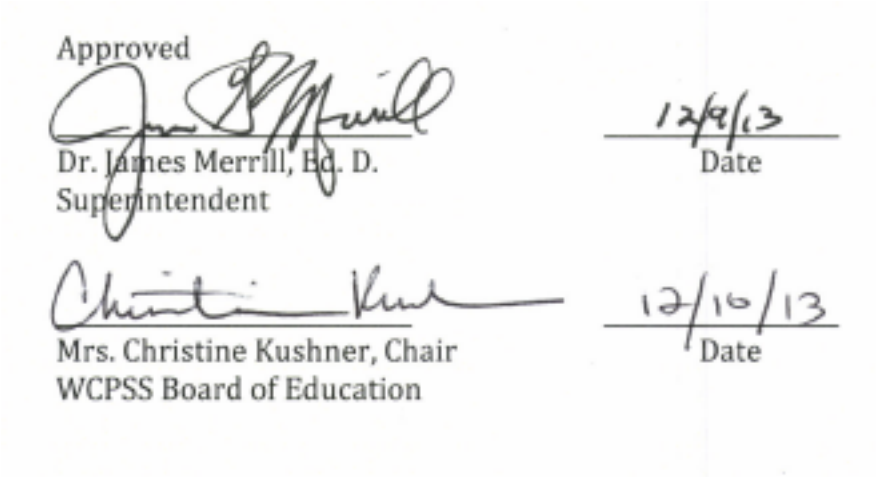
A PLAN FOR
MEETING THE NEEDS OF
ACADEMICALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY
GIFTED STUDENTS

Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program

WCPSS Local AIG Plan

2013-2016

Wake County Public School System
Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan



Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program

This is the Wake County Public School System's Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) plan. This plan replaces any copy that you may currently have and will be approved during the 2013-14 school year, with portions effective at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. The plan will be re-evaluated and revised for the 2016-2017 school year.

This document will serve as a reference for policy and procedure. The support in meeting the needs of gifted population is of utmost importance. Should you have any questions and/or comments, please contact the District AIG Director for the Wake County Public School System

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2013 Acknowledgements

Many people were instrumental in the rewriting of this local plan for Academically or Intellectually Gifted: parents, community leaders, teachers, students, school board members and administrators. We hereby acknowledge their dedication, hard work and tenacity as we continue to strengthen the course for gifted education in the 21st century. The following people served as members of this committee and/or provided input for review, giving generously of their time and talents:

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Introduction

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) is currently the largest school district in the North Carolina and the 16th largest in the United States. Our student population has almost tripled since 1980, and another 40,000 students are projected by year 2022. WCPSS has 104 elementary schools, 33 middle schools, 26 high schools and 4 special/optional schools, 1 academy (K-8), and 2 leadership academies (6-12), for a total of 170 schools. Academically or Intellectually Gifted Programs offer support in grades K through 12. As of April 1, 2013 (SY 2012-13), there were 26,889 students, or 26.5% of the WCPSS student population, enrolled in academically gifted programs.

The Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program staff has spent many years studying research on gifted practices, reviewing programs in gifted education, discussing, revising, and formulating the AIG Program. The following states our beliefs about gifted education programming:

- Gifted and highly capable students learn at a faster rate and are able to think with more complexity than their peers.
- Gifted and highly capable students are found across a diverse student population.
- Gifted and highly capable students need a more rigorous and differentiated curriculum.
- Ongoing research-based professional development for all stakeholders is necessary to sustain an effective gifted program.
- Collaborative partnerships with parents and community are essential to build and maintain an effective gifted program.

A Glossary is included in his document to enhance stakeholder understanding of various terms and acronyms. See Appendix A.

Wake County Public School System
Academically or Intellectually Program
Overview and Purpose

In August 1996, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Article 9B which changed gifted education in the state. This legislation removed gifted education from the law-governing children with special needs. However, Exceptional Children Division at the state level still oversees programs for academically or intellectually gifted. The new law required each local school district to develop its own plan for gifted students and be prepared for implementation by the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. The Wake County School Board of Education approved its plan for gifted students and the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction accepted the plan for implementation during the 1997-98 school year. Every three years the plan is reviewed and submitted for approval by the local board of education as well as the state department. The most recent local AIG plan must conform to Article 9B and to the AIG program standards that are available in the Appendix of this document.

ARTICLE 9b ACADEMICALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED STUDENTS

§ 115C-150.5. Academically or Intellectually gifted students.

The General Assembly believes the public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence and that academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically or intellectually gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.

§ 115C-150.6. State Board of Education responsibilities. In order to implement this Article, the State Board of Education shall:

(1) Develop and disseminate guidelines for developing local plans under G.S. 115C- 150.7(a). These guidelines should address identification procedures, differentiated curriculum, integrated services, staff development, program evaluation methods, and any other information the State Board considers necessary or appropriate.

(2) Provide ongoing technical assistance to the local school administrative units in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their local plans under G.S. 115C-150.7.

§ 115C-150.7. Local plans:

(a) Each local board of education shall develop a local plan designed to identify and establish a procedure for providing appropriate educational services to each academically or intellectually gifted student. The board shall include parents, the school community, representatives of the community, and others in the development of this plan. The plan may be developed by or in conjunction with other committees.

(b) Each plan shall include the following components:

(1) Screening, identification, and placement procedures that allow for the identification of specific educational needs and for the assignment of academically or intellectually gifted students to appropriate services.

(2) A clear statement of the program to be offered that includes different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diversity of identified academically or intellectually gifted students.

(3) Measurable objectives for the various services that align with core curriculum and a method to evaluate the plan and the services offered. The evaluation shall focus on improved student performance.
(4) Professional development clearly matched to the goals and objectives of the plan, the needs of the staff providing services to academically or intellectually gifted students, the services offered, and the curricular modifications.
(5) A plan to involve the school community, parents, and representatives of the local community in the ongoing implementation of the local plan, monitoring of the local plan, and integration of educational services for academically or intellectually gifted students into the total school program. This should include a public information component.
(6) The name and role description of the person responsible for implementation of the plan.
(7) A procedure to resolve disagreements between parents of guardians and the local school administrative unit when a child is not identified as an academically or intellectually gifted student or concerning the appropriateness of services offered to the academically or intellectually gifted student.
(8) Any other information the local board considers necessary or appropriate to implement this Article or to improve the educational performance of academically or intellectually gifted students.

(c) Upon approval of the plan developed under this section, the local board shall submit the plan to the State Board of Education for its review and comments. The local board shall consider the comments it receives from the State Board before it implements the plan.
(d) A plan shall remain in effect for no more than three years; however, the local board may amend the plan as often as it considers necessary or appropriate. Any changes to a plan shall be submitted to the State Board of Education for its review and comments. The local board shall consider the State Board's comments before it implements the changes.

§ 115C-150.8. Review of Disagreements. In the event that the procedure developed under G.S. 115C-150.7(b)(7) fails to resolve a disagreement, the parent or guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. The scope of review shall be limited to

(i) whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an academically or intellectually gifted student, or
(ii) (ii) whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C-150.7 has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/sbe-archives/meetings/2012/article9b.pdf

North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards

WCPSS AIG plan and services are aligned with the standards as adopted by the State Board of Education December 2012. (State Board of Education Policy GCS-U-000).

http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/academicservices/gifted/ncaig-program-standards.pdf

The six North Carolina AIG Program Standards have been developed to serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate, and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs. These standards reflect Article 9B and nationally accepted best practices in gifted education. Furthermore, the AIG Program Standards help ensure that the needs of AIG students are met and the potential of AIG students is optimally developed. These AIG Program Standards will:

- Convey expectations for quality local AIG programs and services;
- Guide the development, revision, and monitoring of local AIG programs;
- Articulate best practices for local AIG programs, including those related to student identification, differentiated curriculum and instruction, and comprehensive programming;
- Provide a guide for AIG personnel and professional development;
- Promote strong partnerships and communication between and among home, school, and community;
- Serve as a vehicle for continuous program improvement and accountability.

Wake County School System Mission Statement

The Wake County Public School System will significantly increase achievement for all students by providing a world-class education that equips students with the knowledge and expertise to become successful, productive citizens.

Wake County School System Vision Statement

WCPSS will serve as the national standard for increasing student achievement in the 21st century. Highly effective teachers and principals are empowered to raise the achievement of all children and will provide students with high quality classroom instruction that fosters intellectual development.
WCPSS recognizes children have different needs. WCPSS is committed to ensuring all students are challenged to reach their full potential and to be held accountable partners in their learning. Students will graduate in increasingly higher percentages and compete successfully as productive citizens. WCPSS will continue this community's proud tradition of education leadership and academic excellence with a proactive school staff, effectively supported by the Board of Education and Central Services.

Wake County School System Core Beliefs

1. All children, regardless of socio-economic circumstances, can be high achieving students.
2. Academic achievement gaps can and will be eliminated.
3. Challenging all students by providing academic rigor is essential to student success.
4. Highly effective principals and teachers are key to improving growth in student achievement.
5. The Board of Education and Central Services promote an environment of continuous improvement and innovation that results in a high performing organization and is 100% focused on student achievement.
6. Supportive and passionate parents, families, student mentors, and other members of the multi-cultural Wake County community are active participants in the education of our students.

WCPSS AIG Core Beliefs

1. High- ability students from low-income backgrounds, high ability students who are culturally or linguistically different and/or high ability students with special needs, share many of the personal traits and characteristics of gifted students and can perform at high levels.

2. We recognize that academic achievement gaps exist for underrepresented populations. Not only is this achievement gap a concern in WCPSS, but it is a national epidemic. We believe it is imperative to support emergent talent as early as possible, establishing a commitment to achievement at an early age. Capable children may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential on tests or other performance assessments until after they have access to challenging curriculum and enriched learning opportunities. Barriers for underrepresented students that impede performance include a lack of literacy-rich home and community where reading, writing, and language are understood to be critical for academic success. We believe that by supporting our underrepresented children through nurturing to build vocabulary, develop thinking skills and problem solving abilities prior to formal assessments will assist in closing the achievement gap for our high ability students..

3. Advanced curriculum and high expectations are key to deep engagement that results in the demonstration of higher level thinking and achievement. Challenging highly capable students by providing advanced curriculum and high expectations are essential to promoting high academic growth.

4. Highly effective principals and teachers are key to improving growth in student achievement. Reflective practice and data driven decisions should guide instruction for all students. Changing the attitudes and expectations of teachers and principals away from a deficit perspective and giving them the skills to differentiate curriculum allows them to provide advanced and enriched content to highly capable students.

5. AIG Program Staff works collaboratively with stakeholders by using research-based practices to promote innovation and continuous improvement. AIG Program Staff supports comprehensive programming for a 21st century culture of high academic growth.

6. The AIG Program needs supportive and passionate stakeholders within the multi-cultural Wake County community as active participants in the education of our students.

Standard 1 – Student Identification

The focus of this standard is student identification. The 2013-2016 WCPSS AIG plan offers more opportunities for students to be identified for program services. Creation of 5 gateways will offer a variety of opportunities for underrepresented students to be identified based upon student data. Emphasis will be placed on increasing communication with all stakeholders regarding the various gateways for identification.

Training is also essential for appropriate identification. We will continue to collaborate to train teachers in the characteristics of gifted students. Through the department's work with the Office of Professional Learning, school site(s) and regional Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), the AIG Program will seek ways to increase the number of underrepresented students with potential. The AIG Program will share resources to assist in achieving high growth for students. The AIG Program staff will increase collaboration with other WCPSS Departments to determine specific strategies to identify and serve students from underrepresented populations. The AIG Program continues to collaborate with Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI), Literacy, Mathematics, and other divisions within Academics. The various gateways will enable under-achieving gifted students access to AIG program and services. See Appendix I and Appendix J.

Standard 2 – Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

Over the next three years, the WCPSS AIG Program will guide and support advanced academic performance among high performing students from culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse populations. The AIG Program will strive to reach the untapped potential in students not typically identified in the AIG program. The identification of our underserved students remains an issue in our nation and across our state. Identifying students from under represented populations in order to promote growth and assist in closing the achievement gap will remain a top priority for the WCPSS AIG Program. We will expand the implementation of a comprehensive, and intentional, K-3 nurturing program.

Standard 2 provides detailed information for the services and programming available to gifted students, students who are highly capable, students who have high academic potential, and students who need nurturing to discover potential. The Co-Teaching and Collaborative Consultation Model, commonly referred to as push-in will be how most students are served. Some gifted students may need to participate in enrichment and extension activities outside of the regular education classroom, commonly referred to as pull-out, to meet their individual needs. The professional development program designed to support the teachers and administrators in serving these students is also addressed in this standard.

Standard 3 – Personnel and Professional Development

Standard 3 outlines the support and responsibilities of the AIG Central Service Staff and AIG school personnel. Quality professional development is key to growing and improving gifted services. Plans for staff development include an increase in training for staff focused on the social-emotional needs of gifted students as well as improving instructional practices. Sessions for parents and community members will also be offered. Another goal is to establish stronger connections with Student Support Services to provide training to K-12 counselors on the social and emotional needs of gifted students. All of the professional development opportunities from AIG will align with district-wide initiatives such as the Common Core and Essential Standards, Response-to-Instruction (RtI), as well as assist AIG teachers with the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES). Our goal is to establish a relationship with the Office of Professional Learning for collaboration in the creation of professional development courses that teachers within the WCPSS district may access to aid in improving achievement/growth for any student in any class. This series of professional development opportunities will provide teachers with resources and training around best instructional practices (questioning, problem-based learning, critical thinking, multiple intelligences, and interdisciplinary models) for nurturing highly capable and gifted students.

Standard 4 – Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

Standard 4 addresses the need to create a comprehensive and intentional program for highly capable and gifted learners. Included in this standard is a concentration on the diverse academic, intellectual, social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Vertical alignment among elementary, middle and high schools was defined and structured within the plan to ensure a continuum of services. As part of Standard 4, an increase in the collaboration with the Exceptional Children's Department, the English as a Second Language Department and the Title I Department is crucial to better identify and serve our twice-exceptional students, our highly/profoundly gifted students, and our culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students. The unique social-emotional needs of gifted students require dedicated attention from educators and parents. The AIG Program recognizes these needs and will provide additional training to discuss the social and emotional needs of gifted students. AIG central service staff will collaborate with Student Support Services, the Academics Department, and Data and Accountability (D&A) to further support our gifted students and students with high academic potential with the accelerative practices outlined in WCPSS Board Policy 5532.

Standard 5 – Partnerships

Standard 5 supports fostering partnerships, communication, and collaboration with all stakeholders. Communication is crucial in providing appropriate services to gifted students and students with high academic potential while working to eliminate barriers to services for students who are typically underrepresented in AIG programming. Communication will be available to stakeholders, particularly parents, in a variety of forms including, but not limited to, school and classroom newsletters, the WCPSS website, Teacher and School websites/pages, and district sponsored curriculum events. Surveys and focus groups will be better utilized to receive feedback for continuous improvement from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and the community. A concerted effort will be made to ensure that these communications are available in multiple languages in collaboration with the Office of Translation and Interpretation (OTI). An AIG Advisory Committee is comprised of stakeholders who represent the diverse demographics in the school district. This committee meets regularly to review all aspects of the AIG program. Efforts will be made to expand our current partnerships with local universities.

Standard 6 – Program Accountability

Standard 6 outlines the importance of revising and writing a new gifted plan every three years. Changes made to the plan will be communicated to all stakeholders. In addition, the new version of the plan, approved by Wake County's Board of Educations, will be distributed to schools, Central Services Staff, Area Superintendents, posted to the AIG PB Works site, and posted on the WCPSS website. During the course of the next three years, the AIG Program staff, with the partnership of other WCPSS staff/departments, will work to integrate compliance and instructional school visits to create a check system ensuring that identification, placement, and services are compatible and to ensure the fidelity of the program's implementation. Information will also be gathered from various stakeholders as part of this process to continually improve the program. Through the practices in Standard 6, AIG program staff will increase the use of data analysis in collaboration with the WCPSS D&A department. This will allow opportunity to determine the value added of the overall program as well as the gifted plan's effectiveness across the district. A review of current budget and allocation of resources throughout the district will be evaluated in regards to how AIG Program funds (both state and local) are allocated to maximize the resources, trainings, and services provided to WCPSS teachers.

Wake County Public Schools
Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Plan
Effective July 2014- June 2016

Approved by local Board of Education on:
LEA Superintendent's Name: Dr. James Merrill
LEA AIG Contact Name: Wendy Carlyle
Submitted to NC Department of Public Instruction on:

Wake County Public Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs.

The NC AIG Program Standards encompass six principle standards with accompanying practices. These standards articulate the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relate to the categories related to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C- 150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs.

As LEAs continue to transform their AIG Programs and align to the AIG Program Standards, LEAs participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, which involved multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process guided LEAs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2013-2016. This local AIG plan must be approved by the LEA's Board of Education and sent to NC DPI for comment.

For 2013-2016, Wake County Public School System's local AIG plan is as follows:

Wake County Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, July 2009). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs.

The NC AIG Program Standards encompass six principle standards with accompanying practices. These standards articulate the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relate to the categories related to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C-150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs.

As LEAs transition to the new AIG Program Standards, every LEA participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, which involved multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process guided LEAs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2013-2016. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's board of Education and sent to NC DPI for comment.

For 2013-2016, Wake County Public School's local AIG plan is as follows:
Wake County Schools Vision for local AIG program: The Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Program provides an appropriately challenging education for students who perform, or show potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared to others of their age, experience, or environment. Services for AIG students include differentiated curriculum and instruction that extends and enriches the Common Core and Essential Standards. The Wake County

Public School System's Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program seeks to inspire the love of learning, foster high achievement capabilities and the individual interests of gifted learners, and effectively nurture highly able learners from all populations.

Classroom teachers and AIG teachers collaborate to provide learning opportunities that engage, challenge, interest, stimulate and motivate students. Curricula and instructional practices are modified to provide consistent opportunities that are rich and rigorous for gifted students in all classes. Every effort is made to match appropriate opportunities for challenge with the needs of students. There is the expectation of excellence, equity, and focus on learning and teaching. Research based models of service delivery are available for gifted learners in each school. Students experience differentiated instructional opportunities rich with rigor and complexity, thus creating challenging opportunities for optimal student growth.

Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 2012-2013)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
$7390833.00	**$1155562.00**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**

Standard 1: The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice A
Articulates and disseminates clear, comprehensive, and equitable screening, referral, and identification processes for all grade levels to school personnel, parents/families, students, and the community-at-large.

This practice is a Focused Practice 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The AIG Program has screening, referral and identification procedures for all grade levels that are comprehensive and equitable. The program outlines K-12 identification procedures and the process for students who transfer into WCPSS. The program provides support in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged families, from culturally/linguistically diverse families, and for children with disabilities.

WCPSS AIG Program conducts comprehensive screening measures to recognize children with outstanding potential who may be gifted. All third grade students may participate in a district-wide aptitude screening, which can be used for referral to the AIG Program. Schools utilize both standardized testing data, when available, and informal classroom performance measures during screening. Due to the cognitive level of development in students, screening varies by grade level.

Goals:
To identify students in WCPSS who need nurturing, additional classroom differentiation, and/or differentiation beyond what is offered in the regular classroom. WCPSS will focus efforts to identify students from underrepresented populations throughout the district through a clear, equitable identification process. A variety of pathways for students to be formally identified in the AIG program will be created and implemented. WCPSS AIG Program staff will provide clear communication with stakeholders regarding the AIG identification process.

Description:
SCREENING
Screening involves the use of a combination of measures of potential and performance. General screening occurs in grades K-3. Students participate in differentiated activities that indicate the potential for gifted services as part of the screening process. Documentation from the screening process may result in a nomination to the School Based Committee for Gifted Education (SBCGE) for further consideration for gifted services. Parents are requested to complete a Parent Checklist as part of the informal indicators. The student's classroom teacher also completes a Teacher Checklist. All data collected will be used as part of the screening process. Classroom teachers and AIG teachers collect portfolio samples for referred students.

Screening for K-2
At least one of the following is used for screening:
- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) form to capture data. AIG teachers support instruction and collaborate with classroom teachers to identify and develop skills.

- Teacher anecdotal notes to document above level/extraordinary performance
- Teacher Checklist
- Parent Checklist
- School and district administered assessments
- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- mCLASS quarterly reading assessments

Screening for Grade 3

At least one of the following is used for screening:

- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- Teacher Checklist
- Parent Checklist
- Data collected from *Explorer's Program* (3rd grade nurturing only)
- District administered quarterly benchmark assessments in reading and math
- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT): Aptitude assessment administered to all third grade students; any third graders scoring at or above 85% on any subtest or composite score on the CogAT will be given the opportunity to take the Iowa Assessments
- Iowa Assessments (Iowa): Achievement assessment in reading and math
- mCLASS quarterly reading level

Screening for Grade 4-12

At least one of the following is used for screening:

- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- Teacher Checklist
- Parent Checklist
- District administered quarterly benchmark assessments in reading and math
- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- Prior years' EOG and/or EOC data, if available
- Nationally normed aptitude and achievement data, if available

NOMINATIONS

Nominations may be submitted for any K-12 student. Nominations must be submitted on the appropriate form. AIG nomination forms are available at every school, and nomination forms may also be downloaded from the AIG WCPSS website. Parents, teachers, or the students themselves may make nominations.

Nominations may be submitted to the AIG teacher and/or designated staff member at any time during the school year, however there are specific windows for testing if the SBCGE refers for evaluation. Testing windows are determined based upon the number of instructional days in the school calendar therefore, year round and traditional schools test at the same point in the instructional year. WCPSS administers aptitude and achievement tests only once in the fall and once in the spring.

AIG teachers post Nomination Window dates in multiple locations throughout each school. Other places this information may be posted include school websites and AIG newsletters. Stakeholders should inquire if testing windows are not clearly communicated at the school site.

The AIG teacher and/or designated staff member must receive all nomination forms at least one week prior to the testing window so that the SBCGE can meet to review the nominations to determine if a referral for further evaluation via the AIG program is warranted.

Nominations K-2:

At least three of the following is used by the SBCGE to nominate for a referral:

- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- Teacher anecdotal notes to document performance
- School and district administered assessments
- Above grade level classroom performance of student work evidenced in a portfolio
- mCLASS quarterly reading assessments (minimum level = Kindergarten/Level D; 1st Grade/Levels J-K; 2nd Grade/Levels M-N)

Nominations Grade 3

At least three of the following is used by the SBCGE to nominate for a referral:

- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- Teacher anecdotal notes to document performance
- School and district administered assessments
- Above grade level classroom performance of student work evidenced in a portfolio
- mCLASS quarterly reading assessments (minimum level = Levels P-Q)
- Standardized, comprehensive, grade level, end of year assessments

Nominations Grade 4-5

At least three of the following are used by the SBCGE for referral:

- Completed Nomination form by a teacher, parent, or student
- EOG score of 85% or above
- District administered quarterly benchmark assessment data (85% or above)
- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- Prior CogAT and Iowa Assessments for trends in data
- Patterns of significant growth or upward trajectories over time based on formal and informal data
- mCLASS quarterly reading assessments (minimum level = 4th Grade: Levels S-T; 5th Grade: Level U)
- Standardized, comprehensive, grade level, end of year assessments

Nomination Grades 6-8

At least three of the following instruments is used by the SBCGE :

- Completed Nomination form by a student, parent, or teacher
- EOG/EOC score of 85% or above
- District administered quarterly benchmark assessment data (85% or above)
- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- Prior CogAT and Iowa Assessments for trends in data
- Patterns of significant growth or upward trajectories over time based on formal and informal data
- Standardized, comprehensive, grade level, end of year assessments

Nominations Grades 9-12

At least three of the following instruments is used by the SBCGE:

- Completed Nomination form by student, parent, or teacher
- EOG/EOC score of 85% or above
- District administered quarterly benchmark assessments data (85% or above)

- Classroom performance and portfolios of student work
- Prior CogAT and Iowa Assessments for trends in data
- Patterns of significant growth or upward trajectories over time based on formal and informal data
- Standardized, comprehensive, grade level, end of year assessments

Referral for Grades K-12

The SBCGE reviews all nominations and makes a recommendation to refer or not to refer for evaluation. This decision is based upon a collection of student data. Standardized aptitude and achievement test scores remain current for one calendar year and these scores may be used for a referral decision. Additional testing may be needed as part of identification criteria. If a referred candidate requires testing, parents must complete and return a Consent for Evaluation form before any testing will be administered. Classroom teachers and AIG teachers collect portfolio samples for referred students. Parents will receive a copy of the WCPSS AIG Parent Guide, which summarizes the AIG identification process and AIG Program.

Identification for Grades K-12

The process for identification has been delineated within the table in Appendix A. Included here are brief synopses of identification procedures at particular grade configurations. See also Standard 1, Practice B for specific identification criteria.

K-2 Identification

The SBCGE may recommend students for early identification in AIG if the following criteria are met:

- Portfolio with required documents as specified in the Early Identification Checklist that demonstrates consistent performance above their grade peers

AND

- Aptitude score at or above 98% on approved nationally normed standardized assessments

AND

- Achievement score in reading and/or math at or above 98% on approved nationally normed standardized assessments.

3rd Grade Identification

All WCPSS third grade students are administered the CogAT. Students who score at or above the 85th percentile on either the Composite or any subtest score on the CogAT are eligible to take the Iowa Assessments. Students who have a score of 95th percentile, or higher, on a qualifying CogAT score OR Iowa Assessment score are referred to the SBCGE for determination of eligibility. Referrals are submitted to the SBCGE to approve, deny or gather additional data for use in identification decisions, which may include additional testing using individual aptitude or achievement assessments. See Standard 1, Practice B for additional AIG identification options.

4th-12th Grade Identification

Students referred for evaluation will participate in group aptitude and achievement assessments. Referrals are submitted to the SBCGE to approve, deny or gather additional data for use in identification decisions, which may include additional testing using individual aptitude or achievement assessments.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION TO STAKEHOLDERS

AIG Program Brochures and Parent Guide
AIG Central Services Team (AIG CST) will provide AIG brochures and AIG Parent Guides. These guides outline gifted screening, referral, and identification processes and procedures for school personnel, parents/families and students to communicate effectively with these stakeholders. The AIG Parent Guide is available for any interested parent. Parents automatically receive a copy of the AIG Parent Guide if SBCGE refers a student for evaluation. Parents of all third grade WCPSS students receive a copy of the AIG Program brochure, which summarizes AIG services. AIG CST will also post on the Wake County Schools website screening, nomination, referral, and identification information. In addition, AIG CST will compile a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for parents seeking information regarding the WCPSS AIG Program and disseminate to stakeholders.

AIG Transfer Process
Students who transfer from other states, North Carolina school districts or other WCPSS schools with no prior gifted (AIG) identification must be enrolled and actively attending a Wake County Public School before a nomination may be submitted. The AIG nomination/ referral procedures will then be followed. Students who transfer from other states or districts where they were identified as gifted (AIG) must meet Wake County's identification criteria in order to receive services within WCPSS. See Standard 1, Practice F for more information.

Planned Sources of Evidence
- AIG Program Brochure
- AIG Parent Guide
- AIG Identification Gateways
- School Workbooks
- FAQ's
- Parent Presentation agendas

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
AIG Central Services will monitor procedures and processes for compliance.

Standard 1: Student Identification
The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice B
Employs multiple criteria for student identification, including measures that reveal student aptitude, student achievement, or potential to achieve in order to develop a comprehensive profile for each student.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
Wake County Public Schools currently employs multiple criteria for student identification but needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that gifted behaviors are recognized in the identification process for a

more diverse student population. Multi-faceted evaluation procedures and Gateway options are needed to reveal student potential and giftedness in the WCPSS AIG Program, making this a focused practice. Clear communication to all stakeholders is needed to promote consistent and equitable screening, nomination, and referral of a variety of student populations, particularly those historically underrepresented.

Goals:
To reevaluate identification criteria and develop multiple gateways to AIG identification.

Description:
Wake County Public Schools employs multiple criteria for student identification. The criteria includes measures that reveal student aptitude, student achievement, or potential to achieve, work samples, portfolio data, parent and teacher checklists in order to develop a comprehensive profile for each student. Wake County Public Schools has utilized multiple criteria since Article 9B became legislation, however recognizes the need to expand opportunities for program access by underrepresented populations.

Current criteria reviewed during the identification process:

- **Observation** – The classroom teacher must fill out the observation checklist which targets gifted behaviors for a nominated candidate. Parents also must fill out an observation checklist.
- **Performance** – Classroom performance information includes current grades, benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics, literacy assessments, math assessments and portfolio samples of differentiated work. Parents may submit work samples which must be replicated in the classroom setting. Any other available anecdotal information may be included.
- **Student aptitude** – Aptitude refers to the percentile from a nationally normed standardized test. Student aptitude scores are analyzed based on significant differences among subtest scores to determine if the Composite score or the subtest scores (Verbal, Quantitative, and Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite) better reflect the student's aptitude. The Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite (QN Partial Composite) better predicts achievement in mathematics and some technical domains than either the Quantitative Battery or Nonverbal Battery alone. It also allows for meaningful score interpretation for English Language Learners (ELL) and underrepresented populations since none of the items on either the Quantitative or Nonverbal tests require language. Based on this analysis, the score best representing the student's aptitude is used for placement consideration. Individual aptitude assessments are administered when the group achievement scores suggest a need for placement but group aptitude scores do not. Therefore,a second measure of aptitude is obtained. Specific individual aptitude measures can be chosen (verbal/nonverbal) based upon the strengths of the referred student.
- **Student achievement** – Achievement refers to subject area tests' percentiles for a nationally normed standardized test. Individual achievement assessments are administered when group aptitude scores used for placement consideration suggest a need for placement, but the group achievement score does not. A second measure of achievement is obtained.
- **AIG Gateways** – WCPSS's AIG Program outlines multiple Gateways for identification into the AIG Program. See also Appendix B for AIG Gateways Table and Appendix C for AIG Gateway Flowchart .

Gateway #1

- Students scoring $\geq$ 95% on both a qualifying CogAT score **AND** Iowa total reading and/or total math score are eligible for AIG identification in the area(s) in which the scores align.

Gateway #2

- Students scoring ≥95% on qualifying CogAT score with Iowa reading and/or math < 95% :
    - The Woodcock Johnson III will be administered in reading and/or math. The achievement areas administered are determined by the qualifying CogAT score. The subtests chosen are culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through the referral and assessment.
- Students scoring ≥ 95% on WJIII paired with the qualifying CogAT are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.
- Students scoring <95% on qualifying CogAT score with Iowa reading and/or math ≥95% :
    - Either the Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (RIST) or the Raven Standard Progressive Matrices will be administered. The test chosen is culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through the referral and assessment.
    - Students scoring ≥ 95% on the individual aptitude score paired with the qualifying Iowa score(s) are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.

Gateway #3

- Students scoring ≥ 98% on either a CogAT partial composite or a CogAT composite score are identified in reading and mathematics.

OR

- Students scoring ≥ 98% on Iowa total reading and/or math score *AND* a score of ≥ 98% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with qualifying Iowa scores are eligible for AIG identification in the area(s) in which the scores align.

Gateway #4

- Students scoring ≥ 95% on a qualifying CogAT score, but <95% on the Iowa assessment and the individual achievement assessment from Gateway 2:
    - With ≥95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with the qualifying CogAT score

AND

    - A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS scales (Intellectual, Academic, Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation)
    - Students meeting the above criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.

- Students scoring ≥ 95% on the Iowa Assessment in reading and/or math, and <95% on a qualifying CogAT score and the individual aptitude assessment from Gateway 2:
    - With ≥95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with the qualifying Iowa score(s)

AND

    - A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS Scales (Intellectual, Academic, Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation)
    - Students meeting the above criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.

Gateway #5

- Gateway #5 is a referral made by the SBCGE for an individual psychological evaluation to be completed by the AIG psychologist. This evaluation may include individual aptitude and/or achievement assessments.
- This gateway can be accessed when portfolio data demonstrates consistent performance 1-2 grade levels above student's current grade placement who do not meet identification criteria in Gateways #1, #2, #3, or #4.
- There are circumstances under which Gateway #5 can be accessed for any student when the SBCGE determines an individual assessment is appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to:
    - Students needing individual nonverbal aptitude testing
    - Students for whom group testing is not appropriate because of diagnosed medical problems
    - Students whose group scores do not reflect the student's performance in the class (all scores <95%)
    - Students with IEP's or 504 Plans
    - Students scoring ≥95% on individual cognitive ability assessment and on achievement in reading and/or math are identified.
    - Students scoring ≥95% on the individual aptitude, but below 95% on the individual achievement can access Gateway #4.
    - Students scoring ≥95% on the individual achievement, but below 95% on the individual aptitude, can access Gateway #4.

The School Based Committee for Gifted Education examines multiple criteria, formal indicators (aptitude and achievement scores) and informal indicators (performance, portfolio work samples, teacher checklists and parent checklists) throughout the identification process.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Appendix A
- Appendix B
- Appendix C
- Individual Student Profiles (ISP's) for identified and students nominated, referred, but not identified
- Services for Academically Gifted Education (SAGE) data base
- Lists of Approved Tests for AIG Identification
- Completed *Gifted Rating Scales*
- School Based Committee for Gifted Education Meeting Minutes
- AIG Central Services decision forms
- Student AIG folders with identification documentation

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

WCPSS AIG Program will continue to evaluate the identification process.

Standard 1: Student Identification

The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice C
Administers both non-traditional and traditional standardized measures that are based on current theory and research.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Wake County Public Schools administers both traditional and non-traditional standardized measures based on current theory and research. Valid and reliable assessment instruments are used to identify students for AIG Program services. Both group and individual measures are utilized.

Goals:
To utilize student data from a variety of sources to make the most appropriate program placement decision for each student.

Description:
Wake County Public Schools currently utilizes the following traditional and non-traditional measures to make appropriate placement decisions:

Traditional Measures
Group aptitude assessments are administered to all third graders in order to conduct a broad general screening. Group assessments are also administered to all referred students in grades 4-12.

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Iowa Assessment (Iowa)

Non-Traditional Measures
Individualized assessments administered by trained AIG Teachers. AIG teachers are trained to administer the following non-traditional assessments to referred students who have a qualifying score in one area (either aptitude or achievement) but do not have a qualifying score in the other area. Administration of an individual assessment not only gives the student another opportunity to perform on a standardized test, but the format of the testing changes from a timed group test to an untimed assessment with an individual examiner who can observe student testing behaviors.

- Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (RIST)
- Raven Standard Progressive Matrices
- Raven Advanced Progressive Matrices
- Woodcock Johnson III Normative Update, Tests of Achievements (WJIII NU)

The psychologist for the AIG Program receives referrals for individual assessments. All K-2 referrals are evaluated by the AIG psychologist as well as referred students who have unexplained, inconsistent test/performance data, ESL/ELL students who need non-verbal assessments, special education students needing specialized individual assessments, etc. The following assessment instruments are available for use by the AIG psychologist:

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition: WISC-IV
- Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (WNV)
- Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Fourth Edition: SB: IV
- Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS)
- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test (UNIT)

- Woodcock Johnson III Normative Update, Tests of Achievement (WJ III NU)
- Kaufman Tests of Educational Achievement, Second Edition (KTEA-II)
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test–II (WIAT-II)

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Individual Student Profile (ISP) documenting assessments
- List of administered assessments
- Student AIG folder
- Testing Calendars
- AIG teacher test training agenda and materials
- Psychological referral logs kept by the AIG psychologist

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to evaluate assessments and stay abreast of current research regarding updates, re-norming, and best practices for assessments for use in gifted identification.

Standard 1: Student Identification
The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice D
Initiates screening, referral, and identification procedures that respond to traditionally underrepresented populations of the gifted and are responsive to LEA demographics. These populations include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
WCPSS has strong measures in place that appropriately screen and identify a majority of gifted students. Most gifted and highly gifted students are easily identified through the use of traditional aptitude and achievement tests coupled with various qualitative measures. We recognize that academically and intellectually gifted students come from all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups and that they are gifted in a wide range of academic and/or intellectual abilities. The process used to identify students in need of gifted services must be ongoing, reliant on multiple measures, free of bias, and non-exclusionary.

The Wake County Public School System is committed to identifying the academic needs of high-functioning and high-potential students from all populations. The AIG Program seeks ways to identify and implement programming and specific nurturing initiatives to improve the representation, participation, and performance of underrepresented populations. However, WCPSS recognizes a disproportionate representation of various subgroups within the gifted population in relationship to the general student

population. Multiple Gateways are used for AIG identification employ several evaluation options, which are culturally responsive and break down barriers for underrepresented populations.

WCPSS AIG Department recognizes that there are many factors that impede participation in advanced programs for low income, high-ability students. Over the next three years, we will work to remove these barriers by training educators, changing identification methods and program designs, and fostering the development of gifted behaviors in all students.

In an effort to support the identification of traditionally underrepresented populations, the gifted program has initiated several programs and trainings, including USTARS~ PLUS, training and resource materials for Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program, and training and resources from Edward Zaccaro.

Goals:

- WCPSS will continue to utilize CogAT and Iowa Assessments to screen third grade students. School personnel will study disaggregated data for potential nominations.
- WCPSS will continue to use multiple criteria to identify and nurture high potential among students across all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups.
- WCPSS will utilize multiple Gateways for AIG identification with underrepresented populations.
- WCPSS will continue to use the Third Grade Explorers Model to provide opportunities for all third grade students exhibiting gifted behaviors and to nurture those behaviors among students across all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups.
- WCPSS AIG Program currently uses multiple measures that aid in the identification of students whose gifts may not be as easily recognized through the use of traditional screening instruments.
- In Grade 3 the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is administered to the entire grade level. This gives all students equal opportunity to demonstrate their thinking and reasoning abilities. WCPSS uses the CogAT profile analysis to identify the most appropriate subtest or composite scores to identify a student's strengths.
- The CogAT Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite (QN Partial Composite) better predicts achievement in mathematics and some technical domains than either the Quantitative Battery or Nonverbal Battery alone. It also allows for meaningful score interpretation for English Language Learners (ELL) and underrepresented populations since none of the items on either the Quantitative or Nonverbal tests require language.
- Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students-Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students (U-STARS~PLUS), a nationally recognized K-3 science-based observation and nurturing system, is available for use for AIG teachers and classroom teachers to uncover and grow gifted potential.
- Use of the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) to identify behaviors, including both "teacher pleasing" and "non-teacher pleasing" behaviors that may impede the recognition of students' potential.
- Contingent upon available funds, WCPSS will implement the Young Scholars: Model for Success over the next three years to nurture, guide and support advance academic performance among high performing students from culturally, linguistically, ethnically diverse populations.
- Contingent upon available funds, WCPSS will implement *Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children*. This training provides tools to understand thinking patterns and how learning actually happens. It empowers teachers to structure learning in the most meaningful way, helping students explore new paths to knowledge. Staff development opportunities will be open to AIG teachers and classroom teachers.

- Gifted Rating Scale (GRS) provides scores based on nationally stratified age-based norm groups, allowing the user to compare children's scores to a represented U.S. sample of same aged students in the areas of intellectual ability, academic ability, creativity, leadership ability, and motivation. The GRS is used to identify gifted behaviors for students in Gateway #4.
- Contingent upon available funds, the GRS may be used to document gifted behaviors of students in need of the WCPSS K-2 nurturing program.

Description:

The AIG Program uses individual assessment instruments (standardized tests) for referral and identification of students including those from underrepresented populations which may include non-verbal intelligence tests. Professional personnel are available to provide assessments in the language in which the student is most fluent. Individual aptitude and achievement assessments are administered to identify high-potential students from special populations. Circumstances under which individually administered tests are appropriate may include:

- The student has a documented medical condition or disability that may interfere with his/her ability to perform optimally in a group situation (i.e. ADD, ADHD, chronic asthma, etc.)
- The student has cultural differences, which may interfere with language usage (i.e. LEP, ESL, etc.).
- The student is from a culturally, linguistically, and/or ethnically diverse background.
- The existing group data (current within twelve months) on the student does not provide sufficient information to make the decision about the need for services.
- Student performance is higher than standardized scores indicate
- Gateways for Identification of Students including those from underrepresented populations:

Gateway #3

- Students scoring ≥ 98% on either a CogAT partial composite or a CogAT composite score are identified in reading and mathematics.

  OR
- Students scoring ≥ 98% on Iowa total reading and/or math score *AND* a score of ≥ 98% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with qualifying Iowa scores. Students are eligible for AIG identification in the area(s) in which the score align.

Gateway #4

- Students scoring ≥ 95% on a qualifying CogAT score, but <95% on the Iowa assessment and the individual achievement assessment from Gateway 2:
  - With ≥95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with the qualifying CogAT score

    AND
  - A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS scales (Intellectual, Academic, Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation)
  - Students meeting the above criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.

- Students scoring ≥ 95% on the Iowa Assessment in reading and/or math, and <95% on a qualifying CogAT score and the individual aptitude assessment from Gateway 2:
  - With ≥95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year, which align with the qualifying Iowa score(s)

AND

- A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS Scales (Intellectual, Academic, Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation)
- Students meeting the above criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.

Gateway #5

- Gateway #5 is a referral made by the SBCGE for an individual psychological evaluation to be completed by the AIG psychologist. This evaluation may include individual aptitude and/or achievement assessments.
- This gateway can be accessed when portfolio data demonstrates consistent performance 1-2 grade levels above student's current grade placement who do not meet identification criteria in Gateways #1, #2, #3, or #4.
- There are circumstances under which Gateway #5 can be accessed for any student when the SBCGE determines an individual assessment is appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to:
    - Students needing individual nonverbal aptitude testing
    - Students for whom group testing is not appropriate because of diagnosed medical problems
    - Students whose group scores do not reflect the student's performance in the class (all scores <95%)
    - Students with IEP's or 504 Plans

In addition to the Gateway options, the SBCGE is responsible for verifying that:

- Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be provided with appropriate accommodations and modifications as directed by the IEP, in accordance with Programs for Exceptional Children
- Students with a 504 Plan are tested as directed by the 504 Plan with appropriate accommodations and modifications in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The SBCGE and the IEP team meet to determine appropriate services for the twice exceptional student. Twice exceptional students are identified as academically or intellectually gifted and also meet criteria for exceptional children services such as autism, learning disabled, visually impaired and other health impaired (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, etc).

The SBCGE, school personnel, AIG Teachers, and AIG CST collaborate to determine the most appropriate services for highly gifted students. Individualized plans, which vary from other identified program services may be created for these very few students.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Data regarding formally identified students from underrepresented populations
- Individual Student Profiles (ISP)
- Data from Third Grade Explorers Program
- Nonverbal and alternative assessment measures
- IDEP identifications
- Professional development agendas and rosters
- Observation data from USTARS~ PLUS and P.E.T.S.
- Contingent upon funding, data from Young Scholars and Thinking at Every Desk

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening: Continue to research and implement best practices for gifted program identification, etc.

Standard 1: Student Identification

The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice E

Ensures consistency in implementation of screening, referral, and identification processes within the LEA.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Wake County Public Schools ensures consistency in implementation of screening, referral, and identification processes within the LEA with the AIG Central Services Team and the Record Review procedures to make identification and placement decisions for all students referred by the individual schools. The program supports the use of group assessments for all third grade students, and uses this information to provide information for various programs. AIG teachers at each school receive training and oversee the School Based Committee for Gifted Education nomination, referral and identification processes.

Goals:

Continual evaluation of screening, referral, and identification processes within the LEA to maximize potential and growth for all students.

Description:

- Students are screened across all schools based on student performance and characteristics of gifted learners.
- All referrals are reviewed by the SBCGE to ensure consistency of the referral and identification process. If a student is referred to the SBCGE, the committee reviews all standardized test data and performance data to determine the student's eligibility for program service options in reading and/or mathematics.
- All SBCGE identification decisions are reviewed by the AIG CST during Record Review in collaboration with the AIG Teacher at the school. This process ensures consistency and equity across the district with AIG identification criteria.
- The Services for Academically Intellectually Gifted Education (SAGE) software application developed for Wake County Public Schools AIG Program provides a consistent structure for organizing and reporting identification data. This tool allows direct data entry by AIG teachers, and import of CogAT and Iowa Assessment test data.
- Identification Procedures are documented and communicated in AIG Program Plan.
- AIG Teacher training in test administration and interpretation is provided by AIG psychologist.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Individual Student Profiles
- Parent presentations
- SAGE website data
- AIG website
- Fall, Spring, and 3rd Grade Record Review Schedule

- eSchools courses
- SBCGE minutes and notes

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Contingent upon funding, the AIG Program will hire an AIG Data Manager or AIG Processing Technician to assist in compilation and analysis of data.

Standard 1: Student Identification
The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice F
Establishes written policies that safeguard the rights of AIG students and their parents/families, including informed consent regarding identification and placement, reassessment procedures, transfers from other LEAs, and procedures for resolving disagreements.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
In accordance with state law, the Wake County Public School System has developed a procedure for resolving disagreements between parents and the school system when a child is not identified as an AIG student or concerning the appropriateness of services offered to the AIG student. These procedures relate to the processes of student nomination, referral, evaluation, identification, and the availability of approved service options.

Goals:
To provide a procedure for resolving disagreements that is clearly communicated to stakeholders.

Description:
Parents have an opportunity to provide input about their child's specific needs, and they are informed of the recommendations made by the SBCGE. There are several stages during the decision-making process in which parent permission is obtained and documentation is provided for parent review. At each stage parents are informed about the recommendations for the student's need for differentiated educational services:

- If the student is NOMINATED, but NOT REFERRED for further evaluation, the following documents serve to inform the parent of this decision:
    1. AIG Parent Guide
    2. Nomination Results, Notice to Parents
    3. Individual Student Profile (ISP) copy

- If the student is REFERRED for evaluation, but NOT IDENTIFIED as needing differentiated services, then the following documents serve to inform the parent of this decision:
    1. AIG Parent Guide
    2. Prior Notice and Parent Consent for Evaluation
    3. Individual Student Profile (ISP) copy
    4. Nomination Results, Notice to Parents

- If the student is IDENTIFIED for differentiated services and a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) is recommended, then the following documents serve to inform the parent of this decision:
  1. AIG Parent Guide
  2. Prior Notice and Parent Consent for Evaluation
  3. Individual Student Profile (ISP) copy
  4. Prior Notice and Initial Consent for Services
  5. Once identified, students service plan will be outlined in the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) and/or Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP)

Procedures to Resolve Disagreements Regarding AIG Decisions

Parents have the right to disagree with the recommendations made at any of the following stages: Nomination, Referral, and/or Identification. The following procedures for resolution of such disagreements have been established in Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the NC General Statutes and by Wake County Public School System Board Policy 6520 on student grievances.

1. The parent may make a written request for a conference with the School Based Committee for Gifted Education (SBCGE) to discuss concerns about the recommendation for identification or services.
   At a School Based Committee for Gifted Education meeting:
   a. Parents may provide additional documentation for consideration by the SBCGE.
   b. The SBCGE will share documentation used to support the committee decision and review additional documentation.

2. If the disagreement is not resolved at the SBCGE conference, then the parent may make a written request within thirty days for a conference with the principal. The principal will:
   a. Review the recommendation with the SBCGE chairperson.
   b. Grant the conference within five school days of the request.
   c. State their position in writing within five school days of the conference.

3. If the grievance is not resolved through the conference with the principal, the parent may appeal in writing to the AIG Program Director. The AIG Program Director will:
   a. Review all documentation concerning the unresolved issue.
   b. Review the grievance within five days of the appeal.
   c. Respond in writing within ten days following the review.

4. If the grievance is not resolved through the conference with the AIG Program Director, the parent may appeal in writing to the Senior Director of APS. The Senior Director of APS. will:
   d. Review all documentation concerning the unresolved issue.
   e. Review the grievance within five days of the appeal.
   f. Respond in writing within ten days following the review.

5. If the grievance is not resolved through the conference with the AIG Program Director, then the parent may appeal in writing to the Area Superintendent. The Area Superintendent will:
   a. Review all documentation concerning the unresolved issue.
   b. Review the grievance within five days of the appeal.
   c. Inform the Deputy Superintendent for School Performance of the grievance.

d. Respond in writing within ten days following the review.

6. If the grievance is not resolved through the conference with the Area Superintendent, the parent may appeal in writing to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will:
   a. Review all documentation concerning the unresolved issue.
   b. Review the grievance within five days of the appeal.
   c. Respond in writing within ten days following the review.

7. If the grievance is not resolved through the review of the Superintendent, then the parent may appeal in writing to the Wake County Public School System Board of Education within ten school days following the written response from the Superintendent. The Board of Education will:
   a. Review all documentation concerning the unresolved issue within ten days.
   b. Offer a final written decision within thirty days after review.

8. In the event that the grievance procedure fails to resolve the disagreement the parent may file a petition for a contested case hearing (Article 3 Chapter 150B of the General Statutes). The purpose of the review is to determine if:
   - The school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the student as an academically/intellectually gifted student, or
   - The plan has been implemented inappropriately with regard to the student.

Following the hearing the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusion of law. Notwithstanding the provision of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

AIG Transfer Process

Students who transfer from other districts or schools with no prior gifted (AIG) identification must be enrolled and actively attending a Wake County Public School before the student may be nominated. The AIG nomination/ referral procedures will then be followed.

Students who transfer from other districts where they were identified as gifted (AIG) must meet Wake County's identification criteria.

- The Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Program in Wake County identifies students in reading/language arts and/or mathematics.
- Identification in another school system does not transfer as automatic identification in WCPSS.
- Transfer students who have been previously identified and served in gifted programs in other districts are guaranteed a referral to the AIG Program in Wake County.
- The identification criteria must include both aptitude and achievement test scores and meet the identification criteria as stated in Gateway 1 or 2.
- The scores used for identifying a transfer student in grades 3-12, must have been obtained during or after the student's third grade year.

- Students with scores meeting WCPSS identification criteria, but prior to the student's third grade year, will receive temporary AIG services until current evaluation data can be obtained. Students must meet WCPSS AIG identification criteria on current evaluation data to continue AIG services.
- The scores used for identification must have been obtained within 12 months of each other.

Once a student is enrolled and attending a Wake County School, the School Based Committee for Gifted Education (SBCGE) will meet to review with all available records to determine if there is enough data to make an AIG identification decision. This meeting should be held within 10 school days. If the data documenting previous AIG services is present and meets WCPSS AIG Identification criteria, a recommendation for services can be made. Performance data, Parent and Teacher Checklists, do not need to be collected for these students.

Temporary AIG placement occurs when:

- **All prior AIG identification tests and scores from the previous district meet the WCPSS AIG identification criteria.**
    - Students with scores meeting WCPSS identification criteria, but prior to the student's third grade year, will receive temporary AIG services until current evaluation data can be obtained. Students must meet WCPSS AIG identification criteria on current evaluation data to continue AIG services.

AIG Placement for Transfer students does not occur when:

- **Prior AIG identification data does not meet WCPSS AIG identification criteria.**
    - Students who transfer into WCPSS with no qualifying aptitude or achievement scores will not receive AIG services.
    - These students will be referred for evaluation during the next testing window. Differentiated services will be provided in the regular education classroom by the classroom teacher, while formal and informal data can be gathered.

Reevaluation Procedures

- Students identified prior to their third grade year, will need to be reevaluated.
    - All K-3 AIG identified students will take the CogAT and Iowa Assessment during their third grade year. This will serve as their reevaluation for AIG services.
    - Students who do NOT meet the identification criteria will exit the AIG program. They will not continue to be served in the AIG Program.
    - Students meeting third grade AIG identification criteria will continue to receive AIG services. The student's IDEP will be transitioned to a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). Their service delivery will be outlined in the DEP for grades 4-12.

- Middle School reevaluation will occur if requested by SBCGE. This may occur when:
    - Student performance indicates no need for service at the Annual Performance Review.
    - Student performance indicates a need to gather data for education planning in consideration for whole grade advancement.

Exiting Procedures from AIG Program at SBCGE request:

1. Parent conference to review student performance data and concerns
2. Instructional Support Plan is written in collaboration with all SBCGE members, including parents.
3. The Instructional Support Plan is implemented for one full semester.
4. SBCGE documents student performance and results of implemented strategies. The SBCGE will recommend one of the following:
    - Continuation of AIG Services

- AIG services no longer needed
- Temporary inactive status
- Student continues to receive AIG services and during reevaluation process
- Following the reevaluation , the SBCGE determines need for differentiated services through the AIG program.

Exiting Procedures from AIG Program at parent request:
A parent may request in writing for a student exit from the AIG Program without a reevaluation. The SBCGE will meet with the parents to discuss request.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Parent Guide
- AIG Program Brochure
- AIG Plan
- Consent for Evaluation form
- Consent for Service form
- Instructional Support Plan
- Individual Differentiated Education Plan
- Differentiated Education Plan
- SBCGE minutes
- Temporary Placement form

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening
The AIG Department will continue to evaluate procedures to resolve dispute, as well as the transfer policy.

Standard 1: Student Identification
The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

Practice G
Maintains documentation that explains the identification process and service options for individual AIG students, which is reviewed annually with parents/families.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale: Although the identification process and service options are documented and shared with parents each year, more thorough clarification is needed according to feedback collected during our evaluation. Additionally, some identification procedures have been clarified and documents will need to be updated.

Goals:
Update with new guidelines and publish:
- AIG Parent Guide and AIG Parent Brochure

- ISP Explanation Document
- AIG Service Delivery Plan for school
- AIG Program Parent Presentation and Explorers Power Points
- AIG Information Webpage
- DEP

Description:
Communication is essential for most appropriate services for students. Key stakeholders should participate in decisions for students which will be documented on appropriate forms. Clear, consistent communication is necessary to keep parents and school staff informed of AIG identification process, criteria, and program procedures. A larger variety of ways to communicate paired with consistency in dissemination of information will build capacity of stakeholder groups.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
ALL revised documents and Web Pages for WCPSS AIG Program
- AIG Parent Guide and AIG Program Brochure
- AIG Identification Gateway Chart
- Individual Student Profile (ISP) Explanation
- AIG Service Delivery Plan for schools
- Presentations: AIG Program Parent Presentation and Explorers Power Points
- AIG Information Web Page
- DEP

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to re-evaluate identification process and improve communication regarding the identification process.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice A
Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS) to address a range of advanced ability levels in language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as appropriate through the use of differentiation strategies, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Differentiated curricula and instructional practices outlined in this plan align with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Pre-K through Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards, North Carolina AIG Program Standards adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education, and the goals of the Wake County Academics Division and the Wake County Strategic Plan.

Services for Academically or Intellectually Gifted students in WCPSS, as determined by their learning characteristics and areas of giftedness, include differentiated curricula and instructional opportunities directed toward the unique needs of the gifted learner. These services enrich and extend the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and span grades K-12 in Language Arts and Mathematics through real world applications. Students may access above grade-level curricula through content-based or grade-based accelerative practices as outlined in WCPSS BOE Policy 5532.

At the middle school level, WCPSS compacts mathematics classes to allow students to progress more rapidly through the Common Core Curriculum. Students can complete three years of mathematics content in a two year span during the regular instructional calendar.

Goals:
The AIG program will continue to seek ways to address students' individual needs through a variety of service options.

Description:
The AIG Program supports the development and implementation of differentiated curricula and instruction based on a synthesis of nationally research-based models and theories. Students receive differentiated curricula and instruction that is greater in depth and complexity. Service delivery options for gifted learners create challenging opportunities for optimal student growth. AIG resources are embedded in WCPSS's Curriculum Management Application (C-MAPP) allowing all teachers opportunities to enrich and extend the Common Core Curriculum.

AIG teachers and regular education teachers develop and implement high-quality, comprehensive curricula which include the components of in-depth content, assessments, grouping strategies, teaching activities, learning activities, products, resources, extensions, and differentiation. Differentiated curricula and instruction align with Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) or Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs).

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- School AIG Plan
- Differentiated Education Plans
- ISPs
- Student Work Samples
- Curriculum Management Application (C-MAPP)
- DPI AIG Wiki
- WCPSS AIG PB Works Curriculum Bank
- Teacher Toolbox for Planning Rigorous Instruction
- AIG teacher Curriculum Bank
- Additional Enrichment Units for AIG Teachers to utilize in grades 3-8 for Language Arts and 3-5 for Mathematics aligned with the Common Core Curriculum
- Develop Enrichment Units for AIG Teachers to utilize in math at the middle school level aligned with the Common Core Curriculum
- Magnet School AIG School Plan identified service delivery method

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
The WCPSS AIG Program will expand our AIG Curriculum Bank to include enrichment units for AIG Teachers to utilize at the middle school level aligned with the Common Core Curriculum.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice B
Employ diverse and effective instructional practices according to students' identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles, to address a range of leaning needs at all grade levels.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
An AIG identified student may require curriculum modifications to adjust levels of learning so that they are challenged and/or enriched beyond the rigor of the Common Core. Therefore, students are placed into appropriate learning environments that match their needs and align with the School AIG Plan. The AIG program provides a wide variety of services for AIG identified students that address and support instructional practices for advanced learning. These practices are intended to incorporate a variety of strategies for providing depth, complexity, sophistication, abstraction, and problem-based learning. In addition, WCPSS AIG Program will nurture potential among non-traditionally non-identified students to enrich and develop their natural gifted tendencies. See Appendix D.

The Co-Teaching and Collaborative Consultation model, commonly referred to as push-in, provides benefits to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Two teachers in a classroom improve the teacher-to-student ratio. Additionally, both co-teaching and consultation offer opportunities for diversifying classroom instruction and methodology. The model has been adopted for diverse populations including at-risk students, gifted and talented students, and English language learners. The best approach to implementing this model is to use a continuum of services depending on the needs of student populations, teacher skills in co-teaching and instructional strategies, and other influencing factors such as, but not limited to, social and emotional needs of the students. In this fluid and flexible process, each student receives instruction in the regular classroom to address his or her unique learning needs. Some gifted students may need to participate in enrichment and extension activities outside of the regular education classroom, commonly referred to as pull-out, to meet their individual needs.

Goals:
The AIG teacher will increase the amount of co-teaching and collaboration within the classroom to address ability levels of students through differentiated curriculum and strategies. The AIG teacher will utilize and share a variety of evidence-based practices that are used with gifted learners and facilitate learning based on a student's identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The majority of instruction for gifted services will be provided via the push-in model.

Description:
The AIG Teacher collaborates with regular education teachers to provide differentiated curriculum and instruction for AIG students in the regular education classroom through a push-in. The Elementary AIG teacher provides direct services to students in grades four and five who have been identified through the AIG identification process. The Middle School AIG Teacher will provide direct services to students in grades six through eight who have been identified through the AIG identification process. The majority of instructional time AIG Teachers will push into classrooms to meet individual student needs (Co-Teaching and Collaboration Model). AIG Teacher schedules must be flexible and fluid to retain the ability to modify his/her schedule for serving students as well as to ensure that the AIG responsibilities are also completed with fidelity.

Nurturing Programs
Contingent upon funding, the AIG Program Staff will implement programs such as the Young Scholars Program and *Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Classroom* that develop and nurture potential among non-traditionally served students. Program personnel plan to strengthen the implementation of these programs at each school through staff development opportunities for teachers throughout WCPSS. This training will include the rationale for using these programs, strategies for implementation as well as advanced opportunities for non-traditionally served students. Once implemented, WCPSS will monitor the effectiveness of these programs by collecting data.

Current nurturing services offered by Wake County Schools are as follows:
Grades K-2
- Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.)
- Kids Into Thinking (KITS)
- USTARS-Plus
- Flexible grouping opportunities for students demonstrating potential in reading and/or math
- RtI Tiers

Nurturing Programs to be implemented by WCPSS AIG Program contingent upon funding:
- Young Scholars Model Program
- *Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Classroom*

Over the next three years WCPSS will implement the Young Scholars Model to promote the nurturing of continuous academic growth in schools considered to be high impact schools. High impact schools are defined as schools with the number of identified gifted students below the national average of 6%.

The first goal of this model is to identify giftedness in children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as early as possible. Their classroom teachers in collaboration with the AIG Teacher assigned to each school identifies the Young Scholars. Through systematic observations of all students, anecdotal records, and a careful review of portfolios of student work, classroom teachers in Kindergarten through grade two, identify and nurture students who have gifted potential, (i.e., an ability to think, reason, and problem solve at a level that is advanced in comparison to their peers). Historically, these students have lacked access to gifted services, advocates for their high potential, and affirmation of their advanced abilities.

The second goal of the Young Scholars Model is to nurture, guide, and support the development of the Young Scholars' exceptional potential. Once identified, Young Scholars receive challenging curriculum and instruction in a supportive and stimulating educational setting that is responsive to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. The teachers in the Young Scholars schools collaborate, plan, and design

learning experiences that connect to the students' diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Basic skills are strengthened through lessons that require students to think and apply knowledge on a higher, more complex level.
WCPSS will implement *Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children*. This training provides tools to understand thinking patterns and how learning actually happens. It empowers teachers to structure learning in the most meaningful way, helping students explore new paths to knowledge. Staff development opportunities will be open to AIG teachers and classroom teachers.

Current Services and Curriculum Options for Grades 3-5:

- Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.) (Grade 3)
- The Third Grade Explorers Model provides opportunities for students to demonstrate gifted behaviors.
- Jacob's Ladder Higher Level Thinking and Comprehension Skills Program Level 1-3 (Grades 2-6)
- Cluster grouping for students who demonstrate high potential based upon benchmark assessments, classroom performance, etc.
- In-Class/Across Class flexible grouping (student movement based upon current data to encourage development of potential)
- Professional development provided for AIG and other teachers to support the learning characteristics and gifted behaviors of students from underrepresented populations
- Use of Gifted Rating Scales for additional evidence for underrepresented populations via Gateway #4
- AIG Teachers mainly employ the Co-Teaching and Collaboration model for direct service delivery
- WCPSS AIG Program disseminates information to parents of identified AIG students to inform them of outside opportunities for enrichment.

The Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) outlines the service available and how the student's individual needs will be met based on area of identification. Elementary student DEPs are developed at the beginning of each academic year. Students identified in grade K-3 will have an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). The AIG teacher in collaboration with regular education teachers develops both types of plans. The DEP and IDEP are reviewed, and amended, as needed during the academic year.

Current Services and Curriculum Options for Grades 6-8

- Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program Level 4 & 5 (Grades 7-9)
- Edward Zaccaro Math Resource Books to supplement instruction and encourage open-ended problem solving, providing math student with a tool belt of problem solving strategies
- AIG Teachers pull-out students and/or push-in to the classroom for direct service delivery
- In-class/Across-class flexible grouping
- Course selection options
- Single Subject Acceleration
- Curriculum Compacting
- Differentiated Instructional Units/Centers in order to link between content and real world applications in core curriculum to extend the NC Standard Course of Study
- Individualized assignments are offered to meet individual and cultural learning needs to demonstrate gifted behaviors
- Instructional units/centers, resource classes offered by the AIG teacher for AIG identified students, team teaching and/or Co-Teaching and Collaboration between AIG teachers and the regular classroom teachers, and school-based enrichment.
- NC Virtual Public School course options

- WCPSS AIG Program disseminates information to parents of identified AIG students to inform them of outside opportunities for enrichment.

The Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) outlines the service available and how the student's individual needs will be met based on area of identification. Middle school student DEPs are developed at the beginning of each academic year. The AIG teacher in collaboration with regular education teachers develops both types of plans. The DEP is reviewed, and amended, as needed during the academic year.

Current Services and Curriculum Options for Grades 9-12

- Students self-select courses based upon interests, strengths, needs
- Honors and AP courses
- IB courses, if available
- NC Virtual Public School
- Early College Entry/Dual Enrollment
- Early Graduation

The Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) for high school students indicates areas of service for students in grades nine through twelve. A copy of the high school DEP is provided to parents of identified students at the end of the eighth grade academic year.

Descriptions of Current Service Delivery Options

A variety of differentiated instructional strategies and methods are utilized within program options to offer modifications that develop high levels of thinking and accommodate individual interests, achievement levels, and learning styles.

Cluster Grouping for Instruction

Elementary and middle school principals, in consultation with the SBCGE, elementary teachers and middle school teams, assign AIG students to regular education classrooms in clusters for the majority of gifted education services. Students are assigned to clusters based on similar needs. Students are placed in cluster groups based on their identification in language arts and/or mathematics. Differentiated curriculum and instruction is provided in the clusters to AIG students. The classroom teachers and the AIG teacher will work together to align appropriate instruction for AIG students. Cluster grouping is an instructional strategy that is documented on individual AIG Service Delivery Plans and on Differentiated Education Plans (DEP) for identified students.

In elementary and middle schools, the AIG Teachers provide direct services to students through the implementation of the Co-Teaching and Collaboration Model. AIG teachers will devote the majority of instructional time within the classroom (push-in). Some elementary students may need additional direct services outside the regular classroom (pullout). AIG teachers meet regularly with classroom teachers to collaborate and to plan for differentiated curricula to meet the needs of identified students.

Flexible Grouping for Instruction

Flexible grouping is an instructional strategy that is documented on each school's Academically or Intellectually Gifted Service Delivery Plan and on Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) for identified students. Grouping is used to facilitate appropriate instruction. Flexible groups allow for modification of curricula and instruction according to common ability, readiness levels,

learning styles, and/or interest of students. Identified students will have opportunities to be grouped flexibly without being separated from the rest of their classmates. This may include flexible in-class or across-class groupings for differentiated activities or units. Students may be pre-assessed to form groups based upon common and specific needs in specific curricular areas. Groups are formed, as needed, to assist differentiated curricula and instruction. Teachers meet regularly with the AIG Teacher to plan for flexible grouping instruction. Principals are responsible to ensure that appropriate clustering is a part of the school plan and is implemented correctly in the best interest of all students.

AIG teachers will work in collaboration with regular education teachers to develop resources, procedures, processes, and to implement strategies that provide challenge and enhance the quality of curriculum for gifted and highly capable students. Teachers enrich and extend the curricula to facilitate higher-level learning goals aligned with the Common Core.

Some examples of essential elements of differentiated instruction:

- Co-Teaching and Collaboration for instruction (See Appendix D)
- Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (See Appendix E)
- NAGC ED Cluster Grouping (See Appendix F)
- Gifted Child Quarterly (See Appendix G)
- Differentiation of Content, Process, and Product
- Development of Critical and Creative Thinking Skills
- Model lessons for best practices
- Effective questioning
- Tiered lessons and assignments
- Independent study contracts
- Open-ended problem solving
- Socratic Seminar
- Compacting curriculum using pre-assessments and post-assessments

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- AIG School Plans
- DEP for grades 4-8
- IDEP for grades K-3
- Toolbox for Planning Rigorous Instruction
- Curriculum Management Application (C-MAPP) Enrichment options
- DPI AIG Wiki
- AIG Curriculum Bank
- AIG teacher modeling in the regular classroom setting
- Student portfolios
- Student Data

Other Comments:

Many acceleration opportunities offered in WCPSS do not require an AIG identification for participation which should open the opportunity for all students.

Ideas of Strengthening:

AIG teachers may do walk-throughs of regular classroom instruction to determine ways to assist teachers with better utilization of differentiation strategies. Ensure that schedules remain flexible and fluid.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice C
Selects and uses a variety of research-based supplemental resources that augment curriculum and instruction.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Gifted students require differentiated curriculum and instruction based on the characteristics of gifted learners.

Goals:
It is the goal of the AIG program to identify and recommend supplemental resources for all teachers that can be utilized for the growth of AIG identified students and/or highly capable students.

Description:
There are a variety of differentiated curricular, instructional, and resource materials available to AIG Teachers, and regular education teachers which incorporate research-based models and methods as follows:

- WCPSS Curriculum Management Application (C-MAPP)
- AIG PB Works site for differentiated instruction and curricula
- Kids Into Thinking Skills (KITS) differentiation resources - Grades K-3
- Student Engagement Strategies
- Teacher Toolbox for Planning Rigorous Instruction
- Variety of resource books and programs aligned with AIG Program initiatives, and current research in gifted education such as U-STARS~Plus, Zacarro's Problem-Solving resources, P.E.T.S., and Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program K-8.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Curriculum Bank
- AIG School Workbook
- Professional Development and training provided for and/or by AIG teachers
- Professional Development Resources list
- Professional library

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Continue to increase professional library materials to support and enhance the AIG Program. Continue to develop classroom resources to support differentiation.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice D
Fosters the development of 21st century content and skills by infusing the following at an advanced level:

- content for global awareness, civic and economic literacies and health awareness
- critical thinking and problem solving
- high level communication and collaboration
- applied information and media literacy, including concepts, systems, and operations in challenging research contexts
- creativity and innovation
- real world learning in local, regional, and global contexts
- applied life skills for leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, productivity, responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
AIG Teachers work with Professional Learning Teams and collaborate with classroom teachers and content specialists in their schools to support the integration of 21st century skills and assist in the development of learners who are globally competitive. This collaboration is most effective when co-teaching and collaborative models are used. 21st century content and skills will be embedded in curriculum over the next three years.

Goals:
AIG staff will foster the development of 21st century skills by integrating technology and opportunities to develop critical thinking skills within a real world context. They will describe and share possible implementation strategies with stake-holders.

Description:
In order to promote the development of critical thinking and 21st century skills in a real-world context, as outlined in the statement of this practice, curriculum units are applied appropriately and differentiated for advanced learners. Additionally, AIG teachers will assist classroom teachers in researching and including digital resources in core curriculum.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Consultation and Collaboration Model
- Adaptive Curriculum Units
- CMAPP Enrichment Units

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

WCPSS AIG Program will collaborate with the Academic Department to research and implement the use of digital portfolios.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice E
Uses on-going assessment to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2010-2013.

Rationale:
WCPSS classroom teachers regularly use pre and post assessments to determine students' learning needs. Appropriate formative and summative assessment data will be used to guide instruction. AIG teachers will collaborate with classroom teachers to analyze data regarding students' interests, classroom performance, achievement, and/or learning preferences for planning appropriate differentiated instruction. Walkthrough observations and analysis of student work samples from regular education classrooms may indicate a need for additional support and professional development for classroom teachers in the use of assessment for planning differentiated instruction. Maximum student growth occurs when students' learning style preferences are matched with appropriate instructional practices.

Goals:
To increase the use of multiple intelligence data and students' learning style preferences to drive instructional practice. The AIG teachers will work collaboratively with classroom teachers to use a balanced assessment approach including research-based pre-assessments, formative, diagnostic and summative assessments to inform instructional decisions in a variety of courses. The AIG teacher will use data and observation to determine needs for additional support in the regular education classroom.

Description:
AIG Teachers work with Professional Learning Teams in schools to support the analysis of ongoing student assessment data. Formative assessments and county-wide benchmark assessments are used regularly in addition to other classroom assessments, tests, projects, grades and performance to determine need for planning differentiated learning opportunities.

AIG teachers monitor AIG student achievement and growth, and collaborate with classroom teachers and administrators to achieve goals and facilitate further growth in a variety of subject areas. Using data based decision making, AIG teachers and classroom teachers will improve teaching and learning to increase student performance.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- mCLASS data
- Student Portfolios
- Math predictor-EVAAS
- EOG growth data for AIG students
- Formative and summative assessments
- Learning Style Inventories

- Multiple Intelligences Surveys
- Cog AT Profiles

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to refine practices of using learning styles to drive instruction for student growth. Design curriculum that incorporates the development of multiple intelligences.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice F
Creates affective curricular and instructional practices, which support the social and emotional needs of AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice (2013-2016)

Rationale:
Research tells us that for gifted students school pressures, whether externally or internally imposed, are often more intense than for their peers and can cause them to engage in behaviors that hinder their ability to take learning risk, and persist when faced with truly challenging learning tasks. Some advanced learners are faced with true challenge for the first time as curriculum and learning tasks become increasingly rigorous in the district. Therefore, it is important for teachers and educators to be aware of particular social and emotional characteristics of advanced learners. It is important that educators address the social and emotional needs of the gifted learner in a manner to support healthy affective growth, as well as academic development. It is also the role of the AIG program to support parents, teachers, and other staff in recognizing and meeting these needs.

Goals:
The AIG teacher will increase awareness and support the social and emotional needs of the AIG student by creating affective curricular and instructional practices to share with classroom teachers and other school personnel.

Description:
While collaborating with colleagues in developing content, Gifted Education Specialists can increase awareness of social and emotional characteristics common among gifted learners. Actions to address this goal include:
- Providing information on social and emotional needs of gifted students in different media forms such as websites and PTA news to all stakeholders.
- Introducing ways to respond to social and emotional needs of these learners while designing differentiated units and lessons.
- Building awareness of these needs among counselors in planned PD sessions and solicit their help in addressing these with students, teachers and parents.
- Bringing in guest experts for community forums on meeting complex needs of gifted children, contingent upon funding
- Integrating social and emotional elements into units of study that support the development of AIG children as well as equip classroom teachers to do so as well.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Curriculum units which address social and emotional needs of gifted learners
- Guest speaker(s) to address the social and emotional needs of gifted learners with both AIG teachers and parents of AIG students
- Parent Handout: TIP-ical Kids: Cognitive and Affective Characteristics of High Ability Children and Youth

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

AIG Program Staff will continue to research best practices for meeting the social and emotional needs of the gifted learner. AIG Program Staff will make a more concerted effort to work collaboratively with school counselors on the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice G

Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional strategies and differentiated curriculum and instruction.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The development of gifted behaviors at a young age is critical for achievement and development of full potential. Highly capable children may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential until they have access to enriched learning opportunities. Regular education teachers do not have a background in gifted behaviors; therefore they often do not recognize the capabilities of students from underrepresented populations. The AIG Program provides opportunities and resources that nurture the gifted behaviors of young students at the K-3 level, while supporting classroom teachers in recognizing potential in all students.

According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), "bright children who enter school behind or with some academic weaknesses still can learn at a faster rate and with less repetition than typically developing children. Instruction that proceeds slowly with small increments of knowledge will neither engage nor motivate these students, nor will it allow their advanced problem solving and reasoning abilities to become obvious to teachers."

Goals:

By providing opportunities and resources that nurture gifted behaviors of young students, the AIG program will cultivate and develop the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional strategies and differentiated curriculum and instruction.

Description:

The AIG Program recognizes that highly capable children may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential on tests or other performance assessments until after they have access to challenging curriculum and enriched learning opportunities. WCPSS is cognizant of the need for nurturing programs in order to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Below is a summary of WCPSS AIG Program Nurturing Initiatives

K-2 Model:

- Consultation and Collaboration between AIG teachers, who are trained in recognizing gifted behaviors, and classroom teachers, to identify students with advanced learning potential.
- Differentiated curriculum and instruction resources provided to regular education teachers as requested
- C-MAPP Enrichment Lessons
- Use of instructional resource books and/or programs which include, but are not limited to
    - Jacob's Ladder
    - P.E.T.S.
    - Kids Into Thinking (KIT) Units
    - U-Stars~Plus

Contingent upon funding, WCPSS AIG Program will implement the following nurturing programs, which also address the social and emotional needs of the gifted learner:

Young Scholar's Program for Talent Development:

- Nurture, guide and support advance academic performance among high performing students from culturally, linguistically, ethnically diverse populations.
- Promote the notion of nurturing continuous academic growth in schools that are considered to be high impact schools. High impact schools are defined as schools with the number of identified gifted students below the national average of 6%.
- Identify giftedness in children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as early as possible. The Young Scholars are identified by their classroom teachers in collaboration with the AIG Teacher assigned to each school. Through systematic observations of all students, anecdotal records, and a careful review of portfolios of student work, classroom teachers in Kindergarten through grade two identify and nurture students who have gifted potential, (i.e., an ability to think, reason, and problem solve at a level that is advanced in comparison to their peers). Historically, these students have lacked access to gifted services, advocates for their high potential, and affirmation of their advanced abilities.
- Once identified, Young Scholars receive challenging curriculum and instruction in a supportive and stimulating educational setting that is responsive to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. The teachers in the Young Scholars schools collaborate, plan, and design learning experiences that connect to the students' diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Basic skills are strengthened through lessons that require students to think and apply knowledge on a higher, more complex level.

Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children

- Provides tools to understand thinking patterns and how learning actually happens. It empowers teachers to structure learning in the most meaningful way, helping students explore new paths to knowledge. Staff development opportunities will be open to AIG teachers and classroom teachers.

Third Grade Explorers Nurturing Model

The Wake County Public School System AIG Program includes a unique nurturing component for all third grade students. Throughout the academic year, the AIG teacher works in partnership with all third grade teachers to provide a variety of in-class experiences in language arts and mathematics

designed to elicit high academic performance. All third grade students participate in whole class experiences. As the year progresses, students who demonstrate potential in these in-class experiences receive advanced and enriched learning opportunities. Student groups remain flexible and fluid throughout the school year to allow students with varying strengths and gifts to benefit from higher level instruction from a gifted specialist. This also provides the opportunity for the AIG teacher to develop work samples demonstrating higher-order and problem solving skills. This can be used as part of the student's portfolio to support the need for AIG identification.

Student data collected during the implementation of Explorers Nurturing Model are an integral part of the identification process for third grade students. Selected work samples are designated for inclusion in the student portfolio.

There are a variety of differentiated curricular, instructional, and resource materials available to AIG Resource Teachers and regular education teachers that incorporate research-based models and methods.

- Revised Kids Into Thinking Skills (KITS) differentiation resources - Grades K-3.
- Explorers Model Lessons - Grade 3
- Instructional Differentiation from Preparation to Implementation
- Teacher Toolbox for Planning Rigorous Instruction
- Student Engagement Strategies Resource
- Variety of Resource books aligned with AIG Program initiatives, Academics Division Initiatives, and current research in gifted education.
- P.E.T.S.
- Jacob's Ladder

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Curriculum Bank
- Differentiation Resources
- Student Portfolios
- Professional Development Resources
- USTARS~ Plus Professional Development
- Young Scholar's Program, contingent upon funding
- Thinking At Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Classroom, contingent upon funding

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Implement with fidelity & use data to guide; seek ways to expand & infuse future work.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice H
Ensures collaboration among AIG personnel and other professional staff, including exceptional children's personnel and others related to AIG students, to develop and implement differentiated curriculum and instruction.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The knowledge and expertise of professional staff is critical to the development of comprehensive differentiated curricula that is aligned appropriately with the NC Standard Course of Study and provides necessary rigor and challenge.

Goals:
AIG teachers collaborate and promote communication with classroom teachers and other professional personnel, including, but not limited to, exceptional children's personnel, in order to promote a shared responsibility to meet the needs of gifted students and to establish clear roles for various personnel. These partnerships will also create awareness and possible solutions for identifying students in underrepresented populations.

Intentionally include intervention strategies to address the needs of gifted students as district RtI implementation progresses.

Description:
AIG teachers and/or AIG program staff will collaborate with appropriate school personnel in order to meet the needs of all identified students, including students who are dually identified. AIG teachers should be invited to attend IEP or 504 meetings for dually identified students. The classroom teacher, in collaboration with the AIG teacher, will prescribe appropriate strategies and targeted interventions to address individual needs and foster increased success. AIG Central services staff will participate in various district level groups/teams including, but not limited to, RtI, Literacy, Magnet, and Academics.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Professional Learning Team efforts and notes
- Collaboration with Raising Achievement and Closing the Gap (RACG)
- School Based Committee/RtI Team meeting notes
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- 504 Meeting Minutes
- Personalized Educational Plan (PEP)
- Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs)
- Differentiated Education Plan (DEPs)
- District level team/committee notes and/or agendas

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to infuse AIG program staff into various group meetings and activities to better serve students.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction
The LEA employs challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum and instruction K-12 to accommodate a range of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice I
Develops and documents a student plan that articulates the differentiated curriculum and instruction services that match the identified needs of the K-12 AIG student, such as a Differentiated Education Plan

(DEP). This document is reviewed annually with parents/families to ensure effective programming, a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The AIG Plan provides structure for service delivery and annual review of student performance and achievement to ensure appropriate service to meet student needs. AIG teachers will continue to use the DEP to facilitate communication with parents, teachers, and students about how differentiation occurs.

Goals:
AIG teachers will annually develop IDEPs for K-3 identified students and DEPs for grades 4-12 identified students to meet the needs of identified students.

Description:
Reviews of each AIG elementary and middle school identified student are conducted in collaboration with classroom teachers to determine student needs. As a result of this collaboration, IDEPs/DEPs are created at the beginning of each academic year to address the needs of the individual student. AIG teachers will provide parents with a copy of the IDEP/DEP. Parents have the opportunity to request a conference to review the services outlined in the IDEP/DEP. Any identified students experiencing academic difficulty in K-12 will be provided with an Instructional Support Plan in an effort to encourage, assist, and promote their academic success.

The High School Differentiated Education Plan (HS-DEP) indicates areas of service for students in grades nine through twelve. A copy of the high school DEP is provided to parents of identified students at the end of the eighth grade academic year. Accelerated high school students are served through honors and advanced placement classes and International Baccalaureate classes, if available.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- School Based Committee for Gifted Education meeting notes
- Differentiated Education Plans (DEP's)
- Individualized Differentiated Education Plans (IDEP's)

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Increase communication with families; consider changes in the DEP process in eighth grade to have the DEP information available for high school registration. We will continue to work on effective ways to increase communication with all stakeholders.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development
The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice A
Employs an AIG-licensed educator(s) as lead coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and plan.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
In order to appropriately serve approximately 27,000 identified gifted students as well as nurture the academic potential of K-3 students, AIG personnel should include a Director, four Coordinating Teachers, an AIG Psychologist, and an AIG Secretary at the central services level.

Goals:
WCPSS AIG staff seeks to recruit and retain program personnel with NC AIG licensure. Continue to evaluate job duties and revise job descriptions of program personnel to ensure the most effective utilization of resources and provisions for services to students. Program budget will be re-evaluated to better utilize resources to adjust and/or increase the months of employment allotments for each school as well as add staff at the central services level to better support schools and the district.

Description:
The AIG licensed Central Services Staff work to develop and monitor the implementation of the AIG Plan. The AIG Advisory Committee, administrators, teachers, students, and parents will provide ongoing feedback. All AIG Central Services Staff will be employed twelve months to oversee all aspects of the AIG program including budget and communication. AIG Central Services Staff collaborate with stakeholders, including other Academic Department colleagues, to support schools on all instructional calendars: Tracks 1-4 year round, modified, year- round, and traditional.

2013-2014 AIG Central Services Staff:
- Director
- Four Coordinating Teachers
- AIG Psychologist
- AIG Secretary

Teachers who are AIG licensed are employed for specific months of employment at each elementary and middle school within WCPSS. The AIG teacher serves as the SBCGE chair at their assigned school. The AIG teacher also directly serves students through a hybrid model including both push-in and limited pull out. The AIG teacher will work collaboratively with classroom teachers to plan and provide appropriate levels of differentiation for any student, but especially for AIG identified students.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
Job descriptions of the AIG Director, AIG Teacher, AIG Coordinating Teacher, AIG Psychologist, and AIG Secretary

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
In order to most appropriately serve students, additional funding for staff should be added first, at the school level and then at the district level for the most comprehensive, effective programming.

Additional staffing will also allow for more collaboration amongst the AIG program and other WCPSS programs/departments, but most importantly, to appropriately serve students.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development
The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice B
Ensures that AIG licensed specialists are engaged in tasks which explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
AIG licensed professionals are educated in best practices in meeting the needs of gifted and highly capable students. AIG teachers assist in nurturing and identifying students who demonstrate gifted characteristics. The AIG Director establishes allotments, monitors and utilizes funding to support gifted programming. AIG Central Services Staff support school staff including AIG teachers and Administrators. AIG teachers and administrators are responsible at the school level to appropriately implement the WCPSS AIG plan and adhere to related WCPSS Board of Education (BOE) policies and applicable state laws. Additional monitoring will ensure fidelity and consistency in serving the academic, intellectual, and social /emotional needs of gifted learners by appropriately implementing the local AIG plan.

Goals:
To continually review and evaluate AIG staff, specifically AIG teachers' roles, schedules, and responsibilities in supporting the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted learners. The AIG program will seek ways to increase the numbers of appropriately licensed staff to continually improve program implementation to best serve students at all levels.

Description:
AIG teachers hold an add-on AIG license issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. These educators have specific training regarding the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional characteristics and/or needs of gifted learners. These professionals are also trained to identify characteristics in students with high potential who may not typically be identified in gifted programs. The AIG teacher is an expert at the school for differentiation and provides professional learning sessions to assist other staff members at the school site to appropriately serve AIG identified and other highly capable students. The AIG teachers are hired by and report directly to the Principal at the school site. District level AIG staff is hired by and report to the AIG Director. The Senior Director of the Academic Programs and Support (APS) division within Academics supervises the AIG Director and oversees all aspects of the AIG program.

AIG Teachers provide direct services to students through the implementation of the Co-Teaching and Collaboration Model. AIG teachers will devote the majority of instructional time within the classroom (push-in). Some elementary students may need additional direct services outside the regular classroom (pullout). AIG teachers meet regularly with classroom teachers to collaborate and to plan for differentiated curricula to meet the needs of identified students.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- AIG Teachers' Schedules
- AIG School Quarterly Workbook
- Evaluations by school administrators reported in NCEES
- Job descriptions

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

District supported professional learning opportunities for AIG and classroom teachers specifically aimed at developing high cognitive skills to promote growth of all students. Collaborate regarding district initiative around creating student portfolios.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice C

Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children's personnel, counselors, and school administrators.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:

Focused AIG Professional Development (PD) is necessary to meet AIG student needs. Currently, AIG PD is recommended but not mandatory for classroom teachers who serve formally identified AIG students. WCPSS AIG Staff will participate as part of Response to Instruction (RtI) at various levels to assist in utilizing all students' strengths and providing support as needed. Research supports establishing nurturing programs early in the educational career of students which will lead to increased growth. Professional learning on how to nurture children, and activating the multiple intelligences, is vital to developing critical thinking and problem solving skills for early learners. Gifted education professional development and follow-up will be embedded throughout AIG Professional Learning Teams (PLT), various PLTs, including other program staff, and school level PLTs.

Goals:

Determine the length of time and variety of ways PD can be provided to WCPSS staff. Provide ongoing PD for all AIG program staff on the strategies and teaching models provided in this plan to support school level professional development. Provide instructional resources for all AIG program staff to support school level professional development.

Description:

WCPSS AIG Central Services Staff is responsible for disseminating AIG program information and training throughout the district. Area Superintendents, Principals, AIG teachers, and classroom teachers are responsible for the administration and implementation of the AIG program and differentiation of curriculum and instruction.

Over the next three years, PD courses, including follow-up activities will be offered to personnel involved with AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children's personnel, counselors, and school administrators.

Gifted licensure is recommended and encouraged for teachers of gifted cluster groups and required of AIG teachers. High school Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors level teachers will meet College Board requirements, and IB teachers will earn either the IB certificate in teaching and learning, or the IB advanced certificate in teaching and learning research.

Through professional development the following will be supported:

- AIG District Staff will design appropriate policies, services, and professional development for AIG teachers.
- Area Superintendents and School Administrators will assess AIG program services and assess teacher effectiveness in developing potential of gifted students and differentiation of instruction. AIG Central Services Staff will educate administrators on monitoring the use of AIG Months of Employment for fidelity in program services as described in the AIG plan. Administrators will be provided professional support in the implementation of the Co-Teaching and Collaboration push-in service model to promote growth for all students.
- AIG and classroom teachers will provide appropriately differentiated learning experiences for gifted and highly capable students.
- AIG Teachers in collaboration with school counselors implement will support the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Possible Models for completing Professional Development include:

- In-service workshops, conferences or institutes facilitated by the AIG Program or Academics Division
- Individual and/or PLT follow-ups after district-wide or school-wide professional learning opportunities
- Embedded Professional Development during AIG district or school-based staff development
- Webinars, National Association of Gifted Children's Web-based Gifted Education Learning Modules
- On-line PD opportunities (district and/or commercially created) as available
- Workshops, conferences, or courses offered by universities, DPI, or other recognized educational organizations
- Site visits and observations by classroom teachers (with administrative approval)
- Collaboration for training with AIG staff, other school-based specialist in PLTs, grade level meetings, or school staff meetings

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Professional Growth Plans
- Evaluations from NCEES
- E-Schools transcripts
- On-line Course Registrations
- Professional Learning Session agendas/materials
- RtI for Gifted Children (Appendix I)
- RtI for Gifted Children Update (Appenidx J)
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Other Comments:

Ideas for Strengthening:
WCPSS AIG Program staff will increase collaboration with other programs and departments within WCPSS, as well as continually seeking opportunities to embrace and implement best practices for gifted education.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development
The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice D
Places AIG students in general education classrooms with teachers who have earned an AIG add-on license or who have met the LEA's professional development requirements for that position.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
District-wide PD will increase overall instructional rigor and the use of best practices that have previously been found primarily in gifted programs. While refreshing and retraining themselves, AIG teachers will participate in and support classroom teachers in this work. With the high number of gifted students in the district, and our primary service delivery method of differentiated instruction in the regular classroom, our professional development priority must be deepening teachers' understanding and use of differentiated instruction in the classroom. Such training will also support our district's RtI initiative. In addition, nurturing services within our K-3 classrooms must be priority as well so that all students are reviewed for possible inclusion within the gifted program. Therefore general education teachers, need to be re-introduced to and/or learn strategies for teaching gifted students and nurturing academic potential. Our priority is twofold; every AIG teacher provides support to all teachers of gifted clusters and AIG teachers will refine the delivery of LEA gifted professional development to classroom teachers at their assigned school, prioritizing teachers of cluster groups. AIG central services staff and AIG teachers will be responsible for developing a consistent process to train K-3 classroom teachers in nurturing pedagogy to increase awareness of underrepresented populations needs and general misconceptions about gifted students.

The district is not currently supporting general education teachers with tuition or other incentives for acquiring AIG licensure, so there are no expectations for great increases in the number of AIG licensed teachers. Even so, we will continue to explore partnerships with AIG licensure programs and seek tuition incentives through the Public School Foundation (PSF) or possible grants.

Goals:
- AIG students will be placed in cluster groups for service in their identified area, Reading and/or Math, or both when in regular education classes. Special consideration must be given to size of cluster groups for management of co-teaching/collaboration by the AIG teacher and classroom teacher.
- Clusters in regular, mixed-ability education classes will consist of at least four identified gifted students. The cluster group teacher will have the opportunity to receive training and will

cooperatively plan with the AIG teacher in how to best meet the needs of AIG and highly capable students.

- Building level administrators will facilitate scheduling classes to ensure differentiation of student instruction through grouping and collaboration. Special attention will be needed by administrators to support AIG teachers for appropriate learning environments that are matched with the AIG plan.
- AIG teachers will partner with administration to ensure effective student placement and completely support the fidelity of the AIG School Plan in each elementary and middle school.
- AIG teachers and counselors will review and monitor AIG student placement throughout the school year to ensure program fidelity and student well being.
- AIG teachers will communicate with stakeholders, specifically parents, about all aspects of the AIG program as well as serve as the liaison between AIG Central Services and their school site.

Description:

Gifted licensure is required for all AIG teachers and District AIG positions. AIG licensure is highly recommended for teachers of gifted cluster groups. The WCPSS Academics Department and/or AIG program staff will offer opportunities for classroom teachers to participate in professional development to meet specific needs of AIG and highly capable students in general education/cluster groups. The professional development will align with evidenced-based state and national recommendations for gifted education as well as align with district adopted NC Standard Course of Study. School Administrators will appropriately cluster group AIG students are based on their area(s) of identification.

Teachers of cluster groups should use the Common Core Curriculum as a basis for student pre-assessment and adjust instruction according to students' strengths, interest and developmental levels with respect to reading and or math service level. Curriculum for identified students should be different from the curriculum offered to the general education students qualitatively per their differentiated education plan. This does not mean additional content, but rather allowing for a greater depth of knowledge of content and/or independent study within content.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- District list of licensed AIG teachers
- School schedules of cluster grouped classes
- Documented PD participation in eSchools
- AIG School plans
- AIG School Workbooks

Other Comments:

Ideas for Strengthening:

Continue to promote and support cluster grouping of students.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice E

Aligns professional development with local AIG program goals and other district initiatives.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
The AIG Program professional development is aligned with the WCPSS strategic directives and initiatives to support and promote optimal student learning and teacher and principal effectiveness.

Goals:
Collaborate with various departments/programs to ensure that educators have tools and resources to best serve formally identified students as well as foster and serve those students who are highly capable.

Description:
Professional development is a collaborative effort of the Academics Division, Data and Accountability, the Office of Professional Learning, and the AIG Program. The professional development plan aligns with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Standards, Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards, North Carolina AIG Program Standards established by the Department of Public Instruction Exceptional Children Division, and the recommendations from the Curriculum Management Audit. Professional development will include skills in progress monitoring and utilization of data for AIG services as well as utilizing WCPSS district formative assessments to better serve the needs of AIG students according to their differentiated educated plans. School Improvement Plan (SIP) teams are strongly encouraged to consider the alignment of AIG and professional development as school plans are created. Professional development for AIG support will be designed considering recommendations from the WCPSS AIG program audit of Spring 2013. AIG teachers in collaboration with school administrators will encourage and lead implementation of best practices for gifted education.

AIG Teachers
The AIG Central Services Staff and other educators develop and implement academic programs and rigorous, relevant curricula that equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success in meeting 21st century challenges. The AIG Program designs and implements ongoing professional development for AIG teachers to increase expertise by providing:

- appropriate differentiated curricula and instruction for gifted and highly able learners embedded in the Common Core Curriculum and North Carolina Essential Standards
- extensions and enrichment curricula aligned with the NCSCOS
- consultation services to all classroom teachers
- professional development to school personnel, as requested

The AIG Program provides classroom teachers learning opportunities specific to the potential, characteristics, and needs of gifted learners from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The AIG Program also provides opportunities for ongoing differentiation training through the Co-teaching and Collaboration Model to teachers of kindergarten through eighth grade students. AIG Program Staff collaborates with the Central Services High School Team to support high school classroom teachers with differentiation.

AIG Teachers support classroom teachers as they review, reflect upon, and refine their use of differentiation in managing curricula, instruction, and assessment to promote optimal student growth and achievement.

Elementary and middle school AIG Teachers focus on teaching and learning in their schools. They facilitate multiple forms of job-embedded, learner-centered, professional development. The AIG teachers share knowledge and best practices, develop rigorous and relevant curriculum, and contribute to the development of collaborative learning cultures to support student success through positive nurturing relationships. AIG teachers will operate within the hybrid push-in/pull out model for optimal for academic, intellectual, social, and emotional student growth.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Professional development training modules
- Professional development schedules
- AIG Meeting Agendas
- Extension and Enrichment units
- Lesson plans denoting specific differentiation opportunities
- Student portfolios

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Continue to reflect and refine collaboration between AIG teachers and classroom teachers with intentional support by site administrators. Continue to seek best practices to best serve students and promote professional learning opportunities.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice F

Aligns professional development opportunities with state and/or national teaching standards and best practices in gifted education, including 21st century skills and content at advanced levels.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:

Greater challenge for advanced learners cannot be assumed simply because Common Core Standards are more rigorous. These standards require well thought out curriculum and units of study that embed varying degrees of challenge in anticipation that some learners will need to go deeper and farther. Our effort to align professional development with state and national standards is a continual process.

Goals:

To equip WCPSS AIG teachers and other educators with skills and strategies based on most current research to best serve all students, specifically gifted and highly capable students. To attend and state and national conferences to network and increase resources to more appropriately serve gifted students.

Description:

The professional development plan aligns with the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Standards, Pre-K-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards, North Carolina AIG Program Standards established by the Department of Public Instruction Exceptional Children Division, and the recommendations from the Curriculum Management Audit.

The priority of the NC State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, be globally competitive for work and postsecondary education, and be prepared for life in the 21st Century. AIG Program goals support this vision of preparing future ready and globally competitive students through Common Core Standards and North Carolina Essential Standards. AIG Program resources, units of study, assessment and professional development opportunities align with this vision and are evidenced in C-MAPP.

Increased participation of district staff with AIG colleagues in NC Region 3 and the entire state and NC DPI as well as increased participation in state and national conferences to network and attain most recent information will enhance the total programming and support the development of the most effective program staff.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Professional development agendas
- State and national standards
- C-MAPP
- Agendas from state and national conferences

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Continue to build professional partnerships within our district, within our state, and within our nation to continually improve professional development as part of the total AIG program.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

Practice G

Provides opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development learning.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:

PLCs and other small group models can provide opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan to collectively apply their learning to designing dynamic classroom experiences for students. Regularly designated time for this work is critical, and principals must ensure that such time is allotted.

Professional development that is ongoing and job-embedded is available and offered as requested. It encourages collaborative planning and teaching among elementary and middle school AIG Teachers and classroom teachers.

Goals:
AIG teachers and other AIG program staff will have opportunities to plan and implement best practices for professional growth in addition to fostering high growth for all students.

Description:
In the Co-Teaching and Collaboration Model, the AIG teacher works with classroom teachers to plan and deliver appropriately differentiated curricula and instruction that include the in-depth study of complex and sophisticated content aligned with NCSCOS. This encourages students display products that reflect their abilities while applying complex thinking and questioning. Teachers apply strategies and refine units of study to benefit each learner.

AIG teachers are encouraged to coach, implement, and reflect upon best practices in gifted education and upon professional learning experiences.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- PLT agendas
- Collaborative teaching data i.e. lesson plans, project rubrics, etc.
- AIG meeting agendas
- Student work samples

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Provide opportunities to attend professional learning opportunities and allow sufficient time to plan for implementation.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice A
Delivers AIG programs and services, which are comprehensive of the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners across all grade levels and settings.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Services for identified gifted students need expansion. Research indicates that gifted students need interaction with intellectual peers on a regular basis in order to develop to their highest potential. Therefore, gifted students require contact with the AIG teacher in the area(s) of identification. In addition, skills to increase and provide cognitive challenges are beneficial for all students. Consequently, push in programs in all classrooms need to be increased to allow nurturing of gifted behaviors and higher level thinking highly capable students.

Goals:
Develop and design appropriate instructional support for highly gifted students, such as:
- Focused planning for differentiated instruction between AIG teachers and classroom teachers to prepare successful push in instruction.
- Pull out instruction for problem based learning, long- and short-term projects, independent study, learning contracts, and more direct contact and support from AIG teachers will allow identified AIG students time with their intellectual peers..
- Push in and pull out services are most appropriate in meeting the needs of both the highly capable and identified AIG students.

Description:
The AIG School Plan drives the services offered at each school. Options offered by individual school plan can include cluster grouping, in-class flexible grouping, cross class grouping within grade level, curriculum compacting, differentiated instructional units, and content differentiation. These services allow highly capable and gifted students optimal learning opportunities. The AIG teacher will offer delivery service through the following methods: Resource class (pull out), team teaching (push in), consultation and collaboration. Cluster grouping of AIG students and highly capable students is imperative for a successful push in model.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG School Plan
- Differentiated Education Plans
- Individual Differentiated Education Plans
- Professional Learning Team Meeting Minutes
- Acceleration and Enrichment opportunities noted on DEPs and Progress Reports

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
WCPSS AIG staff will work with other educational professionals to create staff development for teachers regarding the learning style instructional needs and characteristics of the gifted student. Once training is created, all school staff should be trained with follow up each subsequent school year.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice B
Aligns AIG programs and services with each area of AIG identification, goals of the program, and resources of the LEA.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
The AIG Program programs and services are an extension of the NC Standard Course of Study. AIG services further enrich and extend Common Core standards in reading and mathematics. AIG curriculum resources are provided to each school to enhance the curriculum.

Goals:
The AIG Program will align the following resources with NC Standard Course of Study on CMAPP: Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program, Primary Math, Challenge Math, and Real World Algebra.

Description: The AIG Program has developed newly aligned curriculum units of study in mathematics and reading. The AIG Program Bloom's Taxonomy is embedded in professional development provided for AIG teachers to increase higher level thinking skills and problem solving abilities.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Curriculum Bank
- Professional Development Agendas/Materials
- CMAPP
- Bloom's materials available for all schools

Other Comments:
Ideas of Strengthening: Research and implementation of additional strategies and materials to continually improve services to all students, specifically gifted students would strengthen the AIG program and content deliver for increased student achievement.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice C
Delivers AIG programs and services that are integral and connected to the total instructional program of the LEA in policy and practice.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale: The AIG Program aligns offered services with the goals of the NC Standard Course of Study.

Goals:
The WCPSS AIG program should infuse best practices for gifted students in service delivery as a model for use with all students for growth benefits.

Description:
The AIG Program staff collaborates with the Academics Department in the development of enrichment units housed in C-MAPP to provide integrated enrichment and extension lessons and opportunities for all teachers to plan effectively. The AIG Program supports the appropriate use of accelerative and grouping practices and differentiated curriculum and instruction. AIG program staff at the district and school levels will support the infusion of gifted programming best practices through discussions, models, and teaching practices.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- C-MAPP
- School Service Delivery Plans
- Differentiated Education Plans
- WCPSS AIG Website

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Additional enrichment units in middle school mathematics will be written to support academic growth for high ability students.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice D
Informs all teachers, school administrators, and support staff about delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program and plan.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
WCPSS AIG Program recognizes the need for clear communication for all stakeholders. With the transition of our new plan and the implementation of new identification criteria, procedures, and policies, all pertinent information will need to be updated and clarified to ensure consistency throughout the district.

Goals:
To ensure clear and consistent communication with all stakeholders, the AIG Central Services will develop a presentation to disseminate information regarding AIG services. This presentation will be used by AIG teachers to inform stakeholders about delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students. In addition to this presentation, AIG teachers will utilize a variety of methods such as school websites, newsletters, etc. to communicate all facets of the AIG program to stakeholders at each school site.

Description:
The AIG Central Services staff will participate in principals' meetings, Area Superintendents' meetings, and IRT meetings to provide information about goals and service delivery expectations outlined in the district's AIG Program Plan. AIG resource teachers at each school will provide annual sessions at the beginning of the school year to inform school administrators and school staff about the AIG program, share strategies for differentiating instruction, and lead related staff development. AIG teachers will post information on their individual school websites and school newsletters. Communication with school and district personnel will occur through several venues. The venues will include workshops, presentations, websites, and publications. AIG program staff will infuse program information with as many other programs and departments as applicable and solicit feedback for continuous improvement.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Individual School Websites
- AIG Teachers' Quarterly Responsibilities Reports
- AIG School Newsletters

- School Staff AIG Presentation materials
- Meeting Agendas

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

AIG Central Services Staff plan to expand use of social media to communicate with stakeholders in addition to seeking more opportunities to invite stakeholders for specific sessions regarding the local program and specific information for supporting a gifted program and students.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice E
Communicates among and between teachers and schools to ensure an effective continuation of K-12 services, especially at key transition points.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
WCPSS AIG Program recognizes the importance of continued service delivery for AIG students especially as they transition from one school to another, for example, elementary to middle school, to ensure effective communication between teachers during the transition.

Goals:
During spring meetings, the AIG Program Central Services Staff will facilitate Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) between feeder schools (Elementary and Middle) (Middle and High School) to ensure effective continuation of AIG services.

Description:

- The AIG resource teacher will provide updates to their school to inform staff and teachers of upcoming nomination and testing windows, identification procedures and current service delivery components.
- AIG teachers will meet at least twice a year within their regional PLTs to discuss issues and concerns and share solutions in order to provide effective AIG services.
- AIG Central Services Team will facilitate a meeting in the spring between feeder schools where AIG teachers will discuss the following:
    - the needs of each identified AIG student (i.e. social/emotional, academic strengths and weaknesses, accelerative needs, etc.) with the AIG teacher at the receiving school .
    - other students who need to be monitored and considered for nomination and referral at the receiving school. These students may include but are not limited to students from underrepresented groups who are demonstrating gifted behaviors and high growth.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- PLT Minutes

- Meeting Agendas
- SBCGE Meeting Notes for Transition Schools

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice F
Ensures collaboration and involvement among regular education teachers, exceptional children's teachers, other specialists, instructional staff, parents/families, and administrators to provide differentiated programming and services.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The AIG Program recognizes the importance of communication and collaboration between staff members and parents in order to provide appropriate service differentiation for identified AIG students. Ultimately the success of this collaboration is dependent upon the school culture and administrative facilitation. Historically, collaboration between all personnel has worked best at those schools where principals guide its success. Principals can support and ensure collaboration by dedicating time for this work. Social workers, counselors and school psychologists should be included in these efforts especially for families that are more likely to be overlooked via traditional communication means.

Goals:
The AIG Central Services Staff will continue to work closely with principals during this plan cycle to foster more consistent collaborative relationships in providing differentiated programming and services.

Description: AIG teachers work in collaboration with regular education teachers, Special Education Teachers and other school staff to develop and implement resources, procedures, processes and strategies that provide challenge and enhance the quality of curriculum for gifted students. AIG Central Services Staff will work with the Exceptional Children Services Staff, Academics Program, English Language Learners and other specialists at the Central Services level to keep them informed about AIG differentiated services and programming. The AIG Program staff regularly plans with instructional staff and has ongoing communication with parents and other professionals to ensure appropriate services for students.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG School Delivery Plan
- AIG Teacher Quarterly Responsibilities/workbook
- Meeting Agendas and Minutes

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continually request, accept and utilize feedback from stakeholders while continuing to seek ways to communicate effectively to the diverse population within the school district.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice G
Ensures that school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, parents/families, and others collaborate to address the social and emotional needs of AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
The unique social-emotional needs of gifted students require dedicated attention from educators and parents. The AIG Program recognizes these needs and will provide additional training to discuss the social and emotional needs of gifted students. Additional time, professional development, and collaboration with other agencies and personnel are required to strengthen knowledge of the social-emotional needs of gifted students. According to Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenback, authors for the NAGC, *Unlocking Emergent Talent: Supporting High Achievement of Low-Income, High-Ability Students*, "the 'gifted' label carries many connotations that are not welcomed in the same way by all students and their families…The label may also set one apart from peers resulting in unintended negative consequences such as isolation and bullying."

Goals:
The AIG Central Service Team (AIG CST) will offer staff development on the unique social and emotional needs of gifted students for all AIG teachers, parents, and administrators in WCPSS. AIG CST will collaborate with school counselors in providing regular social and emotional support for the gifted students.

Description:
Gifted students have very unique needs dealing with the social and emotional aspects. School counselors are a great resource to help address the needs of the students. District AIG staff and AIG teachers will establish a relationship with the Psychologist/Social worker staff as well as the school counselors. This collaborative relationship will yield resources for use with students in addition to the creation of presentation for students and parents. The information will highlight unique needs of gifted learners and share strategies and resources for coping with the special needs. This presentation will be available at the beginning of the school year and as needed thereafter. The school counselor will be available to address any issues students might have during the school year as related to the social and emotional needs of the gifted students. AIG staff will serve as support as needed for students, parents, and school staff in regards to these special issues.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
Agendas from presentations such as:

- Presentation by Dr. Rick Courtwright, Duke Talent Identification Program, on the Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted Learner for AIG teachers and Parents
- Presentation from AIG Central Service Team to all school counselors concerning the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners
- AIG teachers and School Counselors will collaborate to create and present staff development to their faculty concerning the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners.
- Breaking Down Barriers Chart (Appendix H)

Other Comments:

Ideas for strengthening:
WCPSS AIG staff will continue to research and disseminate information regarding the social/emotional needs of gifted learners.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice H
Articulates and implements a process for accelerative instructional and placement options when an appropriate body-of-evidence indicates that such a practice is warranted for an individual gifted learner.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Gifted students have a need and a right to advance through courses of study at a pace that accommodates and accelerates their learning appropriate to their interest and capability. Schools have a charge to meet these needs by offering options for accelerated study. WCPSS BOE policies 6230 and 5532 specifically address these learning opportunities.

Goals:
The WCPSS AIG Program will create a system of checks and balances for consistent implementation of accelerative practices throughout the entire school district for program fidelity and equity of access. To create a culture of respect for AIG students and programming with the understanding that strategies and skills best for gifted learners can benefit all learners. Under local policy and state law, maintain the ability to build programming services for individual students as needed.

Description:
Staff will insure that students with demonstrated and documented need for acceleration receive academic opportunities to proceed more rapidly through the usual progression of required skills and objectives for a given grade level or course of study. Through accelerative practices, students have the opportunity to work above the assigned grade level and complete studies at an earlier age when deemed appropriate.

District-wide Differentiated Learning Opportunities
Teachers in WCPSS will be trained using Effective Teaching Framework (ETF) to assist in meeting student needs within the classroom in order to provide differentiated opportunities for all learners.

Framework for Accelerative Practices
There are two categories for acceleration; Content-based and Grade-based. The distinguishing feature between the two categories is whether the accelerative intervention shortens the number of years that a student spends in the K-12 system.

1. **Content-based Acceleration** typically allows a student to remain with peers of the same age and grade for the majority of the school day, but receive higher grade-level instruction in an advanced grade. Content-based acceleration can also refer to allowing a student to work on higher grade-level instruction in his regular classroom in lieu of grade-level instruction. The types of content-based acceleration are as follows:

   a. **Curriculum Compacting (K-12):** A student is pre-assessed at the beginning of a unit of study or standard to determine proficiency. If proficient, the student should engage in advanced content and skill development in that area, or another area, while remaining in the current course of study. This accelerative practice focuses on enrichment within a specific content area for depth of knowledge.

   b. **Dual Enrollment (6-12):** WCPSS middle or high school students have the opportunity to take approved courses for high school credit at regionally accredited institutions, including institutions of Higher Education (IHE), NCVPS, and non-WCPSS secondary schools. Courses taken must provide opportunities not currently available to the student at the middle school or high school, including courses of an advanced or expanded nature. The base school will award high school graduation credit and grades when the official grade report for the course taken is received at the base school. Quality points will be calculated as defined in the WCPSS high school program-planning guide. The student's official high school transcript will include grades and credit earned through dual enrollment. For students in grades 9-12, the grades earned through dual enrollment will factor into the Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and class rank. Reference WCPSS BOE Policy 5534.

   c. **Advanced Placement (AP) (9-12):** The AP program offers college-level coursework for students as early as middle school. AP exams allow students to earn university credit and/or advanced university standing based on the examination score. The state weighting system adds the equivalent of two quality points to the grade earned in the AP/IB course. See State Board Policy HSP-L-004 & GS 116-11(10a).

   d. **NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS):** NCVPS provides students the opportunity to enroll in courses that they cannot take at their local school. NCVPS offers high school and middle school credit acceleration course options. Reference WCPSS BOE Policy 5534.

   e. **Individual Subject Acceleration (ISA)(K-5):** ISA is the practice of assigning a student to a higher-grade level than is typical given the student's age, for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

f. **Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (6-12):** A student shall demonstrate mastery through a multi-phase assessment consisting of (1) a standard examination or a final exam developed locally, and (2) an artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may require additional requirements, such as performance tasks. Based upon this body of evidence, a student may be awarded credit in a particular course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a certain amount of seat time.

g. **International Baccalaureate – Middle Years Programme (MYP) 6-10:** The MYP is a whole-school 6th-10th grade curriculum at East Millbrook Magnet Middle School, East Garner Magnet Middle School, Millbrook Magnet High School and Garner Magnet High School. After the tenth grade, students have the opportunity to participate in the Diploma Programme, which is an 11th-12th grade program that fulfills the North Carolina graduation requirements through an internationally-normed curriculum (See International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme).

h. **International Baccalaureate – Diploma Programme (DP) 11-12**: Advanced students may participate in the IB Diploma Programme if they have taken all of the prerequisite courses. At the end of high school the students are required to complete internationally-assessed examinations, a 4000-word extended essay and 300 Community/Action/Service (CAS) throughout the two-year programme. Some universities offer college course credits upon the successful completion of the Diploma Programme.

   *Students interested in participating in the MYP and/or the DP would need to participate in Magnet Programs application process unless the interested student(s) currently reside within the base area of the school.

2. **Grade-based Acceleration** includes strategies that typically shorten the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. A student is placed on a full time basis in a higher-grade level than is typically given for the student's age for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

   a. **Early Kindergarten Entry (EKE):** A child who has reached his /her 4th birthday by April 16, may participate in Kindergarten early, if he or she demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity. The child must meet specific requirements set forth by the LEA prior to conditional enrollment for entering kindergarten early. The process as outlined in WCPSS EKE documents must be followed to ensure the most appropriate placement decision is made. See GS 115-364(d) & WCPSS BOE Policy 6201:School Admissions

   b. **Whole Grade Advancement (WGA):** WGA typically shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. In practice, a student is placed, on a full-time basis, in a higher-grade level than is typical for the student's age. The student is placed for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. Grade-based acceleration is commonly known as "grade skipping," but it can include other means to shorten the number of years a student remains in the K-12 school system. The exception is early entrance to kindergarten, which does not shorten the number of years the student spends in the K-12 system

but shortens the wait time to start school. WCPSS will provide whole-grade acceleration options to exceptional students that meet the standards set by the district.

Students may be considered only if the following can be clearly demonstrated and confirmed, as defined by the Iowa Acceleration Scale 3rd Edition.

A. Academic achievement in all areas of the curriculum
B. Intellectual ability
C. Social and emotional maturity
D. Persistence and motivation
E. Acceleration is determined to be in the best interest of the student

Students that do not meet the standards for whole-grade acceleration may be eligible to participate in other forms of acceleration.

c. Early College High School: Early College means students take college courses at local colleges as well as the courses required to earn a high school diploma over a five year period. Early Colleges blend high school and college in a rigorous, yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

d. Early High School Graduation: Early High School Graduation is the practice of facilitating the completion of the high school program in fewer than four years for the purpose of providing earlier than typical access to post-secondary educational opportunities.

See also WCPSS Board Policy 5532.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Board Policy 5532 Acceleration and Academic Advancement
- Documentation from Early Entry Packet and Applicant data
- Whole Grade Advancement documents and Data regarding recommendations decisions
- Advanced Placement Student Participation data
- Graduation Data
- Dual Enrollment Data
- Accelerative Practice Data

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Document and evaluate closely the data regarding participation and results of participation in the approved accelerative practices so that the most appropriate decisions are being made for students. Research and evaluate accelerative practices that may be added to benefit students.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice I

Provides intentional services for traditionally underrepresented AIG populations, including culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The Wake County Public School System is committed to identifying the academic needs of high-functioning and high-potential students from all populations regardless of identification in the AIG program. We believe it is imperative to support emergent talent as early as possible, establishing a commitment to achievement at an early age. Capable children may not be able to demonstrate their advanced learning potential on tests or other performance assessments until after they have access to challenging curriculum and enriched learning opportunities. We can serve and support our underrepresented children through nurturing in order to build vocabulary, develop thinking skills and problem solving abilities.

Goals:
To increase the use of differentiated curriculum and instructional practices that nurture gifted intelligent behaviors in traditionally underrepresented populations.

Description:
Proposed Services for Traditionally Underrepresented AIG Populations:
Contingent upon availability of funds, WCPSS AIG Program will implement the Young Scholars Model and *Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children* over the next three years.

The Young Scholars Model promotes the notion of nurturing continuous academic growth in schools considered to be high impact schools. High impact schools are defined as schools with the number of identified gifted students below the national average of 6%.

The first goal of this model is to identify giftedness in children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as early as possible. The Young Scholars are identified by their classroom teachers in collaboration with the AIG Teacher assigned to each school. Through systematic observations of all students, anecdotal records, and a careful review of portfolios of student work, classroom teachers in Kindergarten through grade two, identify and nurture students who have gifted potential, (i.e., an ability to think, reason, and problem solve at a level that is advanced in comparison to their peers). Historically, these students have lacked access to gifted services, advocates for their high potential, and affirmation of their advanced abilities.

The second goal of the Young Scholars Model is to nurture, guide, and support the development of the Young Scholars' exceptional potential. Once identified, Young Scholars receive challenging curriculum and instruction in a supportive and stimulating educational setting that is responsive to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. The teachers in the Young Scholars schools collaborate, plan, and design learning experiences that connect to the students' diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Basic skills are strengthened through lessons that require students to think and apply knowledge on a higher, more complex level.

Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children training provides tools for classroom teachers to understand student thinking patterns and how learning actually happens. It empowers teachers to structure learning in the most meaningful way, helping students explore new paths to knowledge. Staff development opportunities will be open to AIG teachers and classroom teachers.

Current Services for Traditionally Underrepresented AIG Populations
Third Grade Explorers Model provides opportunities for all third grade students. A small group of these third grade students exhibiting gifted behaviors is pulled out to nurture those behaviors. This group will consist of third grade students across all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups. This small group will change throughout the year based on content and areas of strength for each student.
Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students-Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students (U-STARS~PLUS), is a nationally recognized K-3 science-based observation and nurturing system and is available for use for AIG teachers and classroom teachers to uncover and grow gifted potential.
Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) identifies behaviors, including both "teacher pleasing" and "non-teacher pleasing" behaviors that may impede the recognition of students' potential.
Primary Education Thinking Skills PETS™ (Primary Education Thinking Skills) is a systematized enrichment and diagnostic thinking skills program. Lessons are presented in convergent analysis, divergent synthesis, visual/spatial thinking, and evaluation, suitable for grades K-3. The program aligns to the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Jacob's Ladder Higher Level Thinking and Comprehension Skills Program Level 1-3 (Grades 2-6) is a learning journey for students which begins with targeted readings from fables, myths and nonfiction sources and moves through an inquiry process from basic understanding to critical analyses of the texts read. There are five levels available that are targeted to students in grades 2 to 9, but can be used at different grade levels depending on student ability. The units are designed to enhance reading comprehension. Tasks have been organized by skill ladders with questions and activities within each. Ladder rungs are organized to increase complexity in intellectual demand.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Curriculum units for Third Grade Explorers
- Updated Curriculum Enrichment Units by quarter in ELA and Math in grades 3-8
- P.E.T.S. data
- T.O.P.S. data from USTARS+
- Jacob's Ladder
- USTAR~PLUS
- Thinking at Every Desk

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to refine use of initiatives for nurturing as established. Also continue to educate staff about research and implement additional/complimentary initiatives for nurturing underrepresented populations.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community
The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice J
Encourages extra-curricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Additional opportunities for enrichment exist outside of the classroom within the school community as well as beyond the school. Gifted students benefit from innovative, challenging experiences.

Goals:
The AIG Program will promote and share information that may be of interest to students, parents and schools regarding opportunities for enrichment and interest within the school community and in conjunction with outside agencies.

Description:
- Duke TIP
- Science Olympiad
- Math Counts
- Geography Bee
- NC State Science House
- Academic Summer Programs at area colleges and universities, i.e., Campbell, NC Central, NC State, UNC, Meredith, and Shaw
- Wake PAGE
- Battle of the Books
- Math Olympiad
- Odyssey of the Mind
- NC State SMILE Camps
- Wake County division of SCRIPPS Spelling Bee
- GEMS
- Other information can be found at: http://www.nagc.org/resourcedirectory.aspx

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG website Listings
- Programs and events updates to schools and how disseminated at the school level
- Program flyers and advertisements for additional opportunities
- Documented contact with agencies and entities regarding existing opportunities and/or suggestions for new opportunities for partnerships

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening
Forging partnerships with local agencies as well as promoting partnerships within the school district for student opportunities.

Standard 5: Partnerships
The LEA ensures on-going and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.

Practice A
Develops partnerships with parents/families and the community that are intentional and meaningful to support the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
The AIG Program Director and other AIG staff value communication between the school district and families that provides clear and concise Information about the AIG program and services, the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students at their individual, developmental level, and the opportunities and partnerships available with the community.

Goals:
Create effective two-way communication between the AIG Program Staff and families about the needs of AIG students at different stages of their educational career. Effectively share news and accomplishments of the AIG program with the community through a variety of methods. Ensure that relationships are fostered for more open communication.

Description:
The AIG Program addresses ways to create two-way communication between the district, schools, and families regarding AIG students' needs at different stages of their educational career, explains how the district works to meet those needs, and shares news and accomplishments of the AIG program with the community.

The AIG Program will provide clear, concise information (translated as needed), in several ways:
At the school level
- Parent Informational Meetings
- 3rd Grade Explorers
- SBCGE
- AIG Teacher web page
- School Webpage
- Individual parent conferences and documents

At the district level
- AIG Program web page
- AIG Parent Guide
- AIG Parent Brochure, provided
- Partnership with community for dissemination of information i.e. Wake PAGE

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Meeting agendas
- School Based Committee Meeting Minutes
- AIG websites (district, school, and teacher)
- AIG Program Guide
- AIG Parent Brochure

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Increase types of media used for communication i.e. Twitter. Increase frequency of disbursing information related to the AIG program.

WCPSS AIG Program Staff will collaborate with community partners to offer more family meetings to educate parents on current issues/concerns regarding the intellectual/emotional needs of gifted learners.

Standard 5: Partnerships

The LEA ensures on-going and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.

Practice B

Shares with stakeholders, including all students' parents/families, information regarding the local AIG program, the local AIG plan, and other policies relating to gifted education.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The AIG Program staff provides frequent, ongoing communication about Wake County's AIG Program to stakeholders, including all students' parents/families. Opportunities to learn about the AIG Program are available at the school and district level, but efforts will be made to ensure that all stakeholders are more clearly and consistently informed.

Goals:

The WCPSS AIG website will be updated to reflect the 2013-2016 AIG Plan. Share updated information with stakeholders through updated AIG Parent Guide and updated AIG Program Brochure. Revise web-based technology to increase parent and community access to AIG information.

Description:

AIG Central Services'Secretary/support staff maintains and updates the AIG website in collaboration with the Communications Department. The AIG website is linked on the Wake County Public School System website and should be linked on each school's website and/or AIG teacher web page.

AIG Teachers at each school provide parent information sessions covering the following topics:

Elementary

- K-3 Service for Early Identified Students

- K-2 Nurturing Parent Overview of the AIG Program
- Third Grade Explorers Model
- Third Grade Identification and Testing information
- Fourth and Fifth Grade AIG service

Middle School
- Sixth Grade Middle School AIG service
- Seventh and Eighth Grade AIG service
- Accelerative opportunities

The AIG Director and AIG Central Services staff will share information with community groups upon request. The AIG Director will also present an update of the status of the AIG Program to the Academic Leadership Team and other district groups upon request.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Program Webpage
- AIG Program Brochures
- AIG Parent Guides
- Agendas and attendance records from information sessions
- Middle and High School Course Guides

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Create a variety of multimedia presentations, to include but not be limited to podcasts, video segments, and slideshow presentations. Remain proactive in forging relationships for collaboration for input and continuous improvement with regards to the AIG program from a variety of stakeholders who represent the diversity within the school district and community.

Standard 5: Partnerships

The LEA ensures on-going and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.

Practice C
Involves stakeholders, reflecting the diversity of AIG parents/families and the community, in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the local AIG program and plan.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Stakeholder involvement is critical in the development of the AIG Program Plan and the success of the AIG Program implementation. Feedback from all perspectives is valuable in the evaluation of the AIG program.

Goals:
The Advisory Committee will meet to provide feedback on practices within the gifted program. The AIG Advisory Committee will establish clear and productive lines of communication.

Description:
AIG Advisory Committee members are representative of the diverse demographics of the local community. This committee participates in the revision and monitoring of policies and plan related to gifted programming.

AIG Advisory Committee
The Senior Director of APS along with the Director of the Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program establishes the AIG Advisory Committee. The Senior Director and Director select participants for the at-large committee. The participants are representative of the local education agency (LEA) and community demographics. The Advisory Board reviews the AIG Program goals and objectives, provides input on the program's effectiveness and gives suggestions for continued improvement.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Meeting agendas
- Membership of the AIG Advisory Committee

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to solicit feedback from the community for continual improvement.

Standard 5: Partnerships
The LEA ensures on-going and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.

Practice D
Informs parents/families and the community of opportunities available to AIG students on an ongoing basis and in their native language.

This practice is a Focused Practice 2013-2016.
Rationale:
There are many enrichment opportunities in our community available to AIG students and their parents. These opportunities should be publicized in order to inform parents and students of what is available. Some information is available in English and Spanish, but there is a need for translation into other languages as represented by the diversity of the AIG student population. AIG Central Services collaborates with the Office of Translation and Interpretation Services to translate this information into parents' native languages.

Goals:
Collaborate with the WCPSS Communications Department to implement technology to share pertinent information to stakeholders, as well as targeting families that do not have access to technology. Collaborate with the Office of Translation and Interpretation Services to determine the principal non-English languages spoken by parents of WCPSS students to determine the areas of greatest need. Provide interpreters/translators at AIG parent meetings and other AIG functions as needed in collaboration with the Office of Translation and Interpretation Service.

Description:

The AIG Program publishes information and encourages parents/families to take advantage of area programs/activities that provide challenging enrichment and exploration opportunities for AIG students.

The WCPSS translates documents and/or provides translators, as needed, to support parent communication. AIG Parent Brochures may be distributed to parents of limited English proficient (LEP) students via WCPSS' Center for International Enrollment located at the WCPSS Administration Building. Schools will request and/or access all AIG program documents in native languages of families as needed.

WCPSS contracts with a team of interpreters through the Office of Translation and Interpretation Services who may help explain AIG Services to support parents in communicating specifics of the AIG program in their native language. For schools with large, non-English speaking families, a large group meeting may be beneficial to ensure that families are aware of program specifics and may advocate for their child/children as needed.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Websites
- Brochures/flyers
- Notes from translators at parent meetings

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
- Coordinate partnerships with the Office of Translation and Interpretation Services with language support; AIG teachers will participate to provide special lessons/project support and general program information.
- Develop advocacy groups focused on issues such as dual identification as AIG/ELL, AIG/LD, and AIG/AU.

Standard 5: Partnerships

The LEA ensures on-going and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.

Practice E
Forms partnerships with parents/families, institutions of higher education, local businesses and industry, and other stakeholders within the community to enhance and gain support for AIG programs and services.

This practice is a Focused Practice 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Community agencies and business partnerships can offer critical support for gifted education and opportunities for gifted learners. Collaboration with colleges and universities will provide opportunities for authentic learning experiences and increase availability of accelerated learning pathways for gifted students.

Goals:
- Create and maintain opportunities for gifted students to experience academic programs through university partnerships.
- Build relationships with local colleges/universities, businesses and industries that create real-world learning experiences for gifted students.

Description:
Disseminate list and descriptions of existing partnerships/activities:
- PAGE Super Saturdays at Meredith College
- SMILE with NC State
- Duke TIP

The AIG Program Staff provides community outreach efforts in the following ways:
- Meets with community members representing underserved/underrepresented/ at risk populations for a variety of events and community meetings as necessary such as the Raising Achievement Closing the Gap (RACG).
- Works to build partnerships with local colleges, universities, and businesses to provide professional mentors and resources for AIG students as needed.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Flyers for events and opportunities for gifted students
- Minutes/Agendas from RACG meetings

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Partner with standing organizations such as NCCAT, NC RESA, Triangle High Five, and other individual LEAs to create opportunities for professional development in gifted education and the needs of gifted learners for teachers, administrators, and the community.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the local AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice A
Develops a written AIG plan describing the local AIG program in accordance with state legislation and SBCGE policy, which has been approved by the LEA's school board and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016

Rationale:
Stakeholders have opportunities to review and provide input for the AIG plan and any local BOE policies associated with the AIG program. Feedback is used for revisions intended to improve the program.

Goals:
Strengthen relationships with a variety of stakeholders who will work with district employees to continually improve all aspects of the AIG program. Strengthen the AIG Advisory Committee by including more participants, opportunities for improvements in communication with this core group and the community.

Description:
An AIG Plan Revision Team reviewed and made initial revision suggestions. The AIG Advisory Committee met and suggested revisions for policies related to the AIG program as well as the plan itself. An external audit of the AIG program was conducted to evaluate current programming and effectiveness. Audit findings resulted in recommendations for improvement. All suggestions were taken into consideration as multiple drafts were created.

Key stakeholder groups provided input for the Academically Intellectually Gifted Plan 2013-2016 by evaluating the current plan and providing suggestions for revision. The evaluations were documented through meeting notes and/or using the AIG Program Self-Evaluation Tool. Stakeholder groups include the following: AIG Central Services Staff, parents, AIG teachers (K-8), principals, classroom teachers, senior district leadership, and community stakeholders.

The AIG Program Plan draft will ultimately be submitted to the Wake County Public School System Board of Education for review and approval. Once approved, the plan will be submitted to the SBE/DPI for review and comment.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Program Audit
- AIG Plan
- AIG Program Self-Evaluation Tool
- Meeting agendas

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Use members to promote awareness of the AIG program by discussing in communities, soliciting feedback, and reporting it to teams for continual improvement. Meetings with stakeholders will continue on a regular basis.

Practice B
Monitors the implementation of the local AIG program and plan in accordance with current legislation and state policies to ensure fidelity of implementation for all AIG program components.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The Wake County Public School System is the largest school district in North Carolina and sixteenth largest in the country. The AIG program must be closely monitored to ensure that services are delivered equitably and effectively in every school. Monitoring the program closely will also

maintain awareness so that students, regardless of race, sex, socio-economic status have opportunities to benefit from the AIG program.

Goals:

- To effectively monitor AIG Teachers' roles and responsibilities, student identification procedures, service delivery options, community outreach opportunities, and other critically important components of the Wake County AIG Program.
- To provide fidelity checks on the progress of AIG Program implementation as outlined within the WCPSS BOE approved AIG plan as requested.

Description:

The WCPSS AIG Plan is written in compliance with state legislation (Article 9B) and NC AIG Program Standards and approved by WCPSS BOE. It is critical to the success of the program that all components are in place and that stakeholders ensure the fidelity of the program. This ensures compliance within local BOE approved plan, state program standards, and state legislation.

School administrators must ensure that the AIG teacher role is utilized in accordance with local AIG plan, and supports the process and procedures as detailed in the plan to support growth of all students. Administrators are the direct supervisors and evaluators of AIG Teachers. AIG teachers are charged with implementing the AIG plan as approved by the local BOE while being a productive member of a specific school faculty who is focused on supporting the growth of all students.

A comprehensive plan in compliance with state legislation and policy will be updated and approved by the WCPSS Board of Education. This plan will guide our work through the 2013-2016 three-year cycle and will lay the ground work for more substantial program revision and implementation during the 2016-2019 plan period.

Planned Sources of Evidence

- 2013-2016 WCPSS AIG Plan
- Article 9B
- NC AIG Program Standards
- WCPSS BOE agenda/minutes

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Collaborate within the Academics Division to design a walk-through tool aligned with Effective Teaching Framework (ETF).

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the local AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice C

Uses and monitors state funds allotted for the local AIG program according to state policy.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Funding for AIG from the state is calculated at 4% of average daily membership (ADM), whereas WCPSS identifies approximately 18% of the total student population. Funds are limited and directed towards services for the Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program through payment of AIG teacher salaries and related benefits. Local monies are allotted to support remaining staffing costs and provide supplies and materials for program needs.

Goals:
To research and deploy a multi-year plan for the implementation of a performance-based budgeting process that links resources to planning and student achievement that reflects that reflects the educational priorities of the district.

Description:
An annual budget plan is developed and monitored to ensure that expenditures are used only for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program services. A daily running budget workbook is updated with each expenditure and encumbrance. Annual business cases are developed and presented to the Board of Education for consideration of additional local funding to support expansions of AIG Program services in subsequent school years.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- AIG Business and Spending Plans
- Running Daily Budget Workbook
- Business Cases
- Research regarding performance-based budget

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continually evaluate effectiveness of budget process and appropriate use of funds.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice D
Maintains, analyzes, and shares student performance growth and annual drop-out data for AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Student achievement data is one measure of the AIG Program's effectiveness. We will extract and monitor student performance growth data as well as annual drop-out data on AIG students for continual improvement.

Goals:
WCPSS AIG Program will maintain AIG data in a more accessible and manageable platform. AIG Program Staff will use growth and drop-out data to support students' individual growth. Data will be shared with AIG teachers and classroom teachers to inform instruction.

Description:
Data is available regarding AIG students across the district. AIG Staff will utilize this data in discussions regarding AIG identified and highly capable students' growth with administrators, teachers and specialist across the district. School staff will continue to use formative and summative assessment data to monitor AIG student growth. AIG program staff will continue to collaborate with the RACG by using data to begin to break down barriers in gifted programs for underrepresented populations.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Student Achievement Data
- AIG Identified Student Drop-Out data
- RACG notes/minutes

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Use EOG/EOC data, reported by NCDPI beginning in 2013-2014, regarding AIG as a sub-group to help guide programming.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice E
Monitors the representation and retention of underrepresented populations in the local AIG program, including students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The disaggregated district demographic data compared with our AIG Childcount generated each April are key sources for monitoring the representation and retention of underrepresented

populations. AIG Program Staff will more carefully extract and monitor our twice-exceptional student count. All this raw data is available, but the work is yet to be done. We remain committed to closely monitoring change in our subgroups and the effectiveness of our programming response during the new plan cycle. The Wake County AIG Program believes that gifted behaviors can be nurtured and the number of children from underrepresented populations identified as gifted can be increased.

Goals:
Disaggregate and monitor data on our underrepresented population overtime. AIG program will nurture gifted behaviors and aim to increase the number of children from underrepresented populations identified as gifted.

Description:
The AIG Program collects and reviews data from a variety of sources. Careful analysis of data will guide decision making related to identification criteria. WCPSS AIG Program utilizes multiple Gateways for accessing gifted services.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Headcounts of AIG identified students by subgroups
- AIG Identification Gateways
- Data from Gifted Rating Scale (GRS)

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Continue to evaluate the use of the GRS in identifying students from underrepresented populations. A district-wide evaluation of current nurturing initiatives will dictate future practices in nurturing K-8 students. Continual improvements will be lead by an analysis of data boring down from the district level to specific class and student performance.

Standard 6: Program Accountability
The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice F
Maintains current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Teachers are required to hold full or a provisional license in Academically or Intellectually Gifted Education in order to serve as a school's AIG teacher and paid from 034 AIG funds.

Goals:

WCPSS will recruit and retain appropriately licensed staff to fill positions who:

- Demonstrate knowledge in characteristics of gifted learners
- Demonstrate knowledge of a variety gifted services
- Demonstrate the ability differentiation within the classroom.
- Identify gifted behaviors and create appropriate lessons to address their needs.

If program staff does not adequately fulfill roles and responsibilities of the program, school administration will work in collaboration with AIG Central Services to make appropriate personnel decisions.

Description:
HR and AIG Central Services staff will collaborate to refine job descriptions of AIG personnel. The Human Resources Department provides updated licensure records for AIG Certified teachers upon request. School administration and AIG Central Service staff will communicate on a regular basis to determine AIG staffing needs, concerns, and or celebrations.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- List of AIG certified teachers
- Job descriptions for AIG Staff

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Encourage classroom teachers to seek AIG licensure, despite lack of funding support.

Standard 6: Program Accountability
The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice G
Forms an advisory group of community members, parents/families of AIG students representative of diverse populations in the program, teachers of the gifted, and other professional staff who meet regularly to review all aspects of the local AIG program and make recommendations for program improvement.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
AIG Advisory Committee will meet regularly to evaluate program effectiveness, equity in program delivery across the district, and/or advocate for AIG students and recommend changes.

Goals:

To continually evaluate and refine AIG Advisory Committee membership to most accurately reflect the diversity of the WCPSS community.

Description:
The AIG Department has an established AIG Advisory Committee. This team includes parents of AIG identified students, principals, Central Service Administrators, AIG and classroom teachers, community members, and AIG Central Services Program Staff who meet regularly to review all aspects of the AIG Program and make recommendations for improvement.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Meeting agendas
- Survey/Evaluation tools
- Advisory member list

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
Seek input from a variety of sources for continual improvement. This will also be a platform for staff to disseminate information to the public for awareness to ensure most accurate feedback.

Standard 6: Program Accountability
The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional

Practice H
Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the quality and effectiveness of the AIG program.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Stakeholder perception and feedback as to effectiveness of the AIG program is vital to continuous improvement. Additional feedback from stakeholders will increase the fidelity of the AIG Program.

Goals:
Develop and administer stakeholder surveys. WCPSS AIG Program will use this data to inform a review in anticipation of significant program changes in the next plan cycle**.**

Description:
As WCPSS ensures all programs and services are effective in meeting the needs of gifted learners, evaluations of programming and service delivery will take place through a variety of venues. It is an opportune time for the gifted program to reflect on its policies and practices and make informed, data-driven changes over the next three years.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
- Focus group data
- Use of AIG School Plans and teacher workbooks
- Parent and community session agendas

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Research and implement a variety of ways to elicit feedback and incorporate into programming.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice I

Reviews and revises the AIG program and plan based on multiple sources of data for continuous program improvement.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Data must drive decision making for continuous improvement. Feedback from stakeholders is used to measure effectiveness and set goals for improving the program.

Goals:

Review and revise the AIG Plan yearly based on data.

Description:

Opportunities for growth and continued improvement are identified during data collection from stakeholders and are addressed in the AIG Plan. These areas are:

- Improve communication at all levels, with special attention on improving communication from AIG teachers to parents regarding academic progress and needs of identified AIG students.
- Increase participation of stakeholders in program evaluation and improvement

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Focus group and survey results
- AIG student growth data
- Examples of communication/documents

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Revise and clarify information contained within the AIG Parent Guide and AIG Program Brochure.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice J
Disseminates all data from evaluation of the AIG program to the public.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
Stakeholders have a right to access results of AIG Program evaluation efforts. As the current plan is implemented, feedback will be gathered from all stakeholders. As staffing and budget allow, information will be compiled, shared, and evaluated by the various stakeholder groups for research in continual improvement efforts.

Goals:
To increase communication with stakeholders regarding all aspects of the program including evaluation efforts.

Description:
The AIG Department, as staffing and budget allow, will share and publish program evaluation data in a variety of formats and outlets to all stakeholders. Formats may include, but not limited to, website publishing, report documentation, and/or public presentations. The data may be shared at least once a year.

Planned Sources of Evidence:
Sharing and publishing documentation will be presented in a variety of formats which may include:

- PowerPoint Presentations
- Brochures and Pamphlets
- Website Links
- Meeting Presentations

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:
As funding and staffing allow, improvements and publications will be upgraded. Communication will be expanded to include the use of Twitter.

Standard 6: Program Accountability
The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Practice K
Protects the rights of all AIG students through policies, procedures, and practices.

This practice is a Focus Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:
The AIG Plan articulates and publishes identification procedures. Board Policies 5532 Acceleration and Academic Achievement and 6230 Assurance of Appropriate Services for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students provide guidelines for meeting the needs of gifted learners. The AIG plan approved by the WCPSS BOE is guided by the NC AIG Program Standards and Article 9b from the State Legislators.

Goals:

Inform parents and other stakeholders of their legal rights regarding AIG decisions. Informs stakeholders of all aspects of AIG programming.

Description:

The WCPSS AIG Program plan is governed by the requirements of N.C. General Statutes Article 9B. Also guiding AIG programming is NC AIG Program Standards. The WCPSS AIG Program plan addresses identification and service delivery as required by law.

WCPSS Board Policy 6230, N.C. General Statutes, Article 9B and the Wake County Public School System define gifted students as follows:

- Academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to perform at high levels of accomplishments when compared with others their age, experience or environment. Academically or intellectual gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated education services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human behavior.

WCPSS Board Policy 6230 also provides the following details**:**

6230.2

The Wake County Public School System Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program assures that all students identified, as Academically or Intellectually Gifted will be provided appropriate differentiated services according to the plan adopted by the WCPSS Board of Education. The plan shall be reviewed and revised, as needed, at least every three years.

6230.3

The Wake County Public School System's Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program identifies and services students who qualify for Early Admission to Kindergarten as determined by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

6230.4

The Wake County Public School System Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program participates in the Governor's School Selection Process as determined by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

The rights of families are clear throughout LEA policies. These rights are included and detailed within the AIG Parent Guide. All parents of nominated AIG students will receive the AIG Parent Guide with the Consent for Evaluation form.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Board Policies 5532 and 6230
- NC DPI AIG Program Standards
- Article 9b
- AIG Identification Procedures
- Parent Guide
- Consent for Evaluation Form

Other Comments:

Ideas of Strengthening:

Revise the Consent for Evaluation Form to include a parent signature and statement that must be acknowledged by stating that they received the Parent Guide.

Appendices

Appendix A: Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program
Acronyms and Glossary

General Acronyms

AIG CST	AIG Central Services Team
AIG	Academically or Intellectually Gifted
AP	Advanced Placement
C-MAPP	Curriculum Management Application
DCP	Differentiated Course Plan
DEP	Differentiated Education Plan
DPI	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
EC	Exceptional Children
EKE	Early Kindergarten Entry
ELL	English Language Learners
EOC	End of Course
EOG	End of Grade
ESL	English as a Second Language
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
GRS	Gifted Rating Scale
IB	International Baccalaureate
IDEP	Individual Differentiated Education Plan
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ISP	Individual Student Profiles
KITS	Kids Into Thinking
LEA	Local Education Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
NAGC	National Association for Gifted Children
NCEES	North Carolina Educator Evaluation System
NCSCOS	North Carolina Standard Course of Study
NCVPS	North Carolina Virtual Public Schools
OTI	Office of Translation and Interpretation
P.E.T.S.	Primary Education Thinking Skills
PD	Professional Development
PEP	Personalized Educational Plan
PLT	Professional Learning Teams
RACG	Raising Achievement and Closing the Gap
RtI	Responsiveness to Instruction
SAGE	Services for Academically Intellectually Gifted Education
SBCGE	School Based Committee for Gifted Education
SBOE	State Board of Education
TOPS	Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students

USTARS~ PLUS	Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students-Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students - a nationally recognized K-3 science-based observation and nurturing system
WCPSS	Wake County Public School System
WGA	Whole Grade Advancement

Abbreviations for Norm Referenced Assessments Administered by AIG Teachers

Advanced Raven	Raven Advanced Progressive Matrices
CogAt	Cognitive Abilities Test
Iowa	Iowa Assessments Test
Raven	Raven Standard Progressive Matrices
RIST	Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (RIST)
WJIII NU	Woodcock Johnson III Normative Update, Tests of Achievement

Abbreviations for Norm Referenced Assessments Administered by AIG Psychologist

DAS	Differential Ability Scales, Second Edition
KTEA-II	Kaufman Tests of Educational Achievement
KTEA-II	Kaufman Tests of Educational Achievement, Second Edition
RIAS	Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales
SB:V	Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Fifth Edition
UNIT	Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Test
WIAT-II	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test–II
WISC-IV	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition:
WJ III	Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement-III
WNV	Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability

Related Assessment Abbreviations

AE	Age Equivalent
C	Composite score
FIQ	Full Scale Intelligence Quotient
GE	Grade Equivalent
NPR	National Percentile Rank
NV	Non-verbal
QN	Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite
S	Stanine
SAS	Standard Age Score

Glossary

Achievement	Achievement refers to subject area tests' percentiles for a nationally normed standardized test. Individual achievement assessments are administered when aptitude scores used for placement consideration suggest a need for placement, but group achievement score do not. A second measure of achievement is obtained.

Advanced Placement (AP) (9-12)

The AP program offers college-level coursework for students as early as middle school. AP exams allow students to earn university credit and/or advanced university standing based on the examination score. The state weighting system adds the equivalent of two quality points to the grade earned in the AP/IB course.

Aptitude

Aptitude is the inclination to excel in a cognitive area. Aptitude refers to the percentile from a nationally normed standardized test. Student aptitude scores are analyzed based on significant differences among subtest scores to determine if the Composite score or the subtest scores (Verbal, Quantitative, and Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite) better reflect the student's aptitude. The Quantitative-Nonverbal Partial Composite (QN Partial Composite) better predicts achievement in mathematics and some technical domains than either the Quantitative Battery or Nonverbal Battery alone. It also allows for meaningful score interpretation for English Language Learners (ELL) and underrepresented populations since none of the items on either the Quantitative or Nonverbal tests require language. Based on this analysis, the score best representing the student's aptitude is used for placement consideration. Individual aptitude assessments are administered when achievement scores suggest a need for placement, but group aptitude scores do not, so a second measure of aptitude is obtained. Specific individual aptitude measures can be chosen (verbal/nonverbal) based upon the strengths of the referred student.

Cluster Grouping

Assigned grouping for gifted students in the regular heterogeneous classroom. Typically, five or six gifted students with similar needs, abilities, or interests are "clustered" in the same regular class for the majority of gifted education services. Grouping allows the teacher to more efficiently differentiate assignments for a group of advanced learners rather than singularly or in a pair. Students are placed in cluster groups based on their identification in language arts and/or mathematics.

Co-Teaching and Collaborative Consultation

Commonly referred to as push-in, provides benefits to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Two teachers in a classroom improve the teacher-to-student ratio. Additionally, both co-teaching and consultation offer opportunities for diversifying classroom instruction and methodology.

Curriculum Compacting

After showing a level of proficiency in the basic curriculum through a pre-assessment, a student can be allowed to exchange instructional time for advanced content and skill development in that area. This accelerative practice focuses on enrichment within a specific content area for depth of knowledge.

Differentiation — Tailoring instruction to meet individual needs by modifying curriculum and instruction according to content, pacing, and/or product.

Dual Enrollment — WCPSS middle or high school students have the opportunity to take approved courses for high school credit at regionally accredited institutions, including institutions of Higher Education (IHE), NCVPS, and non-WCPSS secondary schools. Courses taken must provide opportunities not currently available to the student at the middle school or high school, including courses of an advanced or expanded nature. The base school will award high school graduation credit and grades when the official grade report for the course taken is received at the base school. Quality points will be calculated as defined in the WCPSS high school program-planning guide. The student's official high school transcript will include grades and credit earned through dual enrollment. For students in grades 9-12, the grades earned through dual enrollment will factor into the Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and class rank.

Early College High School

Early College means students take college courses at local colleges as well as the courses required to earn a high school diploma over a five year period. Early Colleges blend high school and college in a rigorous, yet supportive program, compressing the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and the first two years of college.

Early High School Graduation

Early High School Graduation is the practice of facilitating the completion of the high school program in fewer than four years for the purpose of providing earlier than typical access to post-secondary educational opportunities.

Early Kindergarten Entry (EKE)

A child who has reached his /her 4th birthday by April 16, may participate in Kindergarten early, if he or she demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity. The child must meet specific requirements set forth by the LEA prior to conditional enrollment for entering kindergarten early. The process as outlined in WCPSS EKE

documents must be followed to ensure the most appropriate placement decision is made.

Enrichment — extension of the curriculum

Explorers Model — Throughout the academic year, the AIG teacher works in partnership with all third grade teachers to provide a variety of in-class experiences in language arts and mathematics designed to elicit high academic performance. All third grade students participate in whole class experiences. As the year progresses, students who demonstrate potential in these in-class experiences receive advanced and enriched learning opportunities. Student groups remain flexible and fluid throughout the school year to allow students with varying strengths and gifts to benefit from higher level instruction from a gifted specialist. This also provides the opportunity for the AIG teacher to develop work samples demonstrating higher-order and problem solving skills. This can be used as part of the student's portfolio to support the need for AIG identification.

Flexible Grouping — Grouping is used to facilitate appropriate instruction. Flexible groups allow for modification of curricula and instruction according to common ability, readiness levels, learning styles, and/or interest of students. Identified students will have opportunities to be grouped flexibly without being separated from the rest of their classmates. This may include flexible in-class or across-class groupings for differentiated activities or units. Students may be pre-assessed to form groups based upon common and specific needs in specific curricular areas.

Gateways — WCPSS's AIG Program outlines multiple Gateways for identification into the AIG Program.

Grade-based Acceleration

Strategies that typically shorten the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. A student is placed on a full time basis in a higher-grade level than is typically given for the student's age for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

Individual Subject Acceleration (ISA)(K-5)

ISA is the practice of assigning a student to a higher-grade level than is typical given the student's age, for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

International Baccalaureate – Diploma Programme (DP) 11-12

Advanced students may participate in the IB Diploma Programme if they have taken all of the prerequisite courses. At the end of high school the students are required to complete internationally-assessed examinations, a 4000-word extended essay and 300 Community/Action/Service (CAS) throughout the two-year programme. Some universities offer college course credits upon the successful completion of the Diploma Programme. Students interested in participating in the MYP and/or the DP would need to participate in Magnet Programs application process unless the interested student(s) currently reside within the base area of the school.

International Baccalaureate – Middle Years Programme (MYP) 6-10

The MYP is a whole-school 6th-10th grade curriculum at East Millbrook Magnet Middle School, East Garner Magnet Middle School, Millbrook Magnet High School and Garner Magnet High School. After the tenth grade, students have the opportunity to participate in the Diploma Programme, which is an 11th-12th grade program that fulfills the North Carolina graduation requirements through an internationally-normed curriculum (See International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme).

mclass — This is a diagnostic reading benchmark used to inform reading instruction in young readers.

NC Virtual Public School

NCVPS provides students the opportunity to enroll in courses that they cannot take at their local school. NCVPS offers high school and middle school credit acceleration course options.

Observation — The classroom teacher must fill out the observation checklist which targets gifted behaviors for a nominated candidate. Parents also must fill out an observation checklist.

Performance — Classroom performance information includes current grades, benchmark assessments in reading and mathematics, literacy assessments, math assessments and portfolio samples of differentiated work. Parents may submit work samples which must be replicated in the classroom setting. Any other available anecdotal information may be included.

Portfolio — As a supplement to traditional measures of giftedness, portfolios present a collection of student work across a period of time that can help to determine progress and achievement. Frequently the elements found in portfolios may be hard to capture in a standardized test.

Thinking at Every Desk: Four Simple Skills to Transform Your Children

This training provides tools to understand thinking patterns and how learning actually happens. It empowers teachers to structure learning in the most meaningful way, helping students explore new paths to knowledge. 1. Content-based Acceleration typically allows a student to remain with peers of the same age and grade for the majority of the school day, but receive higher grade-level instruction in an advanced grade. Content-based acceleration can also refer to allowing a student to work on higher grade-level instruction in his regular classroom in lieu of grade-level instruction.

Whole Grade Advancement (WGA)

WGA typically shortens the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. In practice, a student is placed, on a full-time basis, in a higher-grade level than is typical for the student's age. The student is placed for the purpose of providing access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities. Grade-based acceleration is commonly known as "grade skipping," but it can include other means to shorten the number of years a student remains in the K-12 school system. The exception is early entrance to kindergarten, which does not shorten the number of years the student spends in the K-12 system but shortens the wait time to start school. WCPSS will provide whole-grade acceleration options to exceptional students that meet the standards set by the district. Students may be considered only if the following can be clearly demonstrated and confirmed, as defined by the Iowa Acceleration Scale 3rd Edition.

A. Academic achievement in all areas of the curriculum
B. Intellectual ability
C. Social and emotional maturity
D. Persistence and motivation
E. Acceleration is determined to be in the best interest of the student Students that do not meet the standards for whole-grade acceleration may be eligible to participate in other forms of acceleration.

Young Scholars

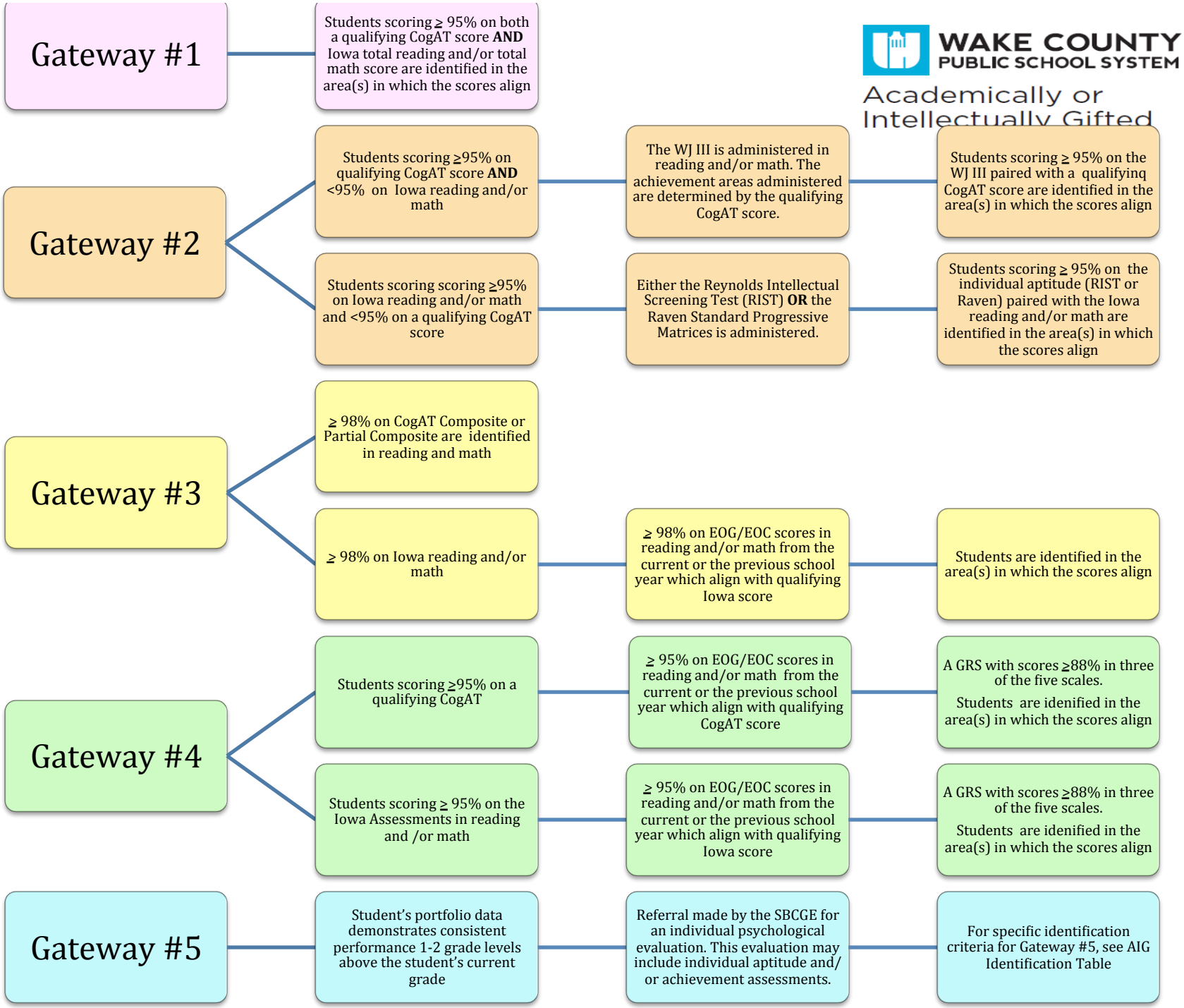
Through systematic observations of all students, anecdotal records, and a careful review of portfolios of student work, classroom teachers in Kindergarten through grade two, identify and nurture students who have gifted potential, (i.e., an ability to think, reason, and problem solve at a level that is advanced in comparison to their peers).

Appendix B: WCPSS Gateways to AIG Identification

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">GRADE</th></tr>
<tr><th rowspan="2">REGULAR EDUCATION</th><th>K-2</th><th>3</th><th>4-8</th><th>9-12</th></tr>
<tr><td>Standard Course of Study</td><td>County wide CogAT Testing
• Students scoring ≥ 85% on any CogAT subtest or composite take Iowa Assessments (Iowa).
• Parents and teachers can request for other students to take Iowa.
Iowa Assessment Testing for referred students</td><td>Standard Course of Study</td><td>Standard Course of Study</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="5">AIG PROCESS</th></tr>
<tr><td>NOMINATION</td><td>1.Parents or teachers nominate
2. SBCGE meets to review nomination and requests data collection
3. Based on collected data, students performing 2-3 grade levels above peers are submitted to AIG Central Services for review</td><td rowspan="2">Students scoring ≥ 95% on either a qualifying CogAT score or Iowa total reading or math score. (Nomination/ Referral)</td><td>• Parents or teachers nominate
• EOG scores, work samples other available data are reviewed for all students with academic potential
• Based on review of collected data, students may be
• Nomination only – no referral
• Referred for evaluation</td><td>1. Parents or teachers nominate and/or student may self-nominate. These nominations are primarily in response to Governor's School Applications.
2. Data is collected and reviewed for nominated students.
3. Students may be
-Nominated only – no referral
- Referred for evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><td>REFERRAL</td><td>AIG Central Services reviews data and portfolio for referral decision. Referred students are submitted to AIG psychologist for evaluation.</td><td>The CogAT and Iowa are administered to referred students during specified testing windows during (fall and spring testing windows).</td><td>The CogAT and Iowa are administered to students referred during specified testing window for Governors School.</td></tr>
<tr><td>GATEWAY #1</td><td>Students scoring ≥ 98% on both individually administered cognitive and achievement assessments are identified.

Assessments provided for K-2 referred students are culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through the referral and assessment.</td><td colspan="3">➢ Students scoring ≥ 95% on qualifying CogAT score AND Iowa total reading and/or total math total score are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align</td></tr>
</table>

GATEWAY #2	Not applicable K-2	➢ Students scoring ≥95% on qualifying CogAT score AND <95% on Iowa reading and/or math - an individual achievement assessment will be administered: o The Woodcock Johnson III will be administered in reading and/ or math. The achievement areas administered are determined by the qualifying CogAT score. The subtests chosen are culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through the referral and assessment. o **Students scoring ≥95% on the Woodcock Johnson III paired with qualifying CogAT score are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.** ➢ Students scoring ≥95% on Iowa reading and/or math and <95% on qualifying CogAT score - an individual aptitude assessment will be administered: o Either the Reynolds Intellectual Screening Test (RIST) or the Raven Standard Progressive Matrices will be administered. The test chosen is culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through the referral and assessment. o **Students scoring ≥95% on the RIST or Raven paired with qualifying Iowa score in reading and/or math are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.**
GATEWAY #3	Not applicable K-2	➢ Students scoring ≥ 98% on CogAT Composite or Partial Composite are identified in reading and math. ➢ Students scoring ≥ 98% on Iowa reading and/or math AND ≥ 98% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or previous school year which align with the qualifying Iowa score are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.
GATEWAY #4	Not applicable K-2	➢ Students scoring ≥95% on a qualifying CogAT score AND o ≥ 95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year which align with the qualifying CogAT score, AND o A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS scales (Intellectual, Academic , Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation) **Students meeting these criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the scores align.** ➢ Students scoring ≥ 95% on the Iowa Assessments in reading and/or math, AND o ≥ 95% on EOG/EOC scores in reading and/or math from the current or the previous school year which align with the qualifying CogAT score, AND o A Gifted Rating Scale with scores ≥88% in three of the five GRS scales (Intellectual, Academic , Creativity, Leadership, or Motivation) **Students meeting these criteria are identified in the area(s) in which the score(s) align.**
GATEWAY #5	Not applicable K-2	➢ Gateway #4 is a referral made by the SBCGE for an individual psychological evaluation to be conducted by the AIG psychologist. This evaluation may include individual aptitude and or achievement assessments. ➢ This Gateway can be accessed when a student's portfolio data demonstrates consistent performance 1-2 grade levels above the student's current grade placement but the student does not meet identification criteria in Gateway #1, #2, #3 or #4. ➢ There are circumstances under which Gateway # 4 can be accessed for any student when the SBCGE determines an individual assessment is appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to: o Students needing individual nonverbal aptitude assessment o Students who because of diagnosed medical problems, group testing is not appropriate o Students whose group scores do not reflect the student's performance in the class (all group scores < 95%) o Students with IEPs or 504 Plans ➢ Students scoring ≥95% on individual cognitive ability assessment and on achievement in reading and/or math are identified. ➢ Students scoring ≥95% on the individual aptitude, but below 95% on the individual achievement can access Gateway #3 ➢ Students scoring ≥95% on the individual achievement, but below 95% on the individual aptitude, can access Gateway #3



Appendix C. *Gateway entry may be accessed with scores from WCPSS approved aptitude and/or achievement assessments administered by a licensed psychologist.*

Appendix D: Co-Teaching and Collaborating

Table of Contents
Co-teaching and Collaborating

Co-teaching and collaborating between a special educator and a general educator is a service designated on a student's IEP. The following information is designed to help the collaborating teachers structure this service so that our students receive special education services in the general education setting. Special educators must keep a daily log of the collaborating service that they provide so that they have data to show this service was indeed provided. There are several samples of collaboration logs included in this guide that can be used for this accountability..

Strategies for Co-Teaching

Co-teaching relationships go though three states: forming, storming and norming. In the first stage, teachers figure out what their pet peeves are, what the daily routine might consist of, and how they will interact with one another and with the students. Naturally, disagreements will occur at times. This would be considered the storming stage. During this phase of the relationship, good communication skills and true commitment to this process is necessary. This is the time when many co-teachers decide to part ways, disgruntled with the situation. However, for those who want to reap the true benefits of co-teaching and who work through the storming phase, the next stage of the process involves norming. Norming involves true collaboration, occasional compromise and in the end, finding ways to truly benefit all students in the classroom in such a way that both teachers are actively engages. This final phase generally results in both teachers feeling pleased with the final results of their interactions and willing to engage in another co-teacher relationship in the future. The following strategies are provided as guides to assist teachers in moving more quickly from the forming and storming stages through to the norming stage.

1. Talk about your pet peeves early in the relationship
2. Include signals that both teachers are equal partners by having both teachers' names on the board in the beginning of school and using "we" instead of "I".
3. Determine a regularly scheduled time each week for planning and reflection. If that cannot be a common planning time during school, consider regular lunch dates or ask to take a day to plan each grading period.
4. Be open about your own strengths and weaknesses related to teaching, grading, organizational practices, planning, etc. Try to maximize each person's strengths by breaking up work by personal preferences.
5. Talk to the students about this relationship and discuss the fact that, even if the teachers may have different opinions about something, students are never allowed to play "mother against father. Support one another in front of students-and then feel free to disagree over during your de-briefing time until you come to a reasonable understanding or until you agree to disagree.

6. Use different instructional activities. Do not get stuck in the same old-same old routine. Regroup students frequently, making sure you have different students in different groups each time so that no one is stigmatized as being with a "special ed" group. Try new things! Read cook and Friend (1995) and Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) for more strategies on how to regroup students into different models that can work with co-teaching.
7. Encourage your administrators to support your actions by occasionally providing substitute teachers so that you have more time to plan together.
8. Above all, be open to learning form one another. Provide one another positive reinforcement, ongoing encouragement, and continued support. A frequently mentioned benefit to co-teaching is that there is another adult in the room to get your jokes, share in the work and eliminate the feeling of adult isolation. Remember, you are no longer alone in this daunting task of education-Celebrate that fact.

Adapted from CARS+

Co-Teaching Summar

Co Teaching is...	**Co-Teaching is not...**
Two or more professionals working together	A teacher and an assistant or teacher's aide
Conducted in the same classroom	When a few students are pulled out of the classroom on a regular basis.
Conducted with heterogeneous groups.	Pulling a group of students with disabilities to the back of the general education class.
When both teachers plan for instruction together. The general education teacher (GET) is the expert on the content while the special education teacher (SET) is the expert on individualizing and delivery to various learning modalities	When the general education teacher (GET) plans all lessons and the special education teacher (SET) walks in to the room and says, "what are we doing today and what should I do?"
When both teachers provide substantive instruction together-having planned together, the SET can grade homework, teach content, facilitate activities, etc.	When the special education teacher walks around the room all day as the general education teacher teaches the content.
When both teachers assess and evaluate student progress. IEP goals are kept in mind as are the curricular goals and standards for that grade level.	When the GET grades "his" kids and the SET grades "her" kids – or when the GET grades all students and the SET surreptitiously changes the grades and calls is "modifying after the fact."
When teachers maximize the benefits of having two teachers in the room by having both teachers actively engages with students. Examples of different co-teaching models include team-teaching, station teaching, parallel-teaching, alternative-teaching and one teach-one support	When teachers take turns being "in charge" of the class so that the other teacher can get caught up in grading, photocopying, making phone calls, creating IEPs, etc.-or when students remain in the large group setting in lecture format as teachers rotate who gets to "talk at them."
When teachers reflect on the progress and process, offering one another feedback on teaching styles, content, activities, and other items pertinent to improving the teaching situation	When teachers get frustrated with one another and tell the rest of the faculty in the teachers' lunge or when one teacher simply tells the other teacher what to do and how to do it.

Co-Teaching/Collaboration Decisions

Topics to discuss with your co-teacher before you begin so that one of you is NOT a glorified aide.

1. How will roles be determined so that the students see us both as equal partners?

2. How will we present *co-teaching* to the students, parents and other staff?

3. How and when will we plan?

4. Will we keep one plan book?

5. What will be our class rules and expectations?

6. How will we grade student achievement?

7. How will we set up the room?

8. How will we handle behaviors in the classroom?

9. What bugs you the most?

10. What routines work best for you?

11. What tasks do you like to do/hate to do?

12. How will we both work with <u>all</u> students?

13. How we will utilize the resource of having two teachers in one class?

Avoiding "Glorified Aide" Status

When one teacher does this…	The other can do this…
Assigns differentiated work	
Gives directions	
Identifies standard to address	
Works with small group	
Writes on overhead	
Collects class work	

Three things that we will do to ensure parity in the classroom are:

1.

2.

3.

Collaboration Models

Collaboration Models	Pros	Cons
One teacher, one support teacher Subject expert often lead teacher Support teacher often specialist	❑ Gain data: behavior rating scales, academic assessment, how something is taught ❑ Support and redirect ❑ students Role reversal opportunities ❑ Good introductory method ❑ Joint planning	❑ Poor utilization of staff ❑ Unequal roles ❑ Often collaboration roles end here
Parallel teaching ❑ Divide the class ❑ Both teach same content to half the class ❑ Plan together for consistency	❑ Smaller student teacher ratio ❑ Increased opportunities for practice, participation and monitoring ❑ Equal teaching responsibilities ❑ Ability groupings ❑ Separate certain students ❑ Joint planning	❑ Noise ❑ Equal coverage of content needed ❑ Timing of groups ❑ Transitions need to be well practiced ❑ Be careful to divide student mix equally
Station teaching ❑ Divide content and students ❑ Each teach mini-lesson ❑ Then switch groups and repeat ❑ Can include an independent group	❑ Can half preparation time for lessons ❑ Clear teacher responsibility ❑ Lower student-teacher ratio ❑ Opportunities for independent practice ❑ Students get both teaching styles and perspectives ❑ Provides kinesthetic breaks for students	❑ Noise ❑ Pacing/timing ❑ Behavior and work for independent group ❑ Transitions need to be well practiced

Collaboration Models Continued

Collaboration Models	Pros	Cons
Alternative teaching ❑ One large group, one small ❑ Smaller group may need pre-teaching or re-teaching or challenge activities	❑ Small group instruction ❑ Smaller group may need pre-teaching, re-teaching, oral testing, or challenge activities ❑ Use as needed ❑ Joint planning	❑ If small group is only special ed, it's stigmatizing
Team teaching ❑ Shared instruction and planning ❑ Coordinated activities ❑ Trust, commitment and personality compatibility a must	❑ Utilize expertise of each teacher ❑ It's fun ❑ Students benefit from different styles and interplay ❑ Joint planning	❑ Need planning time ❑ Conflicting styles can clash

Special Educator Co-Teaching Instructional Strategies and Competencies

California Standards of the Teaching Profession	Teacher Performance Expectation	Special Educators Competencies for the Level I Preliminary Credential	Special Educator-co-Teacher Instructional Strategies (Evidence)
Engaging and Supporting all Students in Learning	Making content Accessible 5: Student Engagement **6A&B**: Developing Appropriate Teaching Practices **6D**:Special Education **7**: Teaching English Learners	• Ensuring that students have access to the core curriculum. • Ensuring that students' goals and objectives respond to students' needs. • Ensuring that instructional strategies respond to students' learning styles. • Promoting self-advocacy, self-determination, and individual accountability. • Ensuring appropriate transitional supports.	• Providing anticipatory set. • Pre-teaching vocabulary • Expanding on a new concept, modeling a new concept. • Reviewing directions using an alternative modality. • Promotes active learning (decrease student passivity.) • Appropriate pacing of instruction. • Incorporates instructional technology. • Use of peer supports. • Use of transitional signals and directive between activities.
Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning	**10**; Instructional Time **11:** Social Environment	• Uses interventions that are positive, and respectful of all students. • Designs and implements positive Behavior Support plans as needed.	• Development of a trusting and professional teacher relationship with students. • Development of a classroom system that establishes and maintains standards for behavior. • Use of cooperative structures to promote social development, and group responsibility. • Use of heterogeneous grouping to promote fairness and respect and promote social justice. • Use of proximity teaching, voice modulation, facial expressions, and planned ignoring for classroom management.

Special Educator Co-Teaching Instructional Strategies and Competencies

California Standards of the Teaching Profession	Teacher Performance Expectations	Special Educators Competencies for the Level I Preliminary Credential	Special Educator-co-Teacher Instructional Strategies (Evidence)
Assessing Student Learning	Monitoring Student Learning During Instruction 3: Interpretation and Use of Assessments	• Collects data pertaining to students' goals and objectives. • Analyzes students' performances and revises goals and objectives or instruction as needed.	• Allowing for assessment with accommodations such as proctoring a small group and reading assessment questions for formative and summative assessments. • Promoting authentic assessments to include oral responses and project-based assessments, and portfolios. • Collaborative reviewing classroom assignments, student homework, and periodic assessments.
Developing as a Professional Educator	12: Professional, Legal, and Ethical Obligations 13: Professional Growth	• Practices student confidentiality • Attends professional growth activities. • Maintains professional relationships with school staff. • Practices self-assessment • Accepting of critical feedback.	• Developing and maintaining a parent, teach4r student communication system. • Collaborating and reflecting with co-teacher to improve instructional practices. • Collaborating special education staff on students' performance. • Attending special education professional development activities.

Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Format

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE THE LESSON

Facts about the Learners:	
Standards:	
Content/Context:	
Objectives:	
Key Vocabulary:	
Materials:	
Product/Assessments:	
Management/Discipline:	

Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

Date:	**Content Instruction** If one of you is doing this… *Examples: Explaining a new concept.*	**WHO**	***Differentiated Instruction*** *The other can be doing this…* *Examples Checking for understanding using active*	**WHO**
AnticipatorySet (Intro) *Motivating and Focusing Students, Building Background.*				
Teacher Input (Through) *Teaching to objectives, describing modeling, and actively engaging all students, comprehensible input, strategies,*				
Guided Practice (Through) *Student practice checking for understanding, meaningful activities, interaction, feedback.*				

Co-Teaching Lesson Plan

	Content Instruction If one of you is doing this… *Examples: Explaining a new concept.*	**WHO**	***Differentiated Instruction*** *The other can be doing this…* *Examples Checking for understanding using active*	**WHO**
Independent Practice (Through) *Providing students opportunities in the lesson, feedback.*				
Closure (Through) *Summarizing of instruction by staff and/or students, assess learning.*				
Transfer (Beyond) *Structuring opportunities for continues practice and transfer of learning.*				
Reflection (Beyond) *What went well, what changes will enhance learning?*				

Collaboration Service Log Legend

(For back of page)

1. Took roll
2. Provided warm-up/pre-taught vocabulary/previewed new concepts
3. Reviewed Homework
4. Simplified directions
5. Re-explained/simplified instruction with alternative modality
6. Checked for understanding/used active learning strategy
7. Monitored Independent Practice
8. Redirected students
9. Put notes on board/screen
10. Lectured/explained new concept
11. Parallel teaching-divide class, both teach same content to half of class
12. Station teaching-Gave mini lesson to half of class and switched groups
13. Alternate teaching-taught one large group or one small group
14. Co-taught (team taught) group lesson
15. Provided individual instruction
16. Summarized main idea of lesson
17. Wrote in Assignment notebook
18. Served as lecture scribe
19. Gathered data (behavioral, social, work habits, academic achievement)
20. Collected work
21. Graded assignments
22. Checked that IEP was being followed
23. Reviewed with class
24. Modified assignment
25. Modified test
26. Monitored Peer Tutor
27. Circulated for general assistance in class
28. Planned with teacher
29. Developed lesson plans
30. _____ Other (specify)

Weekly Collaboration Service log _____

Special Education Teacher

Week of _____

_____ _____ _____

GE Teacher Subject Period

Student(s)

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

Day	Amount of Time	Service Provided (See back for legend)
Monday		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Tuesday		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Wednesday		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Thursday		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Friday		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Daily Collaboration Log for a Student

Student Name _____

Modifications/Accommodations

__ Directions Given in a Variety of Ways
__ Increased Verbal Response Time
__ Individualized Instruction
__ Preferential Seating
__ Extended Time for Completing Assign.
__ Modified Curriculum
__ Note Taking
__ Modified Tests
__ Extended Time for Completing Tests
__ Oral Tests
__ Frequent Breaks_
__ Peer Buddy
__ Assignment Notebooks
__ Reduced Paper Pencil Tasks
__Calculator
__ Peer Tutor
__ Study Sheets
__ Repeated Review Drill
__ Short Answer Tests
__ Reader Services
__Other_____

Date	Comments

Special Education Teacher Daily Collaborating Log Per Period

Teacher_____ Date _____

Period	Location	Support provided to class	
1		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini Lesson __Other_____	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class
2		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini lesson __Other_____	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class
3		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini lesson __Other_____	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class
4		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini lesson __Other_____	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class
5		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini lesson __Other_____	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class
6		__Small group __Redirected students __Put notes on board __Simplified instruction __Plan with teacher __Mini lesson	__Simplified directions __Re-explained instruction __Check for understanding __Assignment notebook __Review with class __Daily Communication Log for a Class

Monthly Communication Log for a Student

Student _____Class_____ Per ____

GE Teacher SPED Collaborator

Month	**Week 1** M T W Th F	**Week 2** M T W Th F	**Week 3** M T W Th F	**Week 4** M T W Th F	Comments
Prepared for class Y or N					
Completed homework Y or N					
Participated Y or N					
Behavior Y or N					
On time, in attendance Y or N					
Accommodations given to Student					
Strategies used & benefits observed					

Daily Data Collection Log for a Class

Subject _____ Period _____ GE Teacher _____

SPED Observing Date

Student's Name	Prepared for class	Homework Completed	Participation	Behavior	Comments on student's strengths & challenges in the class

Y=yes, met expectations N= no, did not meet expectations N/A=not applicable

The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

Restructuring Gifted Education Services for the 21st Century

Dina Brulles[1] and Susan Winebrenner[2]

Abstract: Schools today are experiencing dramatic changes in how they serve gifted students. Gifted programs that have prevailed for years are disappearing. In response, an increasing number of schools are turning to the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM) to serve their gifted students. When implemented well, the SCGM represents one viable solution for providing effective and consistent gifted services within present budget constraints. Perceptions and practices that largely ignore the learning needs of gifted students carry heavy costs to society. Schools lose students to alternative programs, students lose opportunities for academic growth, and families lose faith in the education system. Instead, the potential of all students needs to be nurtured and developed. Current economic and political realities provide new opportunities to reexamine the ways we can deliver comprehensive and sustainable services for the most capable learners. The SCGM can achieve those goals in a way that is equitable and effective for all students by embedding gifted education services into the school system and increasing the possibility that the inherent needs of all students are understood and embraced. Focusing schools' attention on the needs of all students can enfranchise gifted students and demonstrate continued support for gifted education in the 21st century.

Keywords: gifted education, gifted, gifted programs, grouping, cluster grouping, clustering, inclusion

Schools today are experiencing dramatic changes in the ways they serve gifted students. Gifted programs that have prevailed for years are disappearing, and there is little hope of them being replaced in the foreseeable future.

In response, an increasing number of schools are turning to the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM) to serve their gifted students, as implementing this model requires no additional funding.[1] When implemented well, the SCGM represents one viable solution for providing effective and consistent gifted services within present budget constraints. In the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model, all students in a grade level are grouped according to their abilities and achievement levels. The model creates a balance of ability and achievement across each grade level, yielding desirable outcomes that benefit all students (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008). This article shows how the SCGM compares to other models and serves as a guide to educators who are seeking to implement the model in their schools.

WHEN IMPLEMENTED WELL, THE SCHOOLWIDE CLUSTER GROUPING MODEL REPRESENTS ONE VIABLE SOLUTION FOR PROVIDING EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT GIFTED SERVICES WITHIN PRESENT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS.

The Need for Gifted Education Services

During this age of accountability and tightened budgets, schools are experiencing the daunting task of increasing student achievement and providing equity in services. School administrators are now seeking ways to restructure or strengthen their gifted services within these present realities. Prevalent models for delivering gifted education services

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have met with some success throughout the years, as well as some challenges (Rogers, 2002). The following are several key concerns stemming from traditional models:

- The level of services may fluctuate across a school district. This variance in services encourages parents to carefully consider in which school attendance area to reside (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).
- Criteria for acceptance into gifted programs sometimes overlooks gifted students in the primary grades, those who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CLD), and those who are not working to their potential in school (Castellano, 2003).
- Programs that screen out gifted students who are not also high achieving may be viewed as elitist (Naglieri, Brulles, & Lansdowne, 2008).

Administrators seeking programming changes should consider whether these factors are important to the school community.

Visualizing a typical classroom, we can imagine three distinct groups that are present in unequal numbers: high-, average-, and low-achieving students (Winebrenner, 2003). Students in the average group are usually ready for grade-level curriculum, which means they will be learning new content throughout the year. Those who struggle to learn have received much of the nation's legislative attention and funding. They may represent 7% to 10% of the entire school population, with some students receiving special educational services. This practice reflects the system's understanding that these students have exceptional educational needs that must be addressed in order for them to achieve. Likewise, students who have high ability may also represent 7% to 10% of the entire school population, but the probability of their educational needs being accommodated is much lower than for students in the other groups (Winebrenner, 2003).

Accommodations that help gifted students learn and make progress require attention and careful planning. These goals can be accomplished within the current school system (Rogers, 2002). The process begins by reflecting on what is needed to support classroom teachers who have a broad range of ability in their classes and then developing ways to provide the needed support.

Professional development outcomes document that raising awareness of the needs of gifted students benefits all students. Building awareness of gifted students' learning needs can facilitate this process. Teachers can learn strategies that are critical for gifted students yet are effective with all (Gentry & MacDougall, 2009; Tieso, 2005; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008). This expanded understanding can result in more students moving from meeting to exceeding the standard.

Prevalent Gifted Education Models

Most schools with gifted programs incorporate variations of four prevalent models of gifted services: self-contained programs, pullout classes, honors classes, and cluster grouping models. Each model can have benefits and weaknesses depending on the structure and implementation of the services. The models, once flourishing, are becoming diminished in today's economic downturn. The following descriptions highlight a few pros and cons of these models in the context of present conditions.

Self-Contained Programs

Most self-contained gifted programs are designed for high-achieving, highly gifted students who are working well beyond their current grade level and studying content in greater depth than their grade-level peers. This program model is often critical to the academic growth of highly and profoundly gifted students. One limitation of the model is that it rarely serves gifted students who are not also high achieving. Therefore, the students in these programs might not reflect the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity present in other classrooms in the host school. This obstacle can be overcome when school districts providing self-contained programs supplement them with pullout and/or cluster models so they can better serve all their gifted students.

Pullout Programs

Pullout gifted programs vary in delivery of curriculum and instructional methods and in the amount of time students receive services. Instruction for gifted students in pullout models is oriented toward content replacement, enrichment, and/or independent study opportunities. Pullout times may vary from one hour to one day per week. While the instruction during pullout times can be valuable and also enhance learning in other areas, on its own this model does not recognize students' need for gifted education services throughout every school day. When pullout programs represent the sole source of gifted services, classroom teachers may become complacent about challenging gifted students when in their homeroom classes (Brulles, 2005). Due to supplemental staffing needs, pullout services represent the most costly model, thus prompting many schools to eliminate this option.

Content Replacement/Honors Classes

In content replacement, or honors classes, high-achieving gifted students receive advanced curriculum and instruction in core content areas, typically in mathematics and/or reading. A gifted education teacher outside the regular classroom at the home school provides the advanced curriculum. In some scenarios, all students are regrouped according to ability for instruction that is directed toward the particular needs of each group. Parents and teachers report that gifted students appreciate learning in honors classes, for both social and academic reasons.

Sporadic differentiation for gifted students sometimes occurs in the honors class or in the other subject areas in the regular class. This model assumes that gifted students have developed talent in only one or two content areas instead of being recognized as "gifted children" having exceptional general

ability that relates to various academic areas (Naglieri et al., 2008). Most honors teachers have expertise in their content area, but some may not have a full understanding of the learning needs of gifted students.

Cluster Grouping

Cluster grouping models have been used in various forms for decades (Gentry, 1999; Gentry & MacDougall, 2008; Gubbins et al., 2002; Hoover, Sayler, & Feldhusen, 1993; Kulik & Kulik, 1991; Rogers, 1988; Winebrenner & Devlin, 2001). When incorporating a cluster grouping model, students identified as gifted are clustered into otherwise heterogeneous classes. Gifted students' achievement increases when gifted students learn together (Brulles, Cohn, & Saunders, 2010; Gentry, 1999; Gentry & MacDougall, 2008; Kulik & Kulik, 1991; Rogers, 1988; Tieso, 2005). The gifted cluster teacher is expected to provide consistent compacting and differentiated learning opportunities in the cluster classroom (Brulles, 2005; Gentry & MacDougall, 2008; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).

One challenge with cluster grouping models occurs when schools group the gifted-identified students in classes with the high achievers. Although this method benefits gifted students and helps teachers focus instruction at students' readiness levels (Gentry & MacDougall, 2008; Kulik & Kulik, 1991), school administrators report that some parents, teachers, and principals perceive a lack of academic leadership in classes that do not have gifted or high average students. Another important challenge is that successful cluster grouping requires monitoring by a school administrator to ensure that gifted students receive appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction (Brulles, 2005; Gentry & MacDougall, 2008; Rogers, 1988; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).

In summary, all four models provide certain benefits and challenges. Knowing that one single gifted service model cannot fully provide for the differentiated learning experiences needed by all gifted students, school administrators should strive to implement as full a range of programs as possible. This ensures that schools' gifted services are inclusive and thus more likely to improve achievement for all students in the school.

The SCGM: Addressing Elements of Effective Gifted Programs

It is unlikely that one program model can successfully meet the needs of all gifted students. Nonetheless, effective gifted programs share critical features. In successful, comprehensive gifted programs, the following elements exist:

- intellectual peer interaction
- flexible grouping
- differentiation of curriculum and instruction
- continuous academic progress
- continuity of support services
- teachers with specialized training in gifted education.

The SCGM provides a structure and setting in which these elements can occur. Differentiation for gifted learners occurs within the content students learn, the processes they use, the products they develop, the learning environment they experience, and the assessments teachers use to evaluate their progress (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008). Flexible grouping allows students to work with others who share similar interests, are ready for more challenging levels of complexity, or share similar learning preferences. Groupings should change according to the content or targeted objectives. Incorporating consistent flexible grouping is necessary for those teaching in the SCGM. The following two classroom scenarios describe how cluster grouping can address the critical elements of effective gifted programs.

One effective differentiation strategy that allows for acceleration with peer interaction in a gifted cluster classroom is demonstrated with David in Mrs. Baker's second-grade class. As a result of her specialized training in gifted education, gifted cluster teacher Mrs. Baker routinely uses strategies like The Most Difficult First (MDF) so that students can compact out of content they have already mastered:

> When introducing math concepts, Mrs. Baker expects all students to participate in direct instruction for an initial period lasting no more than 10 minutes. After this brief period of direct instruction, she assigns practice problems to the class. She identifies what she considers to be the five most difficult math problems in the assignment. Mrs. Baker explains to the whole class that some students will need more practice with this math lesson and some will need less. Any students who wish to try to do the most difficult problems first are invited to do so. Mrs. Baker explains to the class that if a student can correctly complete the five most difficult problems, she or he demonstrates she or he does not need additional practice. The first student to correctly complete the five problems is invited to be the "checker" for others attempting the most difficult problems. Students who correctly complete the five most difficult first then work on more challenging math activities that Mrs. Baker has prepared in advance. Students who are working on accelerated content may work together in the classroom. Mrs. Baker makes compacting opportunities like this available daily for the different content areas. She believes that using strategies such as this helps all students, especially gifted students who need less practice learning new concepts.

Effective gifted programs ensure students' continual academic progress. With traditional grouping and teaching practices, gifted students often are those who are the least likely to experience academic growth in any given school year. Some gifted students have already mastered grade-level standards because they possess vast knowledge in various areas and

need grade acceleration. When accelerating beyond grade level, teachers may need administrative support for out-oflevel district testing to document growth of the gifted students clustered in their classes. Even when gifted students have not already mastered grade-level content, they need faster pacing because they learn and grasp meaning more quickly than others and easily make connections between different areas of the curriculum (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008). Ongoing assessment, both formal and informal, helps gifted cluster teachers document continued progress of their gifted students. Teachers report they are more likely to establish procedures for formative assessment, compacting, and content acceleration when a group of students in the class indicates the need. The scenario of Amy and her fourth-grade gifted cluster teacher, Mrs. Washington, demonstrates the process.

> Amy was a fourth-grade gifted student who was very advanced in mathematics. Although her work in other subjects was outstanding, her extraordinary reasoning abilities and computational skills indicated that she needed acceleration in this subject. In September, Amy's gifted cluster teacher, Mrs. Washington, gave Amy the end-of-the-unit test for each unit in fourth-grade math. She then gave her the end-of-the-year assessment for fourth-grade math. She invited her other accelerated students to take these pre-assessments as well. The pre-assessments showed that Amy and several others had clearly mastered the fourth-grade level standards and needed a higher level math. To determine their challenge levels, Mrs. Washington then gave the students the endof-the-year assessment for fifth-grade math. Of the several students taking the assessments, Amy and one other student demonstrated over 90% mastery for both fourth- and fifth-grade–level math. Mrs. Washington taught fifth-grade math to the students who were at this level during the same time period she taught the fourth-grade level math to the rest of her class. The sixth-grade math teacher agreed to include the two highly accelerated students in her class for the year. A similar arrangement continued over the years, allowing Amy to accelerate through math as needed. While in high school, Amy took math at the local community college. Because of her specialized training, Mrs. Washington understood that several of her students needed acceleration in math. She then differentiated the content, process, assessments, and environment to enable these students to progress at levels commensurate with their advanced abilities.

Gifted students learn more when grouped with other gifted students (Brulles et al., 2010; Gentry, 1999). They take more academic risks and challenge each other. Their competitive nature urges them to strive to achieve more highly than they would if not with intellectual peers (Rogers, 1988; VanTassel-Baska, 2003). Likewise, when gifted students feel understood and accepted by their classroom teachers, they are more likely to challenge themselves academically and feel more comfortable and confident when learning with like-ability peers (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Webb et al., 2005). Moreover, when cluster grouped with the same students over several years, many gifted students form bonds and develop together socially.

Continuum of Services

One critical element of gifted programs that is sometimes overlooked is the need for continuity. Gifted students are gifted every year, not only during the years when the school has a program that addresses their needs. School administrators should establish gifted education services as an integrated part of the regular school day for all gifted-identified students. Beginning early in the elementary grades, gifted education services should be designed as a continuum that starts when the child is identified as gifted. For this to occur, schools need gifted cluster classes at every grade level (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008) and teachers with specialized training (Gubbins et al., 2002). To enfranchise, engage, and challenge gifted students, teachers need to understand how these students learn. Effective teachers of gifted students know how to do the following:

- provide instruction that takes into account the attributes of gifted learners,
- emphasize appropriately challenging curriculum,
- encourage divergent, critical thinking (Naglieri et al., 2008).

While providing ongoing professional development for gifted cluster teachers is critical to the success of the model, all teachers in the school should receive some training. The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model impacts the entire school to some degree. Teachers who understand the different learning needs of gifted students can help support the model with the school community. Staff members with this understanding are also more likely to know whom to nominate for gifted testing.

Benefits of the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

Schools implementing the SCGM have reported a number of benefits based on the ways that the model is implemented and supported. Schools that effectively support the model commonly report the following benefits:

- Gifted students receive full-time attention to their exceptional learning needs, allowing them to progress at their own pace in an inclusionary setting.
- Gifted students who may not have participated in traditional gifted programs, including English language learners, twice-exceptional students, and underachieving gifted students, become enfranchised in this model.
- Although all teachers still have heterogeneous classes, the student achievement range in each class is slightly narrowed, which facilitates effective teaching.
- Achievement tends to rise across the grade levels being clustered because of the narrowed range of ability and

achievement levels in each class and due to the emphasis on training cluster teachers to provide and manage differentiated instruction in their classrooms.
- When not placed with identified gifted students, high-achieving students often emerge as new academic leaders in their own classes.
- Parents of gifted students support schools that provide appropriate services for their gifted children. Some districts find that families who have left their home school return when the district implements the model (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).

The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model can benefit the entire school population as well as individual gifted students. A study conducted in an elementary school district in Arizona showed that after a 6-year period of using a cluster grouping model, the percentage of gifted students who were identified and served reflected the ethnic composition of the school district's student population (Brulles, 2005). A second study in the same district showed that the gifted students served in gifted cluster classes achieved significantly higher in mathematics than the gifted students who were placed in heterogeneous classes that were not cluster grouped (Brulles et al., 2010). An example of how the SCGM can benefit the school is seen in the story of Erica and her teacher, Mr. Lanard:

> Erica was a fifth-grade gifted student with high general ability. She was placed in Mr. Lanard's gifted cluster class with several other gifted students. Even so, Erica's mother was concerned about the teacher's ability to challenge her precocious daughter in this model. Prior to taking the role of gifted cluster teacher, Mr. Lanard had completed a course of gifted education workshops. He continued training throughout the school year by attending monthly gifted cluster teacher meetings, participating in afterschool workshops offered in the district, and doing a book study blog. This ongoing training proved helpful throughout the school year as he learned and practiced new strategies and procedures. By the end of his first year in this role, Mr. Lanard was feeling confident in his abilities and excited about continuing his training as a gifted cluster teacher. Erica's mother reversed her position as she witnessed the teacher's attention and enthusiasm for teaching her gifted daughter. Once convinced that Erica was thriving both academically and socially in the gifted cluster model, she eagerly shared her support of the model with other parents at the school.

While cluster grouping models can benefit many, it may not meet the needs of all gifted students. Highly and profoundly gifted students, especially those who are radically accelerated in multiple academic areas, are oftentimes served better in self-contained classes with others who have similar learning needs. Since both cluster grouping and self-contained programs require no additional staffing, school districts that implement both models better meet the needs of all their gifted students.

A Model for Inclusive Services

Inclusive gifted programs provide services for all gifted students based on the students' ability and potential to learn (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008). Certain student populations have been historically underrepresented in gifted programs due to students' lack of achievement, English language proficiency status, and/or the coexistence of specific learning disabilities (Brulles & Lansdowne, 2009; Castellano, 2003; Naglieri et al., 2008). The SCGM enfranchises these students and encourages teachers to teach to all students' strengths and potential. Many gifted programs include only students who are highly productive in school. However, gifted children have advanced general ability, and that ability is still present even when productivity lags (Naglieri et al., 2008). When gifted students are grouped together in a cluster class with a teacher who has had training in gifted education, they are more likely to engage in challenging learning activities (Tieso, 2005). Given opportunities to learn with other gifted students, disenfranchised gifted students are more likely to make greater achievement gains (Brulles et al., 2010).

Teachers with training in gifted education acknowledge students' potential, emphasize strengths, and focus less on areas of weakness. When gifted students feel accepted and understood by their teachers, they are more apt to take academic risks (Delisle & Galbraith, 2002; Webb et al., 2005). In the SCGM, these conditions help gifted students engage in meaningful and productive learning experiences. Note how Tan's teacher, Mrs. Gomez, drew Tan in by allowing him to direct his own learning in her classroom.

> Tan is a sixth-grade gifted student clustered in an English class with others who have strengths in this area. Early in the year, his papers were brilliant; he showed signs of being an accomplished writer. However, his enthusiasm for class assignments quickly waned. When Tan started missing assignments, Mrs. Gomez called his parents for a conference. The parents timidly described how Tan spends hours writing every evening at home! Upon further discussion, Mrs. Gomez understood what was occurring. Tan was writing a book, a fantasy that involved Avatars and included intricate illustrations drawn by the author. During her training as a cluster teacher, Mrs. Gomez learned a strategy she would now use with Tan. She invited Tan to work on writing his book at school while completing the illustrations at home. She was able to assess a number of sixth-grade writing standards through Tan's writing of his book. Tan's writing greatly improved because he invested himself in the writing. His efforts motivated several other students to begin writing chapter books of their own, so the teacher built this independent study opportunity into the repertoire of learning extensions she offered all students. Mrs. Gomez conferred regularly with the cluster teachers at her school during planning meetings and trainings. She attributes her success with Tan to this interaction.

Table 1. Recommended Classroom Composition for the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model for a Single Grade Level

Classroom	Gifted	High Average	Average	Low Average	Far Below Average
A	6	0	12	12	0
B	0	6	12	6	6
C	0	6	12	6	6

Note. Classes A, B, and C designate three sections in one grade level. The number of students in each table varies.
Source: From *The Cluster Grouping Handbook: How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All*, by S. Winebrenner and D. Brulles, p. 14. Copyright 2008 by Free Spirit Publishing. Adapted with permission of the authors and publisher.

Placing Students in the SCGM

Gifted cluster groups generally consist of 4 to 10 gifted-identified students. When there are more than 10 gifted students identified at a grade level, a second gifted cluster classroom can be formed. The numbers in each classroom will fluctuate based on schools' situations (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).

Assignments to the various groups are determined by formal and informal methods that combine standardized test data on ability and achievement with teacher observations, grades, and other anecdotal data. Each school's student population should determine placement practices into the designated groups.[2] All gifted students are automatically placed in Group 1. All other students are assigned to groups using the achievement-based descriptors determined by the school. Table 1 shows a suggested classroom composition for a single grade level.

Placing students into classroom groups occurs in the spring of each year, with teachers from the sending and receiving grade levels working with the building principal. Assistance from gifted education specialists and special education teachers is provided as needed. Prior to placing students into classrooms, teachers assign all students in the grade level to one of the categories recommended here.

One visual method for making placements incorporates the use of colored note cards. With this method, each student group is represented by a designated card color, as determined by the student's gifted identification or achievement level. The current classroom teacher assigns each student to a group using the appropriate card color. Colored cards in the grade level are then combined to create the classroom combinations for the following school year.

As described by Winebrenner and Brulles (2008) in *The Cluster Grouping Handbook*, the student identification categories in Table 1 provide guidance for grouping all students into classrooms. Grouping categories consist of:

- Group 1–Gifted: All gifted-identified students, including those who are English language learners, not productive in school, and twice-exceptional gifted students.
- Group 2–High Average: Highly competent and productive students who achieve well in school.
- Group 3–Average: Students achieving in the average range of grade-level standards.
- Group 4–Low Average: Average students who are able to achieve at grade level with support.
- Group 5–Far Below Average: Students who struggle in several subject areas and score significantly below proficiency levels on academic measures.

After designating the appropriate grouping category for each student, the placement team assigns the students to classrooms. The process starts by clustering all gifted-identified students into designated gifted cluster classrooms. Next, high-average students are placed into classrooms that have not been assigned the gifted cluster. Average students are then placed evenly in all classrooms, and low-average students are placed in all classrooms according to the charts. Far-below-average students are grouped in the classes that do not have the gifted cluster.

An example of how student work is differentiated for varied groups in a gifted cluster class is seen in Ms. Kim's fifth-grade class. While studying the social, political, and economic causes of the Civil War, students in Ms. Kim's class were working on assignments at three different levels. Those working at minimum proficiency level needed to name and describe one social, one political, and one economic cause of the Civil War. Students working at slightly advanced levels were instructed to explain how one social, one political, and one economic cause of the Civil War led to the actual conflict. Gifted students in the class were asked to compare social, political, and economic causes of the Civil War to those same influences in the War in Iraq.

Grouping Variations in the SCGM

Establishing the number of gifted cluster classes at a grade level and then placing students into the various classes involves weighing and balancing various criteria. The number of gifted-identified students is the primary factor determining the number of gifted cluster classes needed in each grade. Because these numbers change yearly, the number of gifted cluster classes in a specific grade level may also change from one year to the next.

Schools, grade levels, and student populations vary widely. This variability may call for flexibility and creativity when placing students into classrooms. Additional factors that impact gifted cluster class compositions include:

- the number of sections in a grade level,
- schools with only one or two sections in each grade,
- too few or too many gifted students for one gifted cluster classroom

- combination/multi-age classes,
- high numbers of students who fall far below the average in a grade,
- schools that departmentalize.

Examples of ways to place students in these scenarios are provided in the text and tables that follow.

The Number of Sections in a Grade Level

The number of classes, or sections, in each grade level factors into the ideal number of gifted cluster classes to create. The more sections in each grade level, the greater likelihood that an additional gifted cluster class will be needed. As a general guide, consider Table 2.

Schools with one section per grade level can implement critical elements of the SCGM, such as learning about the needs of gifted students, using differentiated instructional strategies, and flexibly grouping students for instructional purposes. However, these schools cannot follow the model with fidelity, since each classroom would maintain the full range of ability and achievement levels.

Few Students for One Gifted Cluster Classroom

Variations on the suggested model are necessary when cluster grouping in grade levels contains few gifted-identified students. When zero to three gifted students are in a grade level, include some high-average students along with the gifted students in the gifted cluster classroom, as seen in Table 3. The purpose is to create a balance of ability and achievement levels in all classes in the grade.

When there are no gifted-identified students in a grade level, a gifted cluster teacher should still be designated and invited to participate in the cluster teacher meetings and other professional development. Having a teacher at every grade level who has had training or experience in gifted education prompts discussions about the needs of gifted students during grade-level meetings, team planning, and curriculum adoptions. Additionally, when gifted-identified students enroll during the school year, they can be placed with a teacher who has participated in the cluster teacher training.

Too Many Gifted Students for One Gifted Cluster Classroom

High numbers of gifted students in one class sometimes represents a challenge for the gifted cluster teacher. Grade levels with 10 or more gifted students may want to divide the gifted students into two gifted cluster classrooms. When there are enough gifted students to form two gifted cluster classes, there are usually two or more other section(s) in the grade level into which high-achieving students are grouped. This careful placement ensures a balance of ability and achievement levels across the grade.

When dividing gifted students into two cluster classrooms, the gifted students can be placed into the cluster classes based on their learning strengths in math or reading, as seen in Table 4. In Classroom A, Group 1 students who are strong in math are placed with a teacher who specialized in math. In Classroom B, the gifted students who are strong in language arts are grouped together. Similarly, in Classrooms C and D, the students in Group 5 are placed according to resource assistance provided based on the students' needs.

Table 2. Recommended Number of Gifted Cluster Classrooms as Related to Sections in Grade Level

Classes per Grade	Gifted Cluster
2 to 3	1
4 to 5	1 to 2
6 to 8	2 to 3

Source: From *The Cluster Grouping Handbook: How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All,* by S. Winebrenner and D. Brulles, p. 14. Copyright 2008 by Free Spirit Publishing. Adapted with permission of the authors and publisher.

Combination/Multi-Age Classes

Combination classes, also known as multi-age or multi-grade classes, provide an ideal placement for gifted students. In multiage classes, all students work at varying challenge levels within the same content areas. In this setting, the teacher provides ongoing, formative assessment for all the students to create flexible learning groups. This routine practice of pre-assessing students' entry levels in the content areas is ideal for the gifted students in the class.

Table 5 demonstrates how a small school with one and a half sections of both second grade and third grade provides services for their gifted students in the SCGM. The school created a 2/3 multi-grade class, and this class became the gifted cluster class for Grades 2 and 3. High-achieving students were placed in the other classrooms in each respective grade. A similar situation was employed for Grades 4 and 5 in this small school. The classes maintained the same balance as previously described.

Large Numbers of Both Gifted and FarBelow-Average Students in a Grade

Occasionally, grade levels have very large numbers of students falling into Groups 1 (gifted) and 5 (far below average). This scenario creates the need to place some of the students in Group 5 into a gifted cluster class. Assistance from a resource teacher helps the gifted cluster teacher who is working with the full range of abilities in his or her classroom.

Table 3. Recommended Cluster Grouping for Grades With Few Gifted Students

Classrooms	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Average	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Low Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
A	1	7	13	9	0
B	0	10	12	5	3

Table 4. Recommended Cluster Grouping for Grades With Many Gifted Students

Classrooms	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Average	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Low Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
A	10	0	12	12	0
B	12	0	12	10	0
C	0	16	8	4	6
D	0	16	8	4	6

Table 5. Recommended Cluster Grouping for Multi-Age Classes and Related Grade-Level Classes

Classrooms	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Average	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Low Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
Grades 2–3, Multi	3/5	0	5/6	4/5	0
Grade 2	0	10	9	3	6
Grade 3	0	10	9	3	6

Note. This school has 1.5 sections in Grades 2 and 3.

Principals and teachers find that the cluster grouping model facilitates the scheduling of resource teachers because the students receiving resource assistance are also clustered. Table 6 shows how one school divided its large number of students in Groups 1 and 5. The principal separated the students in these two groups according to the students' area(s) of strength or need: in this case, mathematics. She then placed the groups with a teacher (in Classroom B) who enjoyed differentiating in math.

Middle Schools That Departmentalize

Middle schools can incorporate the SCGM in several ways (Table 7). The subjects that cluster group are commonly determined by the school schedule. Some middle schools find it practical to cluster group for specific subjects, such as language arts and social studies. They then ability group for mathematics and have heterogeneous classes for science and electives.

Instruction That Works in the Gifted Cluster Classroom

For success in the model, gifted cluster teachers need training on the SCGM, in gifted education, and in differentiated instruction. This professional development can be offered at the school and district levels. When the SCGM is implemented throughout the district, schools benefit from general training that includes all cluster teachers and principals in the district.

The degree to which cluster teachers are supported throughout the school year influences success of the model. Ongoing training for gifted cluster teachers is a critical component in this model. However, inviting all teachers in the school to participate in training benefits all students (Gubbins et al., 2002). Suggested training topics include:

- the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model,
- characteristics of gifted learners,
- identification procedures,
- social and emotional needs of gifted students,
- parent communication,
- differentiated instruction,
- formative and summative assessment practices,
- forming flexible learning groups,
- curriculum compacting,
- creating lesson extensions,
- creating tiered assignments,
- teaching holistic thinkers.

Table 6. Recommended Cluster Grouping in a Grade With Many Students in Groups 1 and 5

Classrooms	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Average	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Low Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
A	8	0	10	9	0
B	6	6	10	0	5
C	0	12	6	2	7

Note. When it is necessary to combine students in Groups 1 and 5 in the same class, group students according to areas of need, such as mathematics.

Table 7. Recommended Cluster Grouping for Middle Schools

Classrooms	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Average	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Low Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
A	6	0	12	12	0
B	6	0	12	12	0
C	0	6	12	6	6
D	0	6	12	6	6
E	0	6	12	6	6
F	0	6	12	6	6

Effective strategies and instructional methods used in the SCGM are not specific to gifted education. In fact, many classroom teachers use these methods routinely (Tomlinson, 1999) and with great success. When used by a gifted cluster teacher who understands how gifted children think, learn, and feel, these strategies can be powerful tools that engage and motivate gifted students. Skilled cluster teachers incorporate the following strategies into their regular instruction:

- Acceleration: Presenting content to match the accelerated rate at which gifted and advanced students learn. Acceleration occurs in the cluster class in subject areas where students have mastered grade-level content (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).
- Compacting: Giving students full credit for previously mastered standards (Winebrenner, 2003). Compacting eliminates repetition and allows for accelerated instruction so that gifted students can learn more challenging material (Renzulli & Reis, 1992).
- Enrichment: Engaging students in learning activities that emphasize critical and creative thinking in the content areas (Naglieri et al., 2008).
- Independent studies: Allowing students to immerse themselves in areas of interest that relate to the subject being studied without being confined to grade-level standards (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).
- Flexible grouping: Forming temporary groups according to students' interests, achievement levels, learning preferences, or content objectives. Flexible grouping can occur within the classroom, grade level, or beyond grade level (Naglieri et al., 2008).

Effective gifted cluster teachers consistently incorporate formal and informal assessment to determine students' learning needs. Ongoing assessment allows cluster teachers to group students flexibly according to their needs and results in increased student engagement and learning. An example of this is seen in Mr. Joseph's fourth-grade gifted cluster class:

> On Monday, Mr. Joseph asks all students to look at the week's vocabulary list for 2 minutes to decide if they think they already know this week's words. Students may take the end-of-the-week test on Monday if they wish. Students getting no more than a specified number wrong have demonstrated that they do not need the week's practice on that vocabulary. Instead, they work on related extension activities at a higher challenge level. This option is available to all students, and from week to week different students qualify for the differentiation. Every 6 weeks a review unit of the previous five units is presented. During this time, Mr. Joseph provides differentiated activities with the vocabulary words for all students in the class. This scenario shows that all students can choose to take the pre-test each week, and all have regular opportunities to enjoy extension activities.

The Response to Intervention Model (RTI) that schools use to teach struggling students incorporates a similar philosophy as the SCGM. Teachers are encouraged to assess the student's entry level with the designated standard, choose an instructional method of teaching that will move the student forward, apply the method, and assess the degree to which the method worked. If all students—including gifted students—participate in a similar process, they will more likely make consistent academic growth. Using the rationale behind RTI, the SCGM provides a setting and structure in which gifted students can learn, achieve, and thrive.

Conclusion

Perceptions and practices that largely ignore the learning needs of gifted students carry a heavy cost to society. Schools lose students to alternative programs, students lose opportunities for academic growth, and families lose faith in the public education system. Instead, we need to nurture and develop the potential of all our students.

Our current economic and political realities provide new opportunities to reexamine the ways we can deliver comprehensive and sustainable services for our most capable learners. The SCGM can achieve those goals in a way that is equitable and effective for all students, even within present budget constraints.

The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model helps school administrators embed gifted education services into the school system, increasing the possibility that the inherent needs of all students are understood and embraced. The model proposes that when teachers are trained to challenge their gifted students, the learning opportunities and high expectations can positively impact all students. Focusing schools' attention on the needs of all students can enfranchise gifted students and demonstrates continued support for gifted education in the 21st century.

Contents of this article are based on The Cluster Grouping Handbook: How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All *by Susan Winebrenner, MS, and Dina Brulles, PhD, © 2008, Free Spirit Publishing.*

Notes

1. In this article, the term *gifted* is defined as students identified as such on an ability test or IQ test. The term *high-achieving* is defined as students who are academically advanced and considered above the average in a given group (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008).
2. Gifted students placed in the gifted cluster group are formally identified using the school district's identification criteria. A measure of general ability, such as the Cognitive Ability Test (CogAT), the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), or the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT), or an intelligence test, such as the Stanford Binet or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), are commonly used.

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Bios

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Appendix F:

Cluster Grouping of Gifted Students: How to Provide Full-time Services on a Part-time Budget:

Update 2001 THIS DIGEST SUPERSEDES ERIC EC DIGEST #E538

National Association for Gifted Children
1707 L Street, NW, Suite 550
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ERIC EC Digest #E607
Authors: Susan Winebrenner and Barbara Devlin
March 2001

There is an alarming trend in many places to eliminate gifted education programs in the mistaken belief that all students are best served in heterogeneous learning environments. Educators have been bombarded with research that makes it appear that there is no benefit to ability grouping for any students. However, the work of many researchers (Allan, 1991; Feldhusen, 1989; Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 1993; Kulik and Kulik, 1990; Rogers, 1993) clearly documents the benefits of keeping gifted students together in their areas of greatest strength for at least part of the school day. It also appears that all students, including average and below average students, may benefit when gifted students are placed in their own cluster (Gentry, 1999).

What Does it Mean to Place Gifted Students in Cluster Groups?

A group of three to six identified gifted students, usually those in the top 5% of ability in the grade level population, are clustered in a mixed-ability classroom. The teacher has had training in how to teach exceptionally capable students. If there are more than six gifted students, two or more clusters could be formed.

Isn't Cluster Grouping the Same as Tracking?

No. In a tracking system, all students are grouped by ability for much of the school day, and students tend to remain in the same track throughout their school experience. Gifted students benefit from learning together, and need to be placed with similar students in their areas of strength (Hoover, Sayler, & Feldhusen, 1993; Kulik & Kulik, 1990; Rogers, 1993). Cluster grouping of gifted students allows them to learn together, while avoiding permanent grouping arrangements for students of other ability levels.

Why Should Gifted Students Be Placed in a Cluster Group Instead of Being Assigned Evenly to All Classes?

When teachers try to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, it becomes extremely difficult to provide adequately for everyone. Often, the highest ability students are expected to "make it on their own." When a teacher has several gifted students, taking the time to make appropriate provisions for them seems more realistic. Furthermore, gifted students can better understand and accept their learning differences if there are others just like them in the class. Finally, scheduling out-of-class activities is easier when the resource teacher has only one cluster teacher's schedule with which to work.

What Are the Learning Needs of Gifted Students?

Since these students have previously mastered many of the concepts they are expected to "learn" in a given class, a huge part of their school time may be wasted. They need exactly what all other students need: consistent opportunity to learn new material and to develop the behaviors that allow them to cope with the challenge and struggle of new learning. It is very difficult for such students to have those needs met in heterogeneous classes.

Isn't Gifted Education Elitist?

Gifted students need consistent opportunities to learn at their challenge level—just as all students do. It is inequitable to prevent gifted students from being challenged by trying to apply one level of difficulty for all students in mixed-ability classes. When teachers can provide opportunities for all students, including those who are gifted, to be challenged by rigorous curriculum, there is nothing elitist about the situation.

Don't We Need Gifted Students in All Classes So They Can Help Others Learn Through Cooperative Learning, Peer Tutoring, and Other Collaborative Models?

When gifted students are placed in mixed-ability groups for cooperative learning, they frequently become tutors. Other students in these groups may rely on the gifted to do most of the work and may actually learn less than when the gifted students are not in their groups. Research indicates that a particular structure of cluster grouping raises everyone's achievement level (Gentry, 1999). When class placements are made, students should be sorted into 5 groups: I, II, III, IV, V. One class, taught by a teacher with some gifted education training, should be assigned the cluster group of gifted students (group I) and some students from groups II to IV. All other classes should include a range of students from groups II through V. This method creates a more narrow range of student achievement levels, allowing the teacher to focus instructional activities. It is important to place some group II students in each non-cluster class, even if it means placing no group II students in the gifted cluster class.

Won't the Creation of a Cluster Group Rob the Other Classes of Academic Leadership?

Research on role modeling (Schunk, 1987) indicates that to be effective, role models cannot be drastically discrepant in ability from those who would be motivated by them. When gifted students are grouped in their own cluster, they have the benefit of working with one another and new leadership emerges in the other non-cluster classes. As classes are formed, be sure the classes without clusters of gifted students include several highly capable students. Teachers and administrators can expect measurable achievement gains across all classes.

How Does the Cluster Grouping Concept Fit in with the Inclusion Models That Integrate Students with Exceptional Educational Needs into Regular Classes?

The inclusion model, in which students with exceptional learning needs are integrated into regular classrooms, is compatible with the concept of cluster grouping of gifted students, since both groups have exceptional educational needs. The practice of cluster grouping allows educators to come much closer to providing better educational services for groups of students with similar exceptional learning needs. In non-cluster classrooms, teachers report they are able to pay more attention to the special learning needs of those for whom learning may be more difficult. Some schools choose to avoid placing students with significant learning difficulties in the same class that has the cluster group of gifted students. A particular class may have a cluster of gifted students and a cluster of special education students as long as more than one adult is sharing the teaching responsibilities.

Won't the Presence of the Clustered Gifted Students Inhibit the Performance of the Other Students in That Class, Having a Negative Effect On Their Achievement?

When the cluster group is kept to a manageable size, many cluster teachers report that there is general improvement in achievement for the entire class. This suggests the exciting possibility that when teachers learn how to provide what gifted students need, they also learn to offer modified versions of the same opportunities to the entire class, thus raising the level of learning for all students, including those who are gifted. The positive effects of the cluster grouping practice may be shared with all students over several years by rotating the cluster teacher assignment among teachers who have had gifted education training and by rotating the other students so all students eventually have a chance to be in the same class with a cluster group.

How Should Gifted Students Be Identified for the Cluster Group?

Placement in cluster groups is gained by demonstrating that one needs a differentiated curriculum-not by proving one is "gifted." If there will be one cluster, its highly capable students should be those who have demonstrated that they will need curriculum that exceeds grade level parameters. Traditional measures, such as standardized tests, may also be used, but not as the sole criteria. If there will be more than one cluster, those highly capable in specific subjects might be grouped together in separate clusters. Profoundly gifted students should always be grouped together, since there will rarely be more than two such students in any grade level. Identification should be conducted each spring with the help of someone with training in gifted education.

What Specific Skills Are Needed by Cluster Teachers?

Since gifted students are as far removed from the "norm" as are students with significant learning difficulties, it is necessary for teachers to have special training in how to teach children of exceptionally high ability. Cluster teachers should know how to:

- recognize and nurture behaviors usually demonstrated by gifted students;

- create a learning environment in which all students will be stretched to learn;
- allow students to demonstrate and get credit for previous mastery of concepts;
- provide opportunities for faster pacing of new material;
- incorporate students' passionate interests into their independent studies;
- facilitate sophisticated research investigations;
- provide flexible grouping opportunities for the entire class.

Should the Cluster Grouping Model Replace Out-of-Class Enrichment Programs for Gifted Students?

No. Cluster grouping provides an effective complement to any gifted education program. Gifted students need time to be together when they can just "be themselves." The resource teacher might also provide assistance to all classroom teachers in their attempts to differentiate the curriculum for students who need it. As a matter of fact, this resource person is being called a "Schoolwide Enrichment Specialist" in many schools instead of a "Gifted Program Coordinator" in recognition of the fact that so many students can benefit from "enriching" learning opportunities.

Is Clustering Feasible Only in Elementary School?

No. Cluster grouping may be used at all grade levels and in all subject areas. Gifted students may be clustered in one section of any heterogeneous class, especially when there are not enough students to form an advanced section for a particular subject. Cluster grouping is also a welcome option in rural settings, or wherever small numbers of gifted students make appropriate accommodations difficult. Keep in mind, however, if your school has enough gifted students for separate sections in which curriculum is accelerated, such sections should be maintained. Many middle schools have quietly returned to the practice of offering such sections

How Are Records Kept of the Progress Made by Students in Cluster Groups?

Differentiated Educational Plans (DEPs) should be maintained for gifted students and filed with their other ongoing records. In some schools, teachers develop a DEP for the cluster group, rather than for individual students. These plans briefly describe the modifications that are planned for the group and should be shared with parents regularly.

What Are the Advantages of Cluster Grouping?

Gifted students feel more comfortable when there are other students just like them in the class. They are more likely to choose more challenging tasks when other students will also be eligible. Teachers no longer have to deal with the strain of trying to meet the needs of just one precocious student in a class. Teachers are also much more likely to provide appropriate learning opportunities if more than one student will benefit. The school is able to provide a full-time, cost-effective program for gifted students, since their learning needs are being met every day.

What Are the Disadvantages of Cluster Grouping?

There may be pressure from parents to have their children placed in a cluster classroom, even if they are not in the actual cluster group. Gifted students may move into the district during the school year and may not be able to be placed in the cluster classroom. These situations may be handled by:

- providing training for all staff in compacting and differentiation so parents can expect those opportunities in all classes
- requiring parents to provide written documentation of their child's need for curriculum differentiation instead of requesting the placement by phone
- rotating the cluster teacher assignment every 2 years among teachers who have had appropriate training so parents understand that many teachers are capable of teaching gifted students
- rotating other students into cluster classrooms over several years

Another disadvantage might arise if the cluster teachers are not expected to consistently compact and differentiate the curriculum. Their supervisor must expect them to maintain the integrity of the program, and must provide the needed support by facilitating regular meetings of cluster teachers, and by providing time for the enrichment specialist to assist the cluster teachers.

Conclusion

If we do not allow cluster groups to be formed, gifted students may find their achievement and learning motivation waning in a relatively short period of time. Parents of gifted students may choose to enroll their children in alternative programs, such as home schooling or

charter schools. The practice of cluster grouping represents a mindful way to make sure gifted students continue to receive a quality education at the same time schools work to improve learning opportunities for all students.

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Appendix G:

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Investigation of the Effects of Total School Flexible Cluster Grouping on Identification, Achievement, Classroom Practices

Marcia Gentry and Steven V. Owen

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An Investigation of the Effects of Total School Flexible Cluster Grouping on Identification, Achievement, and Classroom Practices

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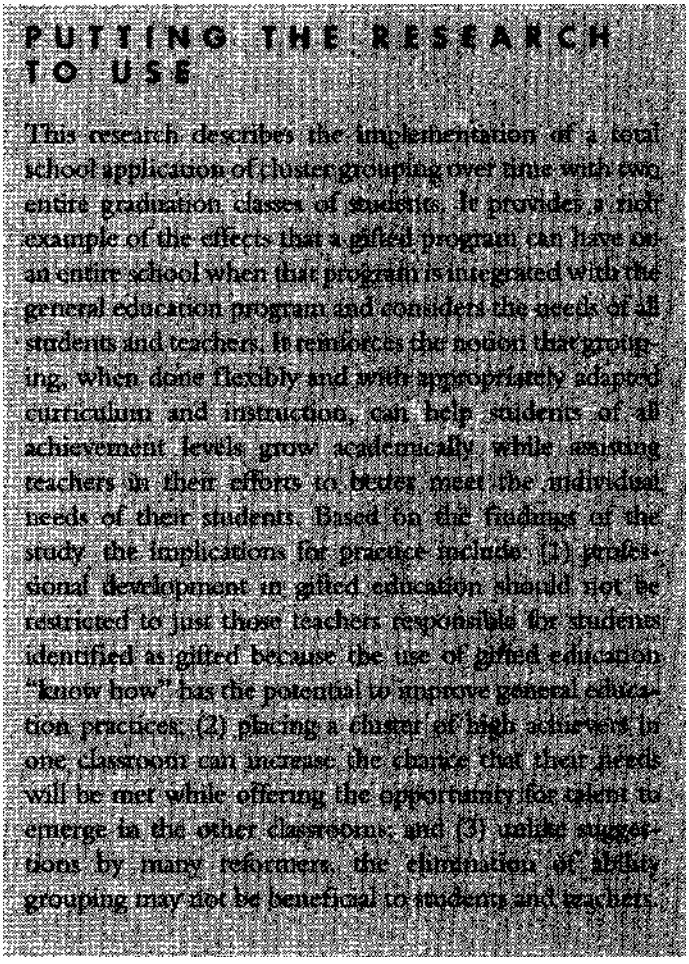
ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a longitudinal, causal comparative investigation of an elementary school cluster grouping program. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used. Although the cluster grouping program was originally designed to provide differentiation of content and instruction for gifted students, positive effects were also found on the achievement of all students in the school. During the three program years, students involved in the school using cluster grouping were more likely to be identified as high achieving or above average. Fewer students were identified as low achieving. A significant increase in achievement test scores of all students was found when these students were compared to similar students from a comparison school district. Qualitative analyses yielded three core categories—the use of grouping, the impact of teachers, and the general school environment—that helped to provide an understanding of the quantitative fmdings.

Background

Cluster grouping is a widely recommended and often used strategy for meeting the needs of high achieving students in the regular elementary classroom. Its use has gained popularity in recent years because of the move toward inclusive education, budget cuts, and heterogeneous grouping policies that have eliminated programs for gifted students (Purcell, 1994). However, little research exists on the effects of using cluster grouping on the achievement of gifted students, and none exists that has examined its effects on students of other achievement levels (Gentry, 1996; Hoover, Sayler, & Feldhusen, 1993).

Gentry (1996) noted many variations in definitions and applications of cluster grouping and identified three common themes in the existing literature on this topic. First, a group of students (varying in number from 3 to more than 10) identified as gifted, high achieving, or high-ability is placed into a classroom with students of other achievement levels. Second, the reason for cluster grouping is to differentiate curriculum.



PUTTING THE RESEARCH TO USE

This research describes the implementation of a total school application of cluster grouping over time with two entire graduation classes of students. It provides a rich example of the effects that a gifted program can have on an entire school when that program is integrated with the general education program and considers the needs of all students and teachers. It reinforces the notion that grouping, when done flexibly and with appropriately adapted curriculum and instruction, can help students of all achievement levels grow academically while assisting teachers in their efforts to better meet the individual needs of their students. Based on the findings of the study, the implications for practice include: (1) professional development in gifted education should not be restricted to just those teachers responsible for students identified as gifted because the use of gifted education "know how" has the potential to improve general education practices, (2) placing a cluster of high achievers in one classroom can increase the chance that their needs will be met while offering the opportunity for talent to emerge in the other classrooms, and (3) unlike suggestions by many reformers, the elimination of ability grouping may not be beneficial to students and teachers.

Third, the teacher of the high ability cluster should have background, training, and experience in working with gifted students.

Current research indicates that there are several major benefits of cluster grouping: Gifted students regularly interact with their intellectual peers *and* age peers (Delcourt & Evans, 1994; Rogers, 1991; Slavin, 1987a); cluster grouping provides full-time services for gifted students without additional cost (Hoover et al., 1993; LaRose, 1986; Winebrenner & Devlin, 1994); curricular differentiation is more efficient and likely to occur when a group of high-achieving students is placed with a teacher who has expertise, training, and a desire to differentiate curriculum than when these students are distributed among many teachers (Bryant, 1987; Kennedy, 1995; Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991); removing the highest achievers from most classrooms allows other achievers to emerge (Kennedy, 1989; Winebrenner, 1992); and, finally, cluster grouping reduces the range of achievement levels that must be addressed within the classrooms of all teachers (Coleman, 1995; Delcourt *&* Evans 1994; Rogers, 1993). Conversely, the literature reveals several concerns about the use of cluster grouping, and these concerns parallel those raised regarding the use of ability grouping in general. These include the effect that removing the brightest students from classrooms has on the students and teachers in these classrooms (Hoover et al. 1993; Oakes, 1985; Slavin 1987a), the methods for selecting teachers for the high-achieving cluster classroom (Oakes; Slavin, 1987b), and whether cluster grouping provides appropriate differentiation for the high-achieving students (Delcourt & Evans 1994; McInerney, 1983; Rogers, 1991; Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993).

Recent studies that examined cluster grouping include survey research conducted by Hoover et al. (1993) and two studies by Delcourt and her colleagues (Delcourt, Loyd, Cornell, & Goldberg, 1994). Hoover et al. reported that classroom teachers believed that cluster grouping benefited both gifted and nongifted students. However, these researchers also concluded that "despite clear potential benefits of cluster grouping, there have been no empirical studies of the prevalence of cluster grouping nor of its effects, perceived or actual, on gifted children" (p. 13). Delcourt et al. examined four programm.ing arrangements for gifted students,including special schools, separate classes, pull-out programs, and within-class programs, and their effects on achievement and affective outcomes. Of the 11 districts included in the study, one used cluster grouping, which was classified as a within-class program. However, across all programs, gifted students from within-class programs received the lowest scores in all areas of achievement when compared to their gifted peers in the other programming options. Delcourt et al. concluded that "since within-class programs are a popular model in gifted education, their curricular and instructional provisions for the gifted must be carefully maintained lest they disintegrate into a no program format" (p. 77). Yet, in a follow-up study (Delcourt & Evans, 1994) that examined exemplary programs in gifted education, a school using cluster grouping was selected as the best example of a within-class program. Key variables that distinguished these exemplary programs were leadership, atmosphere and environment, communication, curriculum and instruction, and attention to student needs. In addition, the exemplary programs were found to influence student achievement and motivation through exposure to challenge and choices. The extent to which these themes are evident within a cluster grouping program may help explain both its success and its impact on student achievement.

Rogers (1991) recognized that the research base on cluster grouping is limited and cautioned that the cluster teacher must be trained and motivated to work with gifted and talented students and that the curriculum must be appropriately differentiated. In a meta-analysis of the research on ability grouping, Kulik (1992) found that youngsters of all achievement groups benefited from ability grouping programs when the curriculum was appropriately adjusted to the aptitude levels of the groups. As a result, he recommended that schools use various forms of flexible ability grouping.

Although many experts advocate the use of cluster grouping (Balzer & Siewert, 1990; Brown, Archambault, Zhang, & Westberg, 1994; Coleman, 1995; Davis & Rimm, 1985; Hoover et al., 1993; Juntune, 1981; Kaplan, 1974; Kulik & Kulik, 1991; LaRose, 1986; Renzulli, 1994; Rogers, 1991; Winebrenner, 1992), surprisingly little evidence exists regarding its effectiveness. Clearly, research that can provide evidence about the effects of cluster grouping on students is needed.

Research Questions

This study examined the use of cluster grouping during a four-year period in a small, rural school district in the Midwest. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is cluster grouping related to teacher perceptions of student achievement as measured by teacher identification categories?
2. How do students in the cluster grouping school compare with students from a similar school who are not involved in cluster grouping after adjustment for initial differences with regard to achievement?
3. What factors exist within the classrooms and the school using cluster grouping that may influence student achievement?

Background of the Treatment Program

Schools, classrooms, teachers, and students are complex, interactive entities, making their study challenging at best, and the results from such study ambiguous. Yet, programs must be studied in their full context to provide insight into their workings and their possible effects. It is from in-depth examination of real programs in real schools that the opportunity to learn about schools presents itself. It is for these reasons that this study examined the existing use of cluster grouping in a small, rural school district, purposefully selected because of its innovative use of cluster grouping with students of all achievement levels in all classrooms.

Cluster grouping in the treatment district began in grade 3 and continued through grade 5, with a flexible identification process beginning at the end of second grade that included information from teachers, parents, and achievement tests. Teachers were involved with the identification and placement of students into the classrooms, which was done using grade level conferencing. Each year in May, second-, third-, and fourth-grade teachers

1. rated their students' academic performance as *high-achieving, above-average, average, low-average,* or *low* (students' academic performance as observed by the teacher and the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics for Superior Students (Renzulli, Smith, Callahan, White, & Hartman, 1977) functioned as a basis for these ratings);
2. indicated those students who received special education or Chapter 1 services; and
3. noted students who had behavior problems or who should be separated.

Teacher ratings were compared with achievement scores on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (Hieronymus, Hoover, & Lindquist, 1984), and discrepancies were discussed. By using both teacher ratings and achievement scores, it was possible for a student who tested poorly or for a student whose classroom performance did not reflect his or her ability to be identified as *high-achieving* or *above-average* without the use of *cutoff* scores. This system of checks and balances is similar to that suggested by Renzulli and Reis (1985) in the Revolving Door Identification Model. Although there were no cutoff scores for identification, the process was done consistently by the same teachers on a yearly basis.

There were five classrooms per grade level in which students were placed yearly on the basis of their identification categories. One classroom had the cluster of *high-achieving* students, with the remainder of the class comprised of *average, low-average,* and *low-achieving* students. The other four classrooms each had students who achieved at *above-average, average, low-average,* and *low* levels. Additionally, two of these classrooms had clusters of special needs students who received Chapter 1 or special education assistance. In each of these two rooms, an aide or a teacher-consultant worked with the classroom teacher for the majority of the day. By arranging classes in this manner, each heterogeneous classroom had a group of *above-average* achieving students, but one class had the specific cluster of *high-achieving* students. In this way, the use of resource personnel was maximized. Behavioral problems—from all achievement levels—were evenly distributed among the five classrooms.

When the cluster grouping program was adopted, all teachers were provided with a general overview of gifted education and talent development based on the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 1985) and were involved in two half-day in-service training sessions regarding the above described approach to cluster grouping. Annual in-services in gifted education (e.g., curriculum compacting, curricular and instructional differentiation, and thinking skills) and opportunities to attend regional, state, and national conferences on gifted education were made available to all teachers. The teachers responsible for teaching the *high-achieving* cluster volunteered and were selected by the staff and administration. Each of these teachers took classes in gifted education and attended several workshops to improve their methods for working with high-achieving students. It should also be noted that, as in any school, cluster grouping was not the only type of grouping or treatment that occurred. In fact, in this school, there were a variety of grouping arrangements that took place, including regrouping between classes for math and reading. Also, because of the increased number of students who were identified as high-achieving, a class of these students existed by fifth grade. The complexity of the grouping arrangements made it impossible to analyze the relative effects of each arrangement on student achievement. For further discussion of the treatment program, including its philosophy and practices, refer to Gentry (1996).

Methods and Procedures

Research Design

The research design was causal-comparative and longitudinal, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The first two research questions were addressed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and the third research question was addressed with qualitative methods. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed a more thorough description of how cluster grouping was imple-

Table 1

Demographic Factors Upon Which Treatment and Comparison Schools Were Matched

Factor	Treatment School	Comparison School
Geographic Region	Rural Midwest	Rural Midwest
Ethnic composition	White, < 1%	White, < 1%
Student Population*	minority 1,499	minority 1,202
Socioeconomic status*	Low	Low
School Configuration	1 elementary school K-5 5 classes/grade level	1 elementary school K-6 4 classes/grade level
Pupil to teacher ratio*	20:1	21:1
Per pupil revenue*	$3,704	$4,071
Rank in state for spending on basic needs programs* (out of 524 districts)	503rd	491st

*Note. *Source: 1992-93 Bulletin 1014 (Michigan Department of Education, 1994).*

mented within the complex context of a real school. Although it was not possible to isolate the effects of a single variable—cluster grouping—this study provided a realistic picture of how cluster grouping worked in concert with other variables found within schools. Causal-comparative research is done after the fact using existing data, and it does not seek to attribute causality; rather it seeks to establish relationships and trends from which future research can be conducted.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used in this study. The treatment sample included all students from two graduation class years who attended the school from grades 2 through 5 (Class of 2000: n = 97; Class of 2001: n = 100). The comparison school was selected based on its demographic similarity to the treatment school (see Table 1) and because its students had not been involved in cluster grouping or gifted programming (Class of 2000: n = 68; Class of 2001: n = 69). Any students for whom achievement data were unavailable for grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 were eliminated from the analyses. The Classes of 2000 and 2001 were selected because longitudinal data could be obtained from both the treatment site and comparison site to compare the students' academic achievement.

The sample also included teachers and administrators from the treatment site who were involved in the program. Follow-up interviews were conducted with 14 of 15 grade 3-5 teachers and with three of five administrators who were originally involved with the program and were involved for the entire time during which the program took place.

Instrumentation

To examine student achievement effects, the present study used existing achievement data from both the treatment and comparison schools. Normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores were collected for each student (grades 2-5) in the areas of total math and total reading from standardized achievement measures used by the schools. The treatment school used the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), Form G (Hieronymus, Hoover, &

Lindquist, 1984), while the comparison school used the California Achievement Test (CAT), Form E (1984) to measure yearly student achievement. Because of the ex post facto nature of this study, available instrumentation was used. Airasian (1989) stated that the CAT "compares very favorably to other achievement batteries of its genre such as . . . the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*" (p. 128). Thus, although the content of these two standardized tests was not identical, the NCE scores provided an achievement standing relative to the respective test's norm in a group and allowed comparison in achievement to be made on the basis of normed scores.

To address Research Question 3, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on themes identified by Delcourt and Evans (1994) (leadership, atmosphere and environment, communication, curriculum and instruction, attention to student needs) and factors identified by Westberg et al. (1993) (questioning and thinking, providing challenges and choices, reading and written assignments, curriculum modifications, enrichment centers). Interviews were taped and transcribed.

Analyses

BMDP statistical software (Dixon, 1992) was used to screen and analyze the data (one outlier was eliminated from the Class of 2001: Mahalonobis D-squared distance value $p < .0003$). Descriptive statistics were used to address Research Question 1 and inferential statistics—including multivariate repeated measures ANCOVAs and planned contrasts—were used to address Research Question 2. Although discriminant function analyses is a preferred follow-up for MANOVA and MANCOVA, it cannot be used with repeated measures; therefore, univariate ANOVA and ANCOVA were used to examine the multivariate main effects. Grade 2 NCE scores in math and reading were used to adjust the groups for initial differences. Separate analyses were run for each graduation year (Class of 2000, Class of 2001). Assumptions for the analyses for each research question were examined (namely normal distribution, homogeneity of variance, and sphericity), and no violations were found.

To address Research Question 3, data from interviews with teachers and administrators *(n* = 17) and documents were gathered, and qualitative procedures were employed (Spradley, 1980). Together with the quantitative findings, the interview transcriptions enabled triangulation of data, a technique that provides checks for both reliability and validity of data through the comparison of multiple sources and data collection methods (Mitchell, 1986). Interview transcriptions and document reviews were coded and analyzed for patterns and themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Trustworthiness was enhanced by using a "devil's advocate," triangulating the data, and checking and questioning the data.

Results and Implications

Identification Findings and Implications for Research Question 1: Is Cluster Grouping Related to Teacher Perceptions of Student Achievement as Measured by Teacher Identification Categories?

Descriptive statistics provided insight into the identification of students in the treatment school during the three program years. Overall for both data sets (Class of 2000 and Class of 2001), more students were identified as *high achieving* each successive year, while fewer students were identified as *low achieving*. By fifth grade, each of these classes had one entire classroom of students identified as *high achieving,* yet all other classrooms still contained groups of students identified as *above average*. Figure 1 depicts the changes in the number of students identified as *high achieving* for both data sets during the three program years, and Figure 2 depicts changes in the frequencies of students identified as *low achieving* during the three program years.

Changes in students' identification categories during the three program years were classified as *increased, decreased, no change,* or *varied,* and these changes were tabulated. *Increased* was defined as moving up, for example, from *average* to *above average,* and *decreased* was defined as moving down, for example, from *high achieving* to *above average* during the course of three years. No change was used to describe those students whose identification category remained constant for each of the three program years. Students whose identification category changed, but did not increase or decrease as described above, were counted as *varied.* A large percentage of students' identification categories in both classes increased (Class of 2000: 47%; Class of 2001: 34%),or saw no change (Class of 2000: 40%; Class of 2001: 45%), whereas only a small number of students' identification categories decreased (Class of 2000: 3%; Class of 2001: 9%). Students in this program were regarded by their teachers as higher achievers as they progressed from third to fifth grade in the program, a result that led to the analyses of achievement scores.

Qualitative follow-up to these findings yielded interesting results that might explain the trend of identifying more students achieving at higher levels during the course of the three program years. Many teachers (n = 13; 93%) and all administrators *(n* = 3) believed that the increase in the number of students identified at higher levels was directly related to the grouping practices used in this school. For example, as Teacher 4C explained:

> Maybe cluster grouping has a lot to do with it. The cluster grouping may give the lower achieving students more self-confidence, because I think they become more involved in class when the high [achieving] kids are removed. And you know that those high kids are competitive

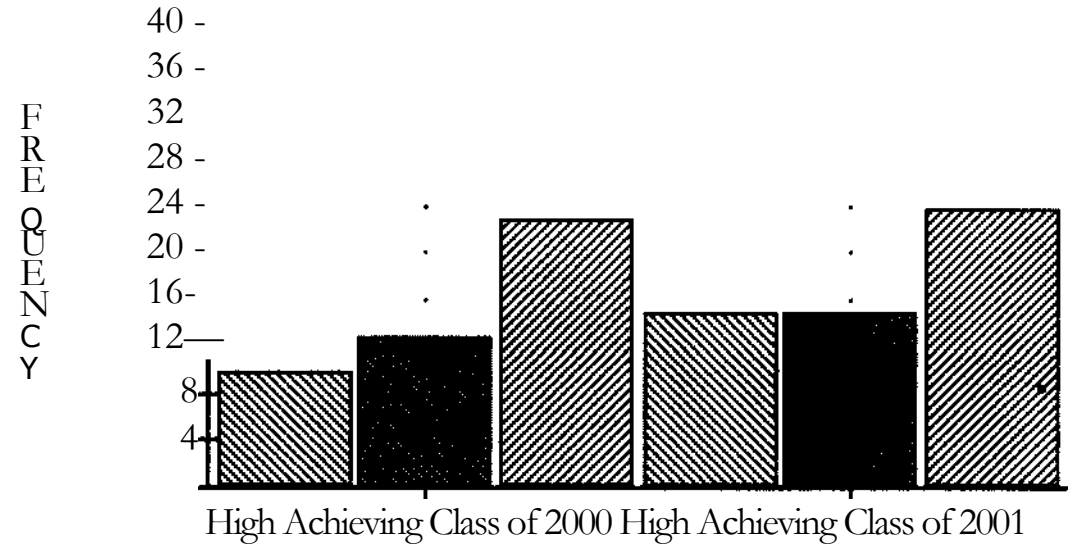


Figure 1. Changes in High Achievement Identification From Grade 3 to Grade 5 for Students in the Class of 2000 and the Class of 2001

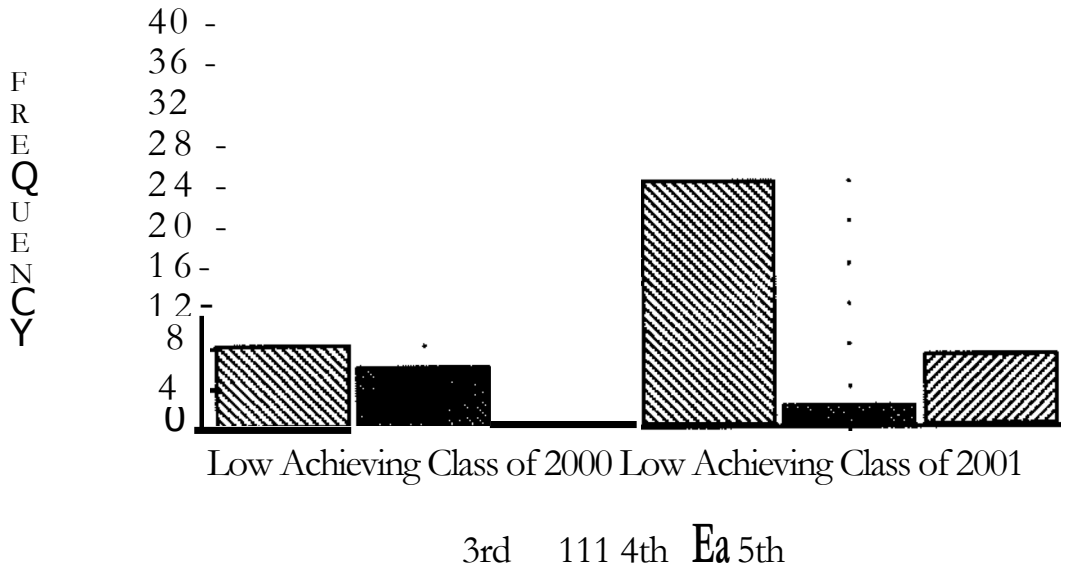


Figure 2. Changes in Low Achievement Identcation From Grade 3 to Grade 5

for Students in the Class of 2000 and the Class of 2001

and tend to dominate class sometimes. Also, the average student or high-average student really blossomed, too, which may be due to cluster grouping.

From the perspective of Teacher 3E:

> We've talked about why we find more higher achieving students for several years. Part of it, I feel, is that when you pull those really high kids out—those who always have their hand up first and jump in with the answers—when you get rid of those students by putting them

> They take risks more often and see themselves as being leaders of the group. They are no longer frightened to offer answers.

As Teacher 3A discussed:

> I think the low and average children really benefited, because we only spent as much time on things as they needed to and then we moved on. Even if they moved at a slower pace, they were feeling successful. I feel even the low students had good self-esteem because they were constantly successful. I think that's why we also had fewer low stu-

and I think a child who is in a classroom where there are not other children taking front stage has that opportunity and starts to shine. Their confidence builds, and I think that turns a high-average child into a high-achieving child.

The teachers in this study believed that removing the highest achievers from four of the five classrooms gave other students the opportunity to grow and achieve at higher levels than they might have if the highest achieving students had remained in the classroom. This result is consistent with the findings of Kennedy (1989), who found that when the gifted students were absent from the regular classrooms, new talent emerged from other students.

Additionally, other teachers (n = 8; 64%) and administrators (n = 2; 67%) suggested that the increase in achievement was due to efforts by the teachers to facilitate achievement among all of their students. These efforts included maintaining high expectations, creating a positive learning environment, and using a variety of strategies to challenge individual students. As Teacher 5A explained:

One thing that caused more students to be identified was our expectations. I think that when kids are expected to achieve at a higher level, they try to do that. And I think that high expectations help students to try, and this effort boosts their scores. I think when students are exposed to higher level thinking skills and challenging work, it helps them achieve. When they are with other kids who are working at high levels, I think that helps them. I know I found that with the cluster grouping.

Teacher 5C described her thoughts:

The high students were all with [Teacher 5A], and we expected more [from the students] we had. By removing some of the higher kids, it may have influenced the others to work harder ... and maybe teachers expected more because we didn't have the higher students and treated it as a regular classroom and expected the average students to rise to the occasion.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

A combination of grouping and teacher practices may have been responsible for the changes in identification of students in this study. As achievement of students increased within the classrooms, they were more likely to be identified as higher achieving. The cluster grouping program may have provided these students with more opportunity to achieve by removing the highest achievers from four of the five classrooms in each grade level. Teachers believed in the program and in their students' abilities. The teachers indicated that the grouping and placement used in the cluster program helped them to better meet individual needs, and, with the highest achieving students removed from their classrooms, other students gained in achievement and confidence. These findings, which are contrary to popular views in the reform movement that grouping somehow damages the low-achieving students (George, 1993; Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987a; Wheelock, 1992), should be considered together with analyses of ability grouping (e.g., Kulik & Kulik, 1992; Rogers, 1991) when decisions are made regarding how children will be placed in elementary classrooms. Cluster grouping may offer students opportunities for academic growth as well as recognition by their teachers, and its use should be seriously considered by elementary schools.

Achievement Findings and Implications for Research Question 2: How Do Students in the Treatment School Compare with Students from the Comparison School with Regard to Achievement?

To investigate the trends in identification, standardized student achievement was compared with the achievement of students from the comparison school. Repeated-measures MANOVA was used with school as the independent variable and grade 3, 4, and 5 NCE math and reading scores as dependent variables. Second-grade math and reading scores were used as covariates, because purposive sampling made randomization impossible. The covariates were significant for both the Class of 2000, $F(4, 300) = 81$, $p < .05$, and the Class of 2001, $F(4, 326) = 79.92$, $p < .05$, but not highly correlated with the independent variables, with canonical correlations of .16 for both data sets (accounting for only 2.6% of the variance that might otherwise explain the dependent variables).

After adjustment by the covariates, there were significant differences in the main and interaction effects for the Class of 2000. The main effect of school, $F(2, 150) = 16.98$, $p < .001$, and the interaction of school and time, $F(4, 610) = 8.01$, $p < .001$, were significant. Because a large sample can more easily yield statistical significance, effect sizes for these results were examined. The effect sizes (R^2) were calculated as 1 minus Wilks' Lambda (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). For the significant main effect of school, the effect size was $R^2 = .18$, and the interaction had an effect size of $R^2 = .10$, both practically significant with

in achievement scores between the schools, the school that the students attended accounted for 18% of the variation in achievement scores measured by the combined supervariable of math and reading. The interaction of school and time accounted for 10% of this variation.

For the Class of 2001, after adjusting for initial differences, significant differences were found in main effects of school, $F(2, 162) = 10.14$, $p < .001$; and time, $F(4, 662) = 6.65$, $p < .001$; and in the interaction of school by time, $F(4, 662) = 4.32$, $p < .002$. Effect sizes for these significant differences were $R^2 = .11$, $R^2 = .08$, and $R^2 = .05$, respectively, all small, but practically significant (Cohen, 1988). The school that the students attended accounted for 11% of the variation in

achievement scores measured by the combined supervariable of math and reading; the repeated occasions of testing accounted for 8% of this variation; and the interaction of school and time accounted for 5% of the variation, after adjustments by the covariates.

Explaining the Omnibus Test: Between School Contrasts

The first set of contrasts used BMDP program 2V ANCOVA procedures to compare the achievement of students in reading and math by grade level between schools. In each contrast, the reading or math score was the dependent variable, school was the independent variable, and the grade 2 reading or math score was the covariate.

Table 2 includes the results of these contrasts for the Class of 2000, and Table 3 portrays results of the same analyses for the Class of 2001. As indicated in Table 2, after adjustment for initial differences, on average, students in the Class of 2000 comparison school scored significantly higher ($M_c = 53.84$) than students in the treatment school ($M_t = 47.94$) in grade 3 reading scores, with a small effect size of $R^2 = .055$. Yet, by grade 5, students in the treatment school were averaging significantly higher scores ($M_t = 53.25$) than students in the comparison school ($M_c = 48.16$), with a small effect size of ($R^2 = .042$) (Cohen, 1988).

Also indicated in Table 2, with regard to mathematics scores of the students from the Class of 2000, significant differences were found between the schools at grade 3, grade 4, and grade 5 after adjusting for initial differences. The treatment school students averaged higher adjusted scores than the comparison school students on each occasion (grade 3: $M_t = 55.98$; $M_c = 49.79$; grade 4: $M_t = 55.60$; $M_c = 50.87$; grade 5: $M_t = 58.01$; $M_c = 48.25$), with the largest difference between the scores occurring at grade 5. The effect sizes for differences at grades 3 ($R^2 = .039$) and 4 ($R^2 = .032$) were practically significant, yet small, and the effect size for the grade 5 differences was medium $R^2 = .099$ (Cohen, 1988).

As depicted in Table 3, after adjusting for initial differences, comparison school students from the Class of 2001 averaged significantly higher scores than treatment school students in reading achievement when in grade 3 ($M_c = 52.62$; $M_t = 46.79$), but there were no significant differences in reading achievement in either grade 4 or grade 5. The medium effect size, $R^2 = .066$, was practically significant and accounted for 6.6% of the variation in adjusted reading scores. By grade 5, the treatment students had increased the mean adjusted score in reading achievement ($M_t = 49.27$) to a level that eliminated statistical differences between the groups.

As indicated in Table 3, with regard to the mathematics scores of the students from the Class of 2001, significant differences in achievement were found for grades 4 and 5 after adjusting for initial differences. In each case, the students in the treatment school scored higher than the students in the comparison school (grade 4: $M_t = 57.12$, $M_c = 51.49$; grade 5: $M_t = 55.54$, $K = 47.92$). The difference at grade 4 had a small, but significant effect size of $R^2 = .044$, and the grade 5 difference had a medium and practically significant effect size of $R^2 = .076$.

Explaining the Omnibus Test: Within Schools Contrasts

The second set of planned contrasts compared student achievement in reading and math by the repeated measure of time. Within each school, scores were contrasted between grades 3 and 4; grades 4 and 5; and grades 3 and 5 to determine when significant changes occurred. For each contrast, the independent variable was time and the dependent variable was math or reading score. These scores

were contrasted for each data set using BMDP program 2V ANOVA procedures. Because these contrasts were performed within the individual school data sets, no covariates were used.

For the treatment school Class of 2000, significant differences were found in mean reading achievement scores between grades 3 *(M* = 46.11) and 4 *(M* = 49.00), $F(1,85) = 4.59$, $p < .05$, and grades 3 *(M* = 46.11) and 5 *(M* = 51.23), $F(1,85) = 12.87$, $p < .05$. The difference in reading scores between grade 3 and grade 5 had practical significance and a large effect size of $R^2 = .13$, or 13% of the variance between the grades (Cohen, 1988). However, no differences existed in math achievement for these students.

The comparison school Class of 2000 contrasts included significant differences in mean reading achievement between grades 4 *(M* = 53.59) and 5 *(M* = 50.69), $F(1,66) = 5.14$, $p < .05$, and grades 3 *(M* = 56.22) and 5 *(M* = 50.69), $F(1,66) = 20.49$, $p < .05$, with student scores decreasing. The decrease between grade 3 and grade 5 had large practical significance ($R^2 = .23$), which explained 23% of the variation in scores between these grades. As with the treatment school, no differences were found in math achievement between any grade levels.

Treatment students from the Class of 2001 showed significant increases in average reading achievement between grades 3 *(M* = 46.11) and 4 *(M* = 50.21), $F(1,97) = 10.30$, $p < .05$, a practically significant increase with a medium effect size of $R^2 = .095$. No significant differences in math achievement were found between any of the grades.

Planned contrasts for the comparison school students from the Class of 2001 indicated no differences in reading achievement with respect to time, but all contrasts of math achievement were found to be statistically significant with decreases in mean scores between grades 3 *(M* = 57.84), 4 *(M* = 53.42), and 5 (M = 50.10). This steady decrease between grades 3 and 5, $F(1,67) = 18.58$, $p < .05$, had a large effect size of $R^2 = .214$.

Table 2

	Treatment School		Comparison School			
Achievement measure	Mean (SD)	Adjusted mean	Mean (SD)	Adjusted mean	*F* value	E.S.
(Covariate) Reading Grade 2	49.42 (23.83)		56.71 (28.84)			
Reading Grade 3	46.12 (17.15)	47.94	56.22 (18.49)	53.84	8.89*	R^2= .055
Reading Grade 4	49.13 (17.27)	50.98	53.59 (18.62)	51.13	.01	
Reading Grade 5	51.30 (18.05)	53.25	50.69 (17.90)	48.16	6.75*	R^2= .042
(Covariate) Math Grade 2	53.98 (21.24)		59.00 (19.96)			
Math Grade 3	54.58 (21.32)	55.98	51.62 (17.12)	49.79	6.41*	R^2=.039
Math Grade 4	54.44 (16.47)	55.60	52.40 (17.31)	50.87	5.12*	R^2 = .032
Math Grade 5	56.48 (22.96)	58.01	50.35 (18.81)	48.25	16.73**	R^2 = .099

Class of 2000 Planned Contrasts: Means, Standard Deviations, Adjusted Means, and F-values for Reading and Math Achievement Measures in Grades 2, 3, 4, and 5

*Note: n = 155, * p < .05, ** p < . 001*

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

Even though students in the treatment schools began with lower reading scores than did students in the comparison school, after three years in a flexible cluster grouping program, the treatment school students outperformed or equaled their comparison school counterparts. Additionally, the growth in reading achievement had both practical and statistical significance for the treatment school students. Qualitative findings revealed that treatment school students from both the Class of 2000 and the Class of 2001 were regrouped between classes for reading instruction on the basis of performance in reading during each year of the program (grades 3-5). Administrators

Table 3

Class of 2001 Planned Contrasts: Means, Standard Deviations, Adjusted Means, and F-values for Reading and Math Achievement Measures in Grades 2, 3, 4, and 5

	Treatment School		Comparison School			
Achievement measure	Mean (SD)	Adjusted mean	Mean (SD)	Adjusted mean	*F* value	E.S.
(Covariate) Reading Grade 2	50.67 (21.91)		53.22 (15.03)			
Reading Grade 3	46.11 (19.38)	46.79	53.60 (14.56)	52.62	11.71**	R^2 = .066
Reading Grade 4	50.21 (17.00)	50.90	51.62 (15.20)	50.64	.01	
Reading Grade 5	48.59 (18.57)	49.27	52.78 (15.14)	51.80	1.78	
(Covariate) Math Grade 2	52.04 (18.33)		57.78 (16.45)			
Math Grade 3	56.04 (19.68)	57.70	57.84 (18.45)	55.43	.96	
Math Grade 4	55.79 (17.75)	57.12	53.42 (13.49)	51.49	7.72*	R^2 = .044
Math Grade 5	54.03 (17.93)	55.54	50.10 (16.20)	47.92	13.56**	R^2 = .076

Note. n = *155.* *p < *.05.* **p < *.001*

indicated that heterogeneous and whole-group instruction were used for teaching reading in their elementary classrooms, and they were not involved in achievement grouping. These findings may indicate that the effects of the cluster grouping combined with regrouping for reading instruction had a positive impact on the reading achievement of treatment school students in the three years.

With regard to math achievement for both data the comparison school students in mathematics during the three program years, with the largest differences in grade 5 after adjusting scores for initial differences. However, unlike reading achievement, treatment school students did not show significant changes in math achievement, possibly because the math scores were already high (as indicated by mean NCE scores above 50 for students from each data set). For the three program years, the average NCE math score for

Students were regrouped for math instruction between classes by achievement levels. As with reading, the collection of high teacher expectations, the use of grouping, and the use of challenging instructional strategies may have been responsible for the high achievement in mathematics of the students from the treatment school.

As indicated in the qualitative part of this analysis, many teachers (n = 11; 79%) and all administrators (n = 3) thought that the restriction of the range of achievement in classrooms, as well as the between-class grouping by achievement levels in reading and math, helped teachers meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms. Qualitative findings also indicated the use of a variety of instructional strategies around the themes of challenge, choice, and interests. High teacher expectations and the use of grouping may also have influenced student achievement in the treatment school. Again, contrary to the popular anti-grouping sentiment, these findings reinforce the idea that the use of flexible grouping coupled with appropriate instruction may positively influence student achievement. The implication for elementary schools is that flexible achievement grouping used in conjunction with challenging curriculum should be considered when designing educational programs. As Teacher 3C explained:

> By using achievement grouping, we are able to challenge the high achievers and meet the needs of the low achievers without having the low achievers or the high achievers feel like they had been singled out. We are able to adjust our curriculum and instruction to meet the individual needs of the students at their levels.

Qualitative Findings for Research Question 3: What Factors Exist in the Classrooms and the School Using Cluster Grouping That May Have Influenced Student Achievement?

The findings discussed in this section emerged as core categories after open, axial, and selective coding had been applied to the data as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990). This coding yielded three core categories: *the use of grouping, the apparent impact of the teachers,* and *the general school environment.* Response frequencies greater than or equal to six (over half of the teachers not responsible for the high-achieving cluster students) were considered to represent a general consensus and are reported as a theme within a core category. With regard to the administrators, two of three responses indicated a theme.

The Use of Grouping

Because cluster grouping implies ability grouping, both the program documents and the teacher interviews focused on the use of various forms of grouping in the program between grades 3 and 5. Grouping occurred within classrooms and between classrooms and, in both cases, was flexible. Like the identification procedures that were used to place students into classrooms, grouping was employed in a variety of ways, and students were not locked into specific groups for the duration of the day. Additionally, many teachers *(n* = 13; 93%) reported that they thought the cluster grouping was directly related to the increase in the number of *high-achieving* students identified during the three program years. Others *(n* = 11; 79%) reported that they believed the cluster grouping program helped them better meet the needs of the individual students within their classrooms.

Between-class groups. It became evident after the first few interviews that even though cluster grouping was used for placing students in classrooms, students were regrouped by achievement for reading and math instruction in grades 3,4, and 5. This meant that, within each grade level, the teachers regrouped the students for reading and math instruction by achievement levels, and different teachers instructed students who were not necessarily the students from their regular class. This regrouping applied to the Class of 2000 for reading in grades 3-5 and for math in grades 4 and 5. The Class of 2001 was regrouped for instruction for reading and math in grades 3-5. Teachers at each grade level chose to do this to better meet the needs of students. One teacher would take the low-achieving students, another would take the advanced students, and the remaining three teachers would have students who were achieving near average in reading and math. The teacher who had the *high-achieving* cluster did not necessarily teach these students for reading and math. Therefore, other teachers had the opportunity to work with the most advanced students. The teachers explained that more students than those in the *high achieving* cluster could be in the *high reading* or *high math* sections, and that these sections did not necessarily include the same students. As Teacher 3A explained:

> We had so many high math students who weren't in the high cluster, we thought, to really meet the needs of the grade level, we would have a cluster group strictly for math. We also had the high cluster reading group to meet the needs of other children who may not have been identified or who had strengths that weren't evident across the board. We were able to target more children for high reading by regrouping within the grade level for reading.

Teacher 3B, who taught the low math class, explained:

> I teach the low math group, which includes the learning disabled students and those identified for Chapter 1 assistance. With these students, I am able to teach in different ways and go at a slower pace, but they think that they are great at math because the better students are not in the room to make them feel slow. We do a lot of hands-on things like base-10 blocks, patterning, and touch math, because many of them can't get it in the traditional ways. We do a lot of problem solving, mental math ... I challenge them at grade level ... I don't dumb down the curriculum, I just teach it differently so they can be successful, too.

This teacher also taught the advanced reading section where she used a literature-based curriculum, and students worked beyond grade level, had their curriculum compacted, and were involved in many different writing activities. When teaching the low-achieving students who had been regrouped for math, she had the assistance of a teacher consultant and a Chapter 1 aide.

In addition to using between-class grouping by achievement for math and reading, the three *high-achieving* cluster teachers indicated that they used between-grade grouping when it was needed to meet the needs of individual students. For example, Teacher 5A explained:

> Some students went to sixth grade to take math in the middle school, because they were even beyond where I was with the high math group. After math in the middle school, they would return for the rest of the day in fifth grade.

Within-class groups. The types of within-class grouping that were reported included interest grouping (n = 8), cooperative grouping *(n = 7),* and flexible grouping (n = 6). Six teachers explained that they used flexible grouping and, depending on the lesson, students often chose their groups or partners. Teacher 4D described her use of grouping in the following way:

> I do all those things, cooperative learning, interest groups, peer teaching, whole group instruction. We're driven ... to do what works for children and use a variety of methods. So, anything that we feel we can use in our classrooms to facilitate whatever the needs are, we do that.

Teacher 3A described,

> I used all forms of grouping, including cooperative learning, flexible groups, and interest groups. Sometimes I chose the groups, sometimes it was by interest, and sometimes groups were chosen independently by the students.

Flexible groups. Flexibility emerged as a key component of both the within-class grouping and the between-class grouping. Seven teachers explained that the grouping between classes was always flexible, and that if a student needed to be in another section, the cooperation and flexibility existed within each grade level to move students around as needed. With the exception of the four teachers who said that their primary mode of instruction was whole-group instruction, it was evident from the many comments that the use of grouping within the classrooms varied and was flexible in nature. For example, Teacher 4C explained:

> The types of groups that I use in my class depend on the activity; sometimes I use cooperative learning, or peer tutoring, other times I use interest grouping, or I group students by ability. The main thing with my use of grouping is that it is flexible.

Even though students were identified in various achievement levels for placement into classrooms, it became evident that these identification categories were not fixed, nor were they used consistently to group students for instruction. Rather, students were grouped and regrouped in many flexible ways designed by the teachers to help them be successful.

Cluster grouping and meeting the needs of individual students. Eleven teachers (79%) indicated that cluster-grouping placement strategies made it easier for them to meet the needs of individual students in their classrooms. The superintendent and the assistant principal agreed. Eight teachers (57%) said that cluster grouping allowed them more time to work with lower achieving students at a level appropriate for these students, whereas all three of the teachers who worked with the high achievers indicated that they were able to do much more to challenge and promote growth in these students than had previously been possible. In the 1990 program evaluation report submitted to the Board of Education, four teachers explained how cluster grouping had helped them better address individual student needs in their classrooms.

The teachers who taught the high-achieving clusters said that it was beneficial to the high achievers to be clustered together because they challenged each other and didn't always get to be the best. Teacher 4A explained, "They [high-achieving students] challenge and motivate each other, and with just one or two kids, I don't think that would happen."

Nine teachers (64%) indicated that the restricted range of achievement levels created by cluster-grouping placements made meeting individual needs easier for them.

> Yes. That's one thing teaching for the first 10 years, I always felt guilty, like I always felt I wasn't giving enough time to the low kids, and I also felt like I wasn't challenging the high kids enough. Because I think the gap is narrower so I can zero in on their needs. (Teacher 3B)

> The kids were more deliberately placed, so we didn't have as broad of a range and didn't have to deal with the extremes. I also had an aide and a teacher consultant, which helped to meet the needs of the students who were struggling. (Teacher 4B)

The majority of the teachers agreed that cluster grouping helped them meet the needs of individual students in their classrooms. The restricted range of achievement levels created more time for the teachers to work with students in their classrooms. They also reported that cluster grouping was beneficial to students because it allowed students of like achievement levels to work together and challenge each other.

The Apparent Impact of Teachers

Positive classroom environments. Teachers and administrators reported positive classroom environments and said that school was a place where students wanted to be. This finding was confirmed by school climate surveys, completed in 1990 and 1991 as part of school improvement planning, in which students in the upper elementary school indicated that they were, on average, happy with their classrooms and felt that

school was friendly and safe. Parent satisfaction surveys were high each year, as reported in the annual reports to the Board of Education and to the State Department of Education. During the semistructured interviews, teachers were asked to describe the atmosphere of their classrooms.

> Excited. The kids don't want to miss school, even when they're sick. I never have a motivation problem, because they like what they are doing and are challenged and feeling successful. (Teacher 3A)

> I think it's safe for them to be who they are, to be different, and to disagree with me. If they offer suggestions on my teaching, I listen to them. I think they understand that I really care, but that there are high expectations for learning. (Teacher 5A)

Both teachers and administrators discussed how the teaching strategies and the curriculum modifications were used to benefit the students. Many teachers *(n* = 12) discussed adjusting assignments, helping students to feel successful, and making their classrooms places that students wanted to be. A theme of concern and caring was continuously discussed by teachers.

High, yet realistic teacher expectations. All of the teachers reported that their expectations for students were high, and two said that they expected more than one year's growth from their students. Two other teachers stated that their expectations were the same as when the high-achieving students had been in their classrooms. Fifth-grade teachers discussed preparing their students for success at the middle school. The general tone of the interviews indicated that the teachers believed in the need to challenge, but at the same time, help the students experience success. Three teachers said they had been accused of having standards that were "too high." None of the teachers said that removing the high-achieving students from their classrooms had, in any way, influenced their expectations. Comments from teachers regarding their expectations included:

> I always keep my expectations of the high achievers high and work and make sure I really push the kids to do more than they want to do. I give work back to them, tell them they have good ideas, and encourage them to expand [their ideas], because they are capable of more. (Teacher 3A)

> I truly expected all students to achieve ... regardless of where they are or who they are. I want to meet the needs of students and feel my standards or expectations are high (Teacher 5E)

> I don't believe because a child has an LD or EMI label means that they are low. I think that's a problem with education—just because a child is identified with a disability or something, some people tend to think, Well, they're low. I expect a lot from them—I don't think they are dumb. I think they can do just as many things as gifted kids, maybe not to the full extent, but in some things they can go beyond. If it's their interest, they can excel just as much as anybody else can. (Teacher 3B)

As the quantitative analyses of the identification categories and achievement data indicated, students seemed to be successful in these classrooms.

Strategies for challenging students and meeting students' needs in the cluster-grouped classroom. Most teachers indicated that they were concerned with meeting the needs of individual students. The strategies these teachers used to challenge and meet the needs of students in their cluster-grouped classrooms are summarized in Table 4. The related themes of challenge, choice, and student interest emerged through all these strategies. Strategies are presented according to which of these themes or combination of themes they belong.

As indicated in Table 4, the majority of these strategies were reported to have been used by the teachers who taught the classrooms with the high-achieving cluster students. However, many strategies were used in other classrooms with students of all achievement levels. For example, curriculum compacting was used by all teachers who had the high-achieving students, but also by five other teachers. Four teachers with regular classrooms had implemented the choice of independent study with their students, and seven teachers regularly provided enrichment experiences beyond the curriculum to their students. Teachers in many classrooms reported using thinking, questioning, and problem-solving strategies, and over half of the teachers reported that they gave students choices in group assignment and curriculum assignments. A variety of methods were used to incorporate student interests including the use of enrichment/interest centers (n = 10); curriculum compacting *(n* = 8); and independent study in an area of student choice and interest *(n = 7).* As Teacher 4A described:

> Because their ideas are implemented, their ideas become part of what we do. Students are pretty empowered in the classroom. For example, a couple of years ago, we had two girls really interested in special education. They did some research and worked once a week with the hearing impaired teacher and her students, and then they came back to class and taught us sign language and shared what they learned.

As indicated by the teachers of the high-achieving cluster students, there was a balance of acceleration and enrichment through appropriate challenges and choices.

> In the homeroom with the high cluster, I found with English and science we were able to move much faster and at a higher level. We didn't need to do spelling every day like other classrooms. I was able to use that time for independent studies and special projects with children. I really liked it because I thought I was challenging the students, and it was productive. I pretest and give them other choices instead. I also move at a faster pace, at a higher level, with higher expectations. (Teacher 3A)

> I use fifth grade math and spelling. I use all kinds of enrichment things—mind benders, we pull in Engin-Uity, inventions, Invent America stuff they get involved in poetry writing, Science Olympid, Math Olympiad. (Teacher 4A)

> Academically talented [students] were allowed to move up to the sixth grade or in some way [work] independently. We did various types of activities. They would have choices ... they could put on a drama to present their material, they could write a book, they use poetry, they could sing a song.... Then, we had different enrichment

Table 4

Strategies for Challenging and Meeting Students' Needs in the Regular Cluster Grouped Classroom: Frequency of Use by Grade Level Responses

Strategy	Grade 3 Responses (n = 5)	Grade 4 Responses (n = 4)	Grade 5 Responses (n = 5)
CHALLENGE			
Integrating High Order Thinking Skills	5*	3*	3*
Developing Critical Thinking Skills	2	3*	3*
Using Creative Thinking Skills	2*	2*	2*
Integrating Problem Solving	3*	2*	3*
Assigning Projects	3*	1*	1*
Using Acceleration	1*	2*	1*
Adjusting Assignments	4	3*	3
CHALLENGE & INTEREST			
Spending Time with High Achievers	1*	1*	1*
Developing Curricular Extensions	5*	4	3*
CHOICE & INTEREST			
Providing Choice of Partners or Groups	2*	2*	4*
Providing Choice to Work Alone or Together	3*	2*	3*
CHALLENGE, CHOICE, & INTEREST			
Using Open-Ended questioning	5*	4*	4*
Offering Independent Study	2*	2*	3*
Using Challenge Questions	2*	2*	1
Implementing Curriculum Compacting	4*	1*	3*
Providing Enrichment Experiences	5*	2*	3*
Providing Choice of Problems or Assignments	2*	2	3*

*Note. *Indicates that one of the respondents included the teacher of the high achieving cluster.*

> throughout the school that kids could apply for and attend. If they liked to write, they could go to a residence in writing; sometimes, we had a mentor in drama or art with them, and they were allowed to pursue those things. I would pretest; if they knew it, then we would cover only the things that they hadn't mastered. With independent studies, they had choices to select things they were interested in, but they were required to meet a certain standard, a certain way of writing; they had to produce a product, had to share with an audience ... that sort of thing. I tried to have writing assignments across the curriculum, plus their independent study was like a thesis-type paper. (Teacher 5A)

The General School Environment

Strong administrative leadership and support. Teachers supplied evidence of strong teacher said the administration had not been supportive, two others expressed that support had been mixed, and 11 indicated that there had been firm support on the part of the administration.

Professional development opportunities. Professional development was ongoing, and most teachers indicated that it was an important part of their success as teachers and with the cluster grouping program. Before choosing to implement the cluster grouping program, all staff attended a one-day workshop on the concept of cluster

cluster grouping. National, state, regional, and local professional development opportunities in gifted education were made available to staff, with all participating in at least the local opportunities (e.g., curriculum compacting; differentiating and individualizing curriculum and instruction; LD gifted and underachievers; meeting the needs of gifted math and science students). In all, a total of 64% of the teachers attended national, state, or regional professional development conferences or workshops in gifted education. Additionally, six teachers mentioned how helpful it was to have the teachers who teach the *high-achieving* cluster in the building as resources. As Teacher 3B explained:

> I've learned so much from [Teacher 3A], and I adapt many of the strategies that she uses with her high achievers and use them with my LD and low achievers. I don't think that gifted education is just for gifted students.

Belief in colleagues and collaboration. The administration and teachers demonstrated strong support of and confidence in the teachers. There was a general atmosphere in this school of quality and of caring by teachers who seemed to do their best to work with students. Fifty-five percent of the teachers who were not responsible for the *high-achieving* students indicated that they used strategies in their classrooms that they thought were typically "gifted education" strategies. All of the third-grade teachers, for example, indicated that they were glad that Teacher 3A had the cluster of high achievers because she had to put so much extra effort into meeting these students' needs, and she was talented in working with those children. The teachers had confidence in each other, worked together, and were regarded as competent by the administration.

Program benefits to all students and teachers. The program was viewed as successful because the teachers and administrators believe it was beneficial both to the teachers and to the students. The teachers liked the program, and many believed it helped them better meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Teacher 3B explained how she came to view the program:

> One thing—I remember how skeptical I was at the beginning because I'm not a risk-taker. I thought the same thing a few other people thought—oh, you take those top kids out and I'm not going to have any spark. And that was so far from being true. I see lots of sparks in my room.... and having my daughter in [the program] ... there's such a difference in her attitude and her love for school is back ... before being placed in the high-achieving cluster, she wasn't being challenged in school, now to see her doing research projects as an eightyear-old ... she's doing projects so beyond what I ever thought and she is so excited about school.

The administrators who were interviewed expressed their belief that the cluster-grouping program had helped the teachers do their jobs. As the superintendent explained:

> Well, I think we've got some real benefits. I had a great deal of skepticism when we first started because I thought, Well, are we looking at an elitist program where we're taking the cream of the crop and separating them even though they may be within a classroom with other students that's going to "dummy down" the other classes. In fact, it's had just the opposite effect. We have been able to have leadership rise in other classes where we don't have the very bright students who have been in those classes. So, it's had a real bonus effect for more general education students, from what I can see ... and at the same time accomplishing more challenges for the gifted kids. Additionally, I think that the cluster grouping program actually makes the teachers' jobs easier.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

Qualitative findings provided further insight into the treatment school and classrooms. The teachers in this study created positive classroom environments in which high expectations were held for all of their students. They used a variety of strategies, including various forms of grouping, to challenge and meet student needs. The program was supported by strong administrative leadership, and teachers had continuing professional development and growth opportunities in which most teachers chose to become involved. Both teachers and administrators worked collaboratively and indicated confidence in their colleagues' abilities. These findings were similar to those found in the exemplary programs for gifted investigated by Delcourt and Evans (1994), who cited the following characteristics of these programs: strong leadership, supportive atmosphere and environment, and flexible curriculum and instruction matched to student needs.

Discussion

The quantitative findings (increased reading achievement, higher math achievement, and increased numbers of students identified as *high-achieving* in the treatment school) combined with the qualitative findings indicate that cluster grouping, when combined with high teacher expectations, the use of strategies to challenge and meet individual needs, and positive classroom environments, may have a positive impact on all students in a school. All teachers and administrators (n = 17) involved in the program believed that cluster grouping was beneficial to both students and teachers, because it helped students be successful by structuring classes in a manner that helped teachers better address individual needs. These findings support research-based suggestions by Kulik and Kulik (1992) and Rogers (1991), who suggested that grouping by ability, when used in conjunction with appropriate differentiated instruction, can be beneficial to student achievement.

Contrary to findings by Oakes (1985, 1995), the teachers in this study who did not have the cluster of high-achieving students were not regarded as the poor teachers, and they did not lower their expectations for their students. In fact, they reported that the opposite occurred, and they expected the same or more from their students as highlighted by the following teacher comments.

> I guess I have the same high standards for the average-and low-achieving student as I do for any other student. (Teacher 4 C)

> I think it's our expectations. I think I just thought that they could all do it and expected them to do it. (Teacher 5D)

As noted by Tomlinson and Callahan (1992), Renzulli (1994), Reis, Gentry, and Park (1995), and the U. S. Department of Education (1993), the use of gifted education "know-how" has the potential to improve general education practices. The cluster-grouping program investigated in this study was designed to simultaneously address the needs of high-achieving students *and* the needs of other students. As a result of this connection with the general education program, professional development opportunities in gifted education were made available to all staff, and dialogue between teachers of the high-achieving cluster students and the rest of the staff was encouraged. As a result, all teachers received professional development in gifted education strategies and reported using these strategies in their classrooms with all of their students.

Unlike the classrooms described by Archambault et al. (1993) and observed by Goodlad (1984) and Westberg et al. (1993), the classrooms in this school were characterized by a variety of challenging activities and varied instructional strategies. Renzulli (1994) noted that the practice in many schools of diagnosing and remediating weaknesses should be replaced with a talent development approach to enrichment learning and teaching that recognizes student interests, strengths, and talents as a basis for their education. In this study, integration of the cluster-grouping program with the general education program seemed to impact all teachers and students in the school. The treatment school teachers applied many strategies from gifted education to their daily teaching, something that might not have happened had professional development in gifted education been reserved only for the teachers of the high-achieving students. The implication is that all staff and, consequently, all students can benefit from in-service in gifted education strategies. Therefore, schools should be careful not to limit their professional development in gifted education to just those teachers who work with identified gifted students. By offering more teachers opportunities to learn and to apply gifted education know-how, perhaps student achievement can be raised in schools.

The findings of this study should interest school districts that are struggling with how to meet the needs of gifted students in the regular classroom. Although current reform trends suggest that heterogeneous grouping is preferred (George, 1993; Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993; Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987a; Wheelock, 1992) when developing elementary classroom configurations, the findings of this study suggest that the deliberate placement of a narrower range of achievement groups in teachers' classrooms, including the placement of a group of *high-achieving* students together in one room, is beneficial to both students and teachers. It stands to reason that if the *high-achieving* students are placed with a teacher who has the background and willingness to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet these students' special needs, their needs are more likely to be met than if they are randomly placed into all teachers' classrooms for the sake of heterogeneous grouping. Further, as was done in the program in this study, if the placement of students in the other teachers' classrooms is done thoughtfully, and includes a group of students who are above average, then districts might see growth in identification and achievement similar to that observed in this study. The implication for districts is that a well-developed cluster-grouping program, such as the one in this study, can offer gifted education services to *high-achieving* students while helping teachers better meet the needs of all students.

Elementary classroom teachers might find the results of this study interesting as they struggle to meet the individual needs of students. Of special interest are the reports by teachers in this study that removing the highest achievers from four of five classrooms per grade level did not affect the way teachers viewed the students in their classrooms. There was no report of "losing the spark" by teachers who were not responsible for the *high-achieving* students. On the contrary, these teachers reported that having the *high-achieving* students removed from their classrooms helped them better meet the needs of individual students, while encouraging new talent to emerge. As Teacher 5B suggested:

> I really believe that those high-achieving kids are not models for the other kids. The other kids know where they are ... so they don't model themselves after those kids. When [the high achievers are] taken out and able to move at their own rate, then these other kids who are good and could be better begin to surface and begin to shine and not sit back and let those extremely high achievers take control of the classroom.

Other teachers may want to consider the views of the teachers involved in this study when deciding whether to try a cluster-grouping approach to programming and classroom placements.

The varied uses of grouping found in this study have implications for teachers who have questions regarding its

appropriate uses. The teachers in this study used achievement grouping in math and reading, reporting that this made it easier for them to challenge the student at appropriate levels. They also used other forms of flexible grouping. The implications are that flexible achievement grouping has the potential to produce academic gains for all students.

Although the weaknesses of causal comparative research are well documented (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), a study such as this is valuable in other ways. First, it enabled the investigation of a practice that was implemented and carried out in an actual school setting. Second, it investigated a school-initiated innovation, as opposed to an innovation demanded by external sources, such as federal funding or special mandates. Because the innovation was school-based, local control and ownership were invested in the program. Although there are problems associated with the use ofintact groups, the use ofintact groups provided a distinct advantage in this research. The intact groups examined were stable over time and facilitated longitudinal comparisons of students between and within groups during the course of a three-year program. Finally, this study examined an often-recommended practice for which little research exists, and the findings can serve as the basis for further, more carefully controlled experimental or quasi-experimental research. A discussion of limitations follows.

Limitations

Internal validity of the study was limited by instrumentation, history, differential selection, the use of intact groups, and multiple treatments (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Regarding instrumentation, existing measures of achievement had to be used, and these measures were on two different tests. The use of NCE scores, the similarity of the ITBS and the CAT, the large number of students involved in the study, and the use of ANCOVA enabled the use of these two instruments to compare student achievement over time. The use of two data sets and repeated measures helped to control for the threat of history and increase confidence that results were not simply due to chance. However, results must be interpreted with caution because other events (of which the researchers were unaware) that occurred during the time the program took place may also have influenced results. The similarity of the comparison school and the use of a covariate helped to control for the threat of differential selection.

Huck and Cormier (1996) warned that a covariate must be used with caution when there are intact groups. However, the covariate was not highly correlated with the independent variable, and the use of nationally normed instruments on which students scored near the national mean helped to increase confidence in the use of the covariate. Additionally, whenever intact groups are used, there is the problem of intraclass correlation (ICC), meaning that the subjects' scores on dependent variables are often correlated simply because they are in the groups (Barcikowski, 1981; Scariano & Davenport, 1987), which violates the assumption that data are independent and inflates the alpha level. One method for addressing the problem of ICC is to make the classroom the unit of analysis. This was impossible here for several reasons. First, students were examined over a three-year period, and their classrooms placements changed. Second, flexible grouping also changed the groups that students worked in throughout the day. Finally, no information regarding classroom placements was available for the comparison school. To control for the inflated probability of Type I error, alpha levels were examined within the context of this problem. Multivariate ANCOVA analyses produced significance at $p < .0001$, and the contrasts produced significance ranges from $p < .05$ top $< .001$, indicating that findings were likely significant despite the increased probability of Type I error. As Cohen (1994) suggested, examining practical significance estimated by effect sizes is more meaningful than reporting statistical significance. Effect sizes were reported throughout this study. These alpha levels and effect sizes increase confidence in the results when considering the problems associated with nonindependence of scores.

The effect of multiple treatments must be acknowledged. This study was not intended to isolate one variable, study that variable, and attribute causality to that variable. Rather, the intent was to acknowledge the complexity of a real program that existed in a real school. There was more going on than just "cluster grouping," as there would be in any school. It was not intended, nor was it possible, to isolate the effects of cluster grouping from the effects of several other variables, including regrouping by achievement for math and reading, the clustering of special needs students as well as high-achieving students, and the entire class of high-achieving cluster students that existed by fifth grade. However, viewed in total, the findings are powerful, and much can be learned about classroom practices, identification, and student achievement by examining the ways in which cluster grouping was integrated with and applied to an elementary school program, its curriculum, and instruction. Cluster grouping was the basis from which the school programs developed, but it was not the sole program existing in this school. Therefore, it would not be appropriate in this study of cluster grouping to make a claim that simply placing students in a cluster group will increase achievement among students without the flexible

grouping within and between classes, the staff development and ownership, high teacher expectations, differentiation of curriculum and instruction for all levels of students, and a reduction of range of achievement levels that the teachers had to teach.

The qualitative portion might have been strengthened by including interviews from parents and students; however, given that this study occurred after the students were in the program, and they had since progressed to middle school, it was decided that such interviews might not provide valid recollections of the elementary school experiences. In further study of cluster grouping that occurs during the program, it would be advisable to include perspectives from both students and parents.

Conclusion

The key to the findings of this study is that the use of cluster grouping facilitated many other positive changes in this school—as perceived by the teachers—such as rich staff development opportunities, ownership in a program that they developed, high teacher expectations, and a reduced range of achievement levels in their classrooms that helped facilitate teachers' desire to better meet the individual needs of all students. The use of grouping is a rich and complex issue, and far too many researchers have attempted to isolate and oversimplify its use. The intention of this study was to understand the working dynamics of cluster grouping in a school that saw consistent increases in achievement and identification of their elementary students. To this end, it seems clear that cluster grouping played a role in this school's success. **C**

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Appendix H:
Unlocking Emergent Talent: Supporting High Achievement of Low-Income, High Ability Students

National Association for Gifted Children
Paula Olszewski-Kubilius and Jane Clarenbach

WCPSS AIG Department recognizes that there are many factors that impede participation in advanced programs for low income, high-ability students. Over the next three years, we will work to remove these barriers by training educators, changing identification methods and program designs, and fostering the development of gifted behaviors in all students.

Barriers	***What is this barrier?***	***How are we going to break down these barriers in our WCPSS AIG Plan?***
A Conception of Giftedness That Emphasizes Only Already-Developed Ability	Formal identification of gifted children is often used first, followed by the development of talents and ability through gifted programs.	We will initiate a nurturing program that is comprehensive, purposeful, and reflective at schools that have an AIG population of less than 6%, the national average of identified gifted students. *Standard 2: Practice G, Page 45*
Misconception About Low-Income Promising Learners	Teachers and school staff often have inaccurate perceptions about the capabilities of low-income students.	AIG Central Services will collaborate with Counselors and the Academics Department to deliver training on breaking down stereotypes and fostering higher-level thinking and questioning through scaffolding. *Standard 3: Practice C, Page 52*
Pedagogy and Curriculum That Fails to Support Talent Development	Most students receive all of their instruction from teachers with little or no formal training in gifted education. Often times, teachers do not have the knowledge to recognize gifted behaviors and organize curriculum to nurture or develop this talent. This leads to teachers underestimating the capabilities of gifted children and eliciting high achievement and further developing these abilities.	AIG Central Services Staff will work with staff from the Office of Professional Learning, Academics Department, Special Education Services, and English as a Second Language Department to design training for all AIG teachers. The focus will be on the characteristics of gifted behaviors, how to nurture gifted behaviors in students, and strategies for providing an enriched gifted curriculum to all students. *Standard 3: Practice C, Page 52*

School Identification Policies	Assessments used in identification do not use multiple and varied types of assessments. Nominations for gifted evaluation rely on classroom teachers with limited education on gifted students or experience teaching culturally or linguistically diverse students. Identification practices are static, provide limited entry into gifted programs, and look only at performance at a particular point in time.	WCPSS AIG will employ multiple criteria for student identification to ensure that gifted behaviors are recognized in the identification process. We utilize multi-faceted evaluation procedures and multiple gateway options to reveal student potential and giftedness, and breaking down potential barriers for low-income, high-ability students. Test instruments are culturally responsive and determined based upon documented evidences provided through referral and assessment procedures. *Standard 1: Practice B, Page 21*
Gifted Program Policies That Hinder Participation and Performance	Gifted program policies can be impediments for diverse and low-income gifted learners. Gifted programs that require students to leave their neighborhood school in order to enroll in a magnet school or special program.	All elementary and middle schools in WCPSS have an AIG teacher assigned to meet the needs of the gifted learner. Students do not have to leave their base school to access gifted services and curriculum. *Standard 3, Practice A, Page 49*
Labeling Students as "Gifted"	A "gifted" label may have a negative connation, thus resulting in unintended negative consequences, such as isolation and bullying.	AIG identified students are clustered with other AIG students with similar strengths. AIG teachers will push into classrooms with clustered AIG students to provide differentiated curriculum and support for high-ability learners. *Standard 2: Practice B, Page 35* *Standard 3: Practice C, Page 52*
Lack of Access to Supplemental Programming Outside of School	Lack of access to supplemental programs due to financial restraints.	Currently, this is not addressed in our WCPSS AIG Plan, as it is addressed through other programming options (e.g. magnet programs, STEM and global schools).

Appendix I

Response to Intervention for Gifted Children

The Association for the Gifted, a Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

Introduction

The Association for the Gifted, a division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC-TAG) recognizes the importance and the impact of the Response to Intervention (RTI) method of identifying and serving students with diverse educational needs. The position paper on RTI issued by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) specifically addressed the needs of children who are "twice-exceptional" indicating that these needs must be met through the provision of "access to a challenging and accelerated curriculum, while also addressing the unique needs of their disability" (CEC Position Paper on RTI, 2007, p. 2). The inclusion of students who are twice exceptional within the RTI framework provided a starting point for addressing students who are gifted. In this paper we extend the application of RTI to include children who are gifted.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education and the Council of Administrators of Special Education (2006) state that RTI "challenges the assumptions that separate, often disconnected "silos" are the best method to address the learning needs of students... " (p. 4). Thus, while gifted education has organized and maintained programs separate from general education, the nature of general education is shifting. The Council for Exceptional Children (2007) has noted that RTI "must be viewed as a schoolwide initiative, spanning both special education and general education" (p. 1). Gifted education must review its relationship to general education given the framework of Response to Intervention model and the changing relationships among the components of education. In addition, the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (2005) has noted that RTI must be addressed within the context of cultural learning and that the diversity of students must be recognized through the nature and implementation of RTI.

Position Statement

It is the position of The Association for the Gifted of the Council for Exceptional Children that the Response to Intervention model be expanded in its implementation to include the needs of gifted children. The use of the RTI framework for gifted students would support advanced learning needs of children in terms of a faster paced, more complex, greater depth and/or breadth with respect to their curriculum and instruction. It should also be noted that students who are gifted with disabilities may need more than one level of intervention and advancement in terms of curriculum and instructional strategies.

Critical Elements of RTI

There are several aspects of RTI that are critical to its development and implementation across educational spectra, including students with gifts and talents. These components include: (a) universal screening, assessments, and progress monitoring; (b) established protocols for students who need additional supports and services; (c) problem-solving that includes parental involvement to determine what the student/child needs; and d) a tiered system of intervention, based on level of need and support.

Screening and Assessment Issues

Universal screening is a process through which all students and their educational performance are examined in order to ensure that all have an equal opportunity for support. It is our contention that universal screening be applied for the purpose of recognizing student strengths and abilities in an effort to provide appropriate education to students whose development is advanced. A universal screening process helps to ensure that access to high-end learning opportunities are open for all students.

Progress monitoring, a key component of RTI, is also appropriate for students who are gifted. For these students, who learn more easily and quickly in their area of strength, progress monitoring should be used to document mastery. Once mastery has been documented, students must be given opportunities to continue learning with enriched and advanced materials related to their area of strength.

Established Protocols

Established protocols are based on standard treatments that have been shown through evidence-based studies to be successful. While these protocols have been designed to promote acquisition of new knowledge and skills for most students, they also need to include curriculum and materials that are differentiated and respond to students who are ready to learn curriculum that is beyond their current grade level. Gifted students need to be able to access a flexibly-paced, advanced curricula that provides depth and breadth in their area of strength.

Problem Solving Approach

The problem solving approach is tailored to individual student's learning needs. When children are not responding to effective curriculum, then individualized adaptations are made. While problem solving approaches consider primarily students who are not progressing when compared with their same-age peers, they also need to address gifted students who are not progressing at above-grade levels commensurate with their abilities. These accelerated interventions allow students to increase their levels of knowledge and skills in their areas of strengths and may include advanced educational options such as continuous progress learning, curriculum compacting, advanced placement, grade or subject skipping, and post-secondary enrollment.

The standard protocol approach uses a common, standardized curriculum in Tier 1, monitors students to identify those that are not making progress as expected, provides for collaboration among special and general educators, and refers to specialized services in Tier 3 if the students not progress as expected. While the standard protocol approach is used primarily for children who may need additional support for success to meet grade level standards, it needs to be differentiated and use with children who are advanced or beyond grade level.

Collaboration between professionals guides both approaches. If the general education classroom curriculum does not appear to be effective, then professionals and parents work together to develop plans for student success. This collaboration is particularly important for students from diverse backgrounds and whose achievement is uneven. These professionals need to include general, special, and gifted educators who determine when individualized adaptations are needed. If the general education classroom cannot provide sufficient improvement in all students' learning then special services are considered.

Tiered Supports and Services

The current implementation models of RTI demonstrate multiple levels of intervention, with the more significant levels of intensive intervention serving the fewest numbers of students with the most intense needs. Typical models have three levels of intervention, with Tiers I and II focused on small group interventions, increasing in intensity to the individual level of Tier III (CEC, 2006).

When considering gifted students, each tier is governed by the intensive services required for students whose achievement is greater than typical students in specific areas. RTI for gifted students differentiates the depth and breadth, pacing and complexity of content for students within each Tier through acceleration and enrichment opportunities. Gifted students who need more intensive services beyond the general education differentiated curriculum, will move into different tiers.

Systemic Needs

Fluidity and Flexibility

According to the Council for Exceptional Children's position paper (2006), RTI services are "flexible and fluid, based on student need." When considering the needs of gifted children, a similar level of flexibility is needed, since gifted children, and particularly twice-exceptional students will not demonstrate high levels of achievement in all areas. A flexible system of continuous and comprehensive services allows schools to meet the needs of gifted students at varying levels of development. In this way, services are less dependent on a student's label and more dependent on a student's need.

Professional Development

Faculty and staff need to become aware of, and capable of progress monitoring across a wide range of developmental levels. As noted by the Council for Exceptional Children (2006), professional development includes development of essential knowledge, skills and beliefs and attitudes. For gifted students, such knowledge, skills and attitudes are clearly noted in the NCATE Preparation Standards established through collaboration with CEC-TAG and NAGC (Johnsen, VanTassel-Baska, & Robinson, 2008). Such training in strengths-based educational strategies is needed at all levels of education, from state to classroom levels.

Resources

There is a wealth of literature available in the fields of gifted education and special education regarding appropriate funding. Because RTI is an allowable expense through IDEA and gifted children with disabilities must be served under IDEA, it is foreseeable that many of these services can be incorporated by realigning them to meet the needs of all students. In addition, existing funds under special education and gifted education can be aligned to meet these varying needs, using the same process that focuses on growth of all students.

Twice-Exceptional Students and Response to Intervention

Nowhere else is the issue of a flexible system of RTI most appropriate than with children who are gifted with disabilities. The current system of RTI allows great flexibility in services designed to support a child's area(s) of challenge. However, it is even more critically important to support a child's area(s) of strength as well. A system in which both systems co-exist and flexible services can simultaneously provide support, remediation, enrichment and acceleration, can provide a cohesive, unified system of education for children with such diverse needs.

Concluding Comments

CEC-TAG is committed to working with general and special educators in developing RTI models that are inclusive and respond to students with gifts and talents. RTI provides a true opportunity for all students to grow and to learn something new every day.

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The National Association for Gifted Children and its Board of Directors has reviewed this position and express general support for its views and concepts. November, 2009

NAGC Positions

Approved by the Board—"the original content, research, and drafts of this position paper were developed and assembled by individuals with expertise in the area. This final version represents discussions, revisions, and conclusions of the NAGC Board to reflect the national policy position of NAGC."

About NAGC

The National Association for Gifted Children is an organization of parents, educators, other professionals, and community leaders who unite to address the unique needs of all children and youth with demonstrated gifts and talents as well as those who may be able to develop their talent potential with appropriate educational experiences. We support and develop policies and practices that encourage and respond to the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. To this end, NAGC supports and engages in research and development, staff development, advocacy, communication, and collaboration with other organizations and agencies that strive to improve the quality of education for all students.

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Closing the STEM Gender Gap

Q&A: A Conversation with Tamara Fisher

Meeting the Learning Needs of Gifted Students with RTI

Willona M. Sloan

Tamara Fisher is the K–12 Gifted Education Specialist for the Polson School District in Polson, Mont., on the Flathead Indian Reservation. She is a teacher and coordinator of the gifted and talented (GT) program for the district's four schools—K–1, 2–4, 5–8, and 9–12. Fisher, who has been in her position for 14 years, also serves as the president of Montana AGATE, the state's gifted education advocacy organization. She blogs about gifted education for *Teacher Magazine* at http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted, and she is an author. In this Q & A interview, Fisher discusses how educators can use Response to Intervention (RTI) to meet the learning needs of gifted students.

Q: Do you feel like there has been a recent shift away from making gifted education a priority? If so, why?

I think the answer to this question is more complex than "yes" or "no." In some ways, the answer is *both* "yes" and "no." Gifted education's current priority status ranges dramatically from state to state, district to district, school to school, and classroom to classroom, as it has for many decades.

I also see a huge philosophical range across our country when it comes to gifted students and gifted education. Some people see and understand that gifted children, just like *all* children, should be learning in school—and that to allow them to learn, we need to make accommodations to reach them where they are as learners.

Their learning needs are often not met by typical curricula because they have already mastered all or most of it before it's even taught. Some educators actually do see each of these kids as "one less kid to worry about" (academically speaking). In practice, that way of thinking means advanced and gifted students receive less teaching effort and therefore are denied opportunities to stretch their learning potential.

Recent studies, such as the Thomas B. Fordham Institute report *High-Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB*, have shown that it is our advanced-ability students whose academic growth is stagnating. I, of course, don't deny the importance of the significant teaching effort that goes into our struggling learners. We should continue to put everything we can into them so they can be everything they possibly can be. What I don't get is why other children, our gifted and advanced learners, are allowed to sit in classrooms with very little effort put into *their* learning progress.

Q: Can you set the scene for what you think RTI is currently being used for (struggling students) and why this leaves out the students you teach?

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a great model and fulfills an important purpose. It aims to assist teachers and specialists in better identifying and reaching students who struggle with any learning task, whose learning needs aren't initially met by just the core curriculum. It is described as a tiered integration of assessments and interventions, together with progress monitoring, and its strengths result from an individualized focus that narrows in on specific learning goals for which a student needs additional assistance (together with how to provide that assistance).

RTI grew out of concerns in the special education world that some students were being over-identified for special education or as having learning disabilities, while other students who still needed some form or level of academic assistance didn't qualify for the programming that could give them that help. Because RTI has its genesis in special education, a lot of people see it as "a special education thing," despite multiple messages that it is a model for whole-school improvement.

Those of us in the gifted education field look at the RTI model and intuitively see how gifted students can and do fit into it. How does it apply? Well, just as some students are *a little bit behind* in any given area or subject and will need some extra assistance, about the same number of students are *a little bit ahead* and will need some extra challenge or acceleration. Just as a few students are *significantly behind* in any given area or subject and will need some

intensive assistance, about the same number of students are *significantly ahead* and will need extra challenges or acceleration.

The concern of many of us in gifted education is that very little of the information about RTI offers any details or materials on how schools can actually [use] the model to reach and meet the needs of their advanced learners.

Q: How can teachers use RTI to reach or stretch the students who already have a handle on the skill or concept?

RTI uses regular progress monitoring to assess what students have learned and what they need more practice or help on. Frequent assessment is important for all students because it helps us to know who has learned what we've taught and who isn't quite there yet. It can also help us know who already knows what will be taught before it's even taught (in the case of using pre-assessment).

If we can utilize assessments that give us a more accurate picture of where our advanced learners are, then we will be better able to know what to provide next for them. Unfortunately, real progress monitoring is not typically applied to our advanced learners because (1) we're more worried about getting everyone to the grade-level standard rather than stretching every child forward from where they are, and (2) adequate assessments for this use with advanced learners are hard to come by.

If our goal is a grade-level standard and a gifted child in that grade has already met or surpassed that standard, it's easy to accept the child as a "mission accomplished" and ignore what that child actually needs next as a learner. But if our goal is to monitor every child's progress and thereby pay attention to providing what each of them needs next, then even our advanced learners will be afforded opportunities to be stretched academically. After all, they come to school to learn, not to make us look good by providing the same excellent test score in April that they could've just as easily achieved in October.

Q: What are some special measures formulating around using RTI in your school, district, or state?

Some states, including Montana, are working on developing ways to implement RTI "in both directions." Colorado, Ohio, and Utah are heading this direction, too. In Montana we have a draft document that, when finalized, will help districts learning how to implement the RTI process [with] our gifted learners, too.

Our school district began using [a multitiered] process in reading instruction a couple decades ago, so it isn't technically an outgrowth of RTI, but it demonstrates how RTI or an RTI-type process can be applied across our spectrum of students in order to better reach all of our learners.

We are Title I schools here and have trained all of our Title I aides to be reading specialists. Together with our regular classroom teachers, we then have enough staff to accommodate many smaller groups for reading instruction. In the 2nd grade, for example, we have 6 homeroom classes that together are divided into about 10 different levels of reading groups. All 2nd graders are assessed and sorted into these fluid groupings. Through the use of running records, every student's reading progress is assessed and monitored frequently (on average about every three weeks) and students are flexibly grouped and re-grouped according to what they are ready for as readers. Children move up or sometimes down a level in order to better place them into a reading group that will be reaching, teaching, and stretching them from where they are.

The beauty of this process is that our students who are really struggling with reading get significant extra assistance on their journey to becoming readers, and our students who are advanced readers (some who even come into kindergarten already reading) are able to move on in their development as readers.

Noneducators might think this sounds too much like the "bluebirds and buzzards" groupings of previous decades. "Aren't the kids in the 'lower' groups going to feel badly about themselves because they're in a 'lower' group?" In its practice here, they actually feel better about themselves because they get to learn what they're ready to learn as readers and they can see themselves making progress, rather than being constantly outpaced. Plus, the groupings are multileveled and fluid enough that such clear distinctions aren't all that apparent.

Besides, as Stephanie Tolan says, "You don't have the moral right to hold one child back to make another child feel better." It is never okay to deny any child their rightful opportunity to learn. RTI has the potential to help us make sure every child gets to grow academically as much as they are able.

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