After the Test
Resources for CTY Talent Search families

city.jhu.edu/talent/after
Dear CTY Talent Search Family:

It is a great pleasure to congratulate your child and your family on completing Talent Search testing through the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

One of the first research universities in the United States, Johns Hopkins is dedicated to the transmission of knowledge that fuels discoveries and advances humanity worldwide.

As part of the university, the Center for Talented Youth identifies and develops the academic talents of the world's most promising young people. The founder of Facebook and co-founder of Google are CTY alumni, as are thousands of others contributing to advancements across the fields of human endeavor. CTY alumni include scientists and mathematicians, novelists and social entrepreneurs. They are leading their generation and shaping the world's future.

Our hope is that, through focused and expert talent development, your student will also realize his or her full potential. This short guidebook takes a step in that direction by explaining more about the test your child took, about working with your child's school, and about CTY's courses and services.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Albert
Senior Director, Academic Programs and Services
By participating in this year’s CTY Talent Search, your student joins children from all U.S. states and 120 countries who have developed their talents with CTY since it was founded in 1979.
Above-level testing: What is it?

Simply stated, “above-level testing” involves a student taking a test designed for older students. Individual results are then measured against a comparison group of older students.

Above-level testing is what makes CTY’s Talent Search and testing different from the testing that students usually encounter. Typically, students take a test designed for students in his or her age or grade. This is true even for admission into most schools’ gifted and talented programs.

Why above-level testing?

Very bright students often perform at the top percentiles on grade-level tests. When students score at the top percentiles, the tests may be imprecise measures of true ability. Why? Because students with these scores have “hit the ceiling” of the test. The test can’t discern if the student has reached his or her level of ability, or if he or she could correctly answer even more difficult questions.

When students at the top percentiles take an above-level test, the resulting scores spread out into an (approximately) normal distribution. In other words, a curve develops, with most students performing at the middle, and fewer at the low and high ends. This result highlights that students who originally scored at the top percentiles on grade-level tests were not all the same with respect to their abilities (or their academic needs).

The higher ceiling of an above-level test allows us to “test the limits” of a student's ability. For many highly able students, this is the first time they can see and appreciate the full extent of their own abilities.

Above-level testing identifies students with the highest level of academic aptitude who have the greatest need for advanced-level and fast-paced coursework.

Good standardized test scores are objective measures of a child’s ability. They are not influenced by a teacher’s individual perception of a student, the “good student” bias, or parental aspirations for their child.

CTY research shows that strong scores on above-grade-level tests are highly predictive of students’ success in advanced-level courses.

The SAT, in particular, is a highly reliable, valid indicator of a student’s current level of academic ability. The SAT assesses reasoning skills, and all the more so for CTY’s students because most of our students take the SAT before they have been exposed to the level of content on the exam. Research studies conducted by CTY and the Educational Testing Service confirm the reliability, validity, and appropriateness of the SAT for the students in our Talent Search.

Similar research supports the validity and appropriateness of the ACT and the School and College Ability Test (SCAT) for students in CTY’s Talent Search.
Online resources

Our resources help Talent Search families further understand, encourage, and develop students’ academic talents. Find them online at cty.jhu.edu/talent/after.

• Compiled test results by grade—See comparative information on scaled scores for students taking the SCAT, SAT, and ACT.

• Reading lists—A CTY favorite! See how many of the books you know, and find some your son or daughter might want to read.

• Webinars—CTY hosts webinars for families and educators of academically talented students throughout the school year.

• Scholarly articles—A listing of valuable research on academic talent.

• Regional Awards Ceremonies—Ceremonies for top-scoring students in the Talent Search are held in states with the most participants. A Grand Ceremony is also held at Johns Hopkins University each year to honor the top-performing students in the world.

• Center for Talented Youth Parents Group on Facebook—This virtual gathering spot has quickly become the go-to place for parents of bright students to connect with each other, share ideas and experiences, and ask questions. Join the group at facebook.com/groups/ctyparents/.
A note to parents

Linking CTY’s assessment to your child’s school

Your child can benefit if you choose to share his or her test results with a teacher or school administrator.

Educators in your school probably understand what CTY’s scores mean if your school has a history of participating in the CTY Talent Search. Whether that’s the case or not, it wouldn’t hurt to make sure the school knows the following information:

- The Talent Search is recommended for students who score in the top percentiles on grade-level state or national tests. CTY’s tests are above grade level.
- In the CTY test data provided online, the percentiles shown are in relation to the norming group for each test. In other words, the top students from schools across the country and around the world form the comparison group for the tests.

SAT and ACT, which CTY’s seventh- and eighth-graders may take, are quite well-known. Educators should know relative scores on those tests and what it means for a seventh or eighth grader to have earned them.

The School and College Ability Test (SCAT) is not as well-known to educators. That’s why it should help to explain the test as an above-level assessment taken by a group of students already known to be of high ability.

Since schools typically do not administer tests designed to measure spatial ability, results of the Spatial Test Battery may be especially unfamiliar. The STB Guide, at cty.jhu.edu/talent/testing/about/stb.html, provides more information on spatial ability and its relation to educational planning.

As you discuss the test results with your child’s school, be mindful that the school also has its own data points. Be open to them. Based on your child’s test results, you may wish to ask for special accommodations, such as subject- or whole-grade acceleration. However, your school might have important information about your child’s current level of actual achievement and emotional, maturational, and motivational readiness to be moved up.

Consider your student’s unique situation. For example, if he or she is achieving only modestly in a middle-level class yet has high area test scores, such a dissonance ought to be brought to the attention of a teacher or school counselor and explored.

This conversation, if done tactfully with a school representative who can help and is sympathetic to the needs of academically talented children, could yield positive results for your child’s academic program and progress.
About CTY students

CTY’s Talent Search is for students scoring at or above the 95th percentile on nationally normed standardized tests, or at the very top levels on state tests.
After the Test

A note to students

Standardized testing: A fact of academic and professional life

The test you’ve just taken can help you learn more about yourself, aid in educational decision-making, and help you chart your path toward college.

Standardized school assessments

Your teachers compare your performance to your classmates’ every day. But how do you perform compared to others in your state or country?

Standardized tests provide norms that allow you to compare your performance to that of a larger population. See a weakness? You can work on it. Discover a strength? It may make you eligible for special programs in high school or allow you to be admitted to more advanced courses.

Talent Search tests

Most school assessments are in-level tests. Eighth graders take tests that measure the skills and knowledge expected of eighth graders, for example, while students in higher or lower grades are tested according to those grades.

If you consistently score near the top on in-level tests, you are doing what psychometricians refer to as “hitting the ceiling.” You may require a more difficult assessment to show the true extent of your abilities.

When you take the SAT or ACT as a seventh or eighth grader through a Talent Search, your performance is compared to that of college-bound seniors. If you score really well, it suggests you may be ready for more advanced work taught at a faster pace than other students your age. A high score can alert your school to your exceptional abilities and educational needs.

If your Talent Search performance is more modest, it doesn’t mean you aren’t a top student headed for big things. It just suggests that honors-level classes designed for your grade level may be able to meet your academic needs for now.

The point is that the information gleaned from above-level tests can inform good educational decision-making as you progress through school.
SAT Subject Tests, AP and IB exams

Like other standardized tests, these achievement tests assess your knowledge of a subject but also allow you to compare your performance to that of others around the country. This is why colleges want them in your admissions portfolio—they want to be able to evaluate your learning without the bias of differing school and teacher standards. This objective information—whether you do well on these tests or not—can also help you select courses when you are in college.

Most colleges require you to submit scores for two SAT Subject Tests, and it's tempting to take tests only in your two best subjects. But demonstrating a strong understanding of more subjects by submitting additional SAT Subject Tests, as well as AP or IB examination results, can enhance your acceptance chances.

Standardized tests serve two purposes: They show schools and colleges what you know, but also, they show you what you know. Take advantage of assessment opportunities to learn more about yourself so you can chart your future appropriately.

*While this article specifically discusses the SAT and ACT for seventh and eighth graders, its lessons hold true for students who took CTY's School and College Ability Test.*
CTY programs and services

The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth offers many academic programs and services that nurture and inspire great young minds.

**CTY Summer Programs**  
(Open to qualifying students) cty.jhu.edu/summer

CTY’s Summer Programs offer eligible students a chance to engage in challenging academic work in the company of peers who share their exceptional abilities.

Residential and day programs, based on age, take place in three-week sessions from late June through early August. Students take only one course per three-week session and study that subject intensively in five- or seven-hour classes, five days a week. Class size is 12–18 students, and each class has an instructor and a teaching assistant. CTY instructors know their subjects extremely well and can communicate well with high-ability students. Outside of class, students participate in a full and fun social program.

**Study of Exceptional Talent**  
(Open to qualifying students) cty.jhu.edu/set

The Julian C. Stanley Study of Exceptional Talent (SET) was created to help extremely talented students achieve their full potential. SET is for students who score at least 700 on the Math or Critical Reading section of the SAT before age 13.

**CTYOnline**  
(Open to qualifying students) cty.jhu.edu/ctyonline

CTYOnline connects academically talented students with flexible, convenient, and challenging courses, high quality faculty, and other high-potential students around the world. The program offers eligible students in grades preK-12 the opportunity to join a lively online academic community that accelerates and enriches their learning all year long.

Each student works with a CTY faculty member who provides guidance, encouragement, and evaluation using e-mail, phone, virtual classrooms, and multimedia resources. Students access their courses online, at any time of day, blending regular schoolwork and summer activities with advanced coursework that matches their abilities and interests. Many students arrange with their schools to take CTYOnline courses for credit or placement, either to enrich or expand the school’s curriculum or to replace grade-level coursework that the student has already mastered with more challenging studies.

**Questions?** Visit us at cty.jhu.edu, email us at ctyinfo@jhu.edu, or call 410-735-6278.
Open to all Talent Search students

CTY’s Family Academic Programs
(Open to all Talent Search participants) cty.jhu.edu/family

CTY’s Family Academic Programs offer students and parents a wide sampling of subjects and themes. These educational events run for one day, part of a weekend, or longer.

Our programs enrich and extend standard school curricula and encourage shared learning between children and parents. Our special extended, educational travel series features destinations in the U.S. and overseas.

Imagine magazine
(Open to students worldwide) cty.jhu.edu/imagine

Imagine’s five annual issues highlight opportunities such as summer programs, academic competitions, and science fairs. Written for advanced seventh–12th graders, it features student-written articles, expert college-planning advice, college reviews, career interviews, puzzles, and more. Upcoming issues will focus on topics ranging from medicine and chemistry to law and architecture.

The Diagnostic and Counseling Center
(Open to students worldwide) cty.jhu.edu/counseling

Families who would like more intensive educational and psychological testing will find it with this CTY service for academically advanced young people. Counselors can help when a bright child is underachieving, is under-challenged in school, or when a learning difference may be suspected. Families find the extensive post-testing report and counseling they receive to be valuable in understanding their child and in planning next steps.

Cogito
(Open to students around the world) cogito.org

Cogito.org is a website for middle- and high-school students with a strong interest or ability in math or science. Articles, interviews, and features let students know what’s going on in the world of STEM. Students can learn about the activities of amazing scientists their own age and what they’re up to, and can interact with each other in a private, secure setting.

Financial Aid
(For students with proven need) cty.jhu.edu/financial

CTY is committed to serving all talented students. Financial aid to assist with CTY program fees is available for students with demonstrated financial need.

Full and partial scholarships are available. Submit the aid application, including the required financial documents, when you apply.

Funds that enable CTY students to attend our programs come from the generosity of foundations, corporations, and other CTY families and alums. We welcome all donations and inquiries. To find out more, call 410-735-6278.
General Information

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Accreditation

The Center for Talented Youth is accredited for grades K through 12 by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.