



Above-grade-level testing: What is it?

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Above-grade-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 their age or grade. This is true even for admission into a school's gifted and talented program.

Above-grade-level testing is useful for these reasons—

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 cannot 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-grade-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).

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. With respect to above-grade-level tests, research done by CTY shows that strong scores on such tests are highly predictive of a student's ability to succeed in advanced-level courses.