade Level, Mid, Late, or Above	35	32	31	30	24	20	20	20	19
On Grade Level, Early	38	36	35	34	33	29	25	22	21
One Grade Level Below	39	37	36	35	34	31	26	23	22
Two Grade Levels Below	–	57	48	43	41	35	30	25	23
Three or More Grade Levels Below	–	–	–	55	47	41	35	33	31

Reading									
Fall Diagnostic Placement Level	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
On Grade Level, Mid, Late, or Above	54	44	27	21	20	18	15	14	13
On Grade Level, Early	65	56	43	39	27	25	25	23	22
One Grade Level Below	67	67	53	40	36	30	26	25	25
Two Grade Levels Below	–	96	81	63	50	47	38	37	36
Three or More Grade Levels Below	–	–	–	79	62	61	51	50	50

► Students with Exceptional Growth

The *i-Ready* growth model includes benchmark growth values for Typical Growth, which is the average expected growth for a student given their starting placement, and Stretch Growth, which represents an aspirational yet attainable level of growth that puts a student on a pathway toward grade-level proficiency. Within a referral process, an exceptional amount of growth may serve, along with corroborating observations by a teacher, as evidence that a student has a high capacity to learn when placed in the right environment. When growth is taken alone as an indicator, however, it does not necessarily demonstrate that a student has high ability. An observation, for example, that a student demonstrates Stretch Growth or greater between the first and second assessments may be presented as evidence of advanced or high-ability learning, especially if growth in terms of scale scores is accompanied with other teacher observations that support this claim.

Example Evidence for Referral

Melanie Tan, a Grade 6 student from Figure 1, obtained a score of 528 in Mathematics in the fall administration of i-Ready. According to the i-Ready growth model, her Stretch Growth target would be 20, a number of points that represents a high standard of growth after 30 weeks of instruction, given her fall Diagnostic placement level. If this amount of growth were to have been observed in the winter, however, the exceptional amount of growth in half of a school year could serve as evidence sufficient to refer Melanie for gifted evaluation because she is achieving a high rate of growth. Melanie may need instruction that has been differentiated, perhaps for pacing, to meet her educational needs. Again, if this observation is consistent with her teacher's observations about her progress, this kind of evidence might warrant a referral to the gifted identification process.

► Students Who Have Exceptional Response to Instruction

A student's exceptional response (e.g., ease of engagement, rapid progress) to instruction can be described in terms of observations of exceptional performance while engaging with My Path lessons or Teacher-Assigned Lessons in *i-Ready*. This kind of observation expressed, for example, in a high passing rate can support a claim of advanced or high-ability learning, especially if there are additional teacher observations that work to sustain this claim. The disparity between a student's noticeably high performance as part of daily instruction as compared to expectations associated with a test result might be evidence of twice-exceptionality (i.e., giftedness and another exceptionality).

Example Evidence for Referral

Teachers who observe that certain students have consistent success, progress at a rapid pace, and exceptionally high scores on the quizzes that are part of i-Ready Personalized Instruction lessons that are determined by a student's Diagnostic placement level may consider that this type of academic engagement is evidence of advanced or high-ability learning. This may be a reason to consider referring such a student to the gifted identification process.

i-Ready as a Part of a Formal Evaluation Phase

After a referral, a Student Search/Eligibility team will evaluate evidence and make an identification determination. A review of a state's regulations governing the identification of gifted students is the best way to discover what specific elements are needed to supply a formal evaluation of a student for gifted identification. Because the specifics of gifted identification are not covered by any federal law, the process is regulated by state policies.

As a measure of academic ability, *i-Ready* can provide evidence of high-ability learning in either mathematics or reading. Also, because the *i-Ready Diagnostic* is usually given more than once a year, *i-Ready* growth scores can be used to provide additional evidence of accelerated learning or of a need for instructional pacing considerations. Finally, *i-Ready* locates each test taker along the continuum of Grades K–12 curricula for mathematics and reading. Knowing what a student needs next in instruction is additional evidence for giftedness if those needs are very different (i.e., more advanced) than the pace at which instruction is occurring as part of general education.

When used to address a state's gifted identification requirements, *i-Ready* results can:

- Provide percentile ranks from a nationally representative norm-referenced group. These scores are available on the Diagnostic Results report as well as the For Families report.
- Supply data sufficient to develop local (i.e., district, school, grade, class) norms. Administrators can download student performance data to make the required comparison group. Additional information on using scores to create local norms is available upon request.
- Provide some evidence about a student's response to advanced materials. Performance on grade-level or advanced learning objectives can be observed as a student engages in *i-Ready's* Next Steps for Instruction or on specified standards assigned by their teachers.
- Provide some evidence about the pace at which a student engages material. Typical Growth and Stretch Growth targets are available from the *i-Ready* growth model. The rate at which students make growth can be observed between assessments and evaluated against growth targets as evidence of exceptional growth.
- Provide some evidence about a student's ability with respect to mathematics and reading standards and content domains. An *i-Ready* result may indicate that a student is ready for advanced work as compared to students in the same grade.

Using the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Gifted Identification

Perhaps the most important question about how to use *i-Ready* for gifted identification is, “What does my state require?” The *i-Ready Diagnostic* reports are a rich source of information that can indicate for a referral and can supply a Student Search/Eligibility team with evidence to consider. Your Partner Success team has the resources to help examine and interpret assessment results to serve this purpose.

For additional technical evidence of the rigor of *i-Ready*, you can request the following documentation from a Curriculum Associates Educational Consultant or Partner Success Manager, or email info@cainc.com.

- *i-Ready* Assessments Technical Manual. Curriculum Associates Research Report | March 2018
- *i-Ready Diagnostic* National Norms Technical Documentation: Grades K–8. Curriculum Associates Research Report | January 2021
- *i-Ready Diagnostic* National Norms Technical Documentation: Grades 9–10 (Fall). Curriculum Associates Research Report | February 2021



For additional questions about using *i-Ready Assessment* to address gifted identification, contact an *i-Ready* Educational Consultant or Partner Success Manager.