

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

ACADEMICALLY/INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED
PROGRAM

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INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

ACADEMICALLY/INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED PROGRAM

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PURPOSE OF GIFTED EDUCATION

Gifted students are unique individuals with differing abilities. The purpose of gifted education is to prepare all gifted students for life in a complex, changing society. Services for students who are gifted must be a part of an overall educational program which supports excellence for all students and the belief that all children and youth can learn. Students should feel free to take creative risks, offer conjectures, question assertions proposed by others, or find their own ideas challenged or confirmed without ridicule or fear of embarrassment. Standards and expectations for gifted students must be appropriately challenging. Differentiation must include extended opportunities for talented, advanced and gifted students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The Ashe County School System recognizes its responsibility to discover, nurture, and develop the potential of each child or youth. We further recognize our responsibility to promote dignity and respect for gifted individuals from all cultures and backgrounds and to promote a supportive environment.

We respect the role of families as the child's first teachers and recognize the high hopes that families have for their children and the educational process. We view parents and community as allies in the education of the student and value the impact they have in achieving the cultivation of independent, self-reliant learners.

Our mission is to provide a differentiated education for all gifted students recognizing individual strengths and needs. An appropriate staff development program will assist teachers in providing this differentiated education. Some children or youth who are gifted may not be reaching their potential; in fact, they may not even be recognized as gifted. This may be particularly true of students who have limited opportunities to learn or who came from culturally diverse backgrounds. Additional support for these students offers opportunities for their giftedness to develop. The successful attainment of this objective necessitates cooperation among parents, schools, and communities to maximize the potential of our gifted population. Only then can we accomplish our goal of adequately preparing students to meet their future.

Ashe County educates gifted students for productive citizenship and life-long learning. The system believes that its duty is to produce independent learners who can thrive in a world of phenomenal change and increasing complexity.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Develop an identification procedure using multiple criteria and curriculum-based assessment strategies to appraise student need for differentiated services.
 - Use rank ordering of student performance data to provide more information on various student subgroups during screening process.
 - Provide checklists that are culturally appropriate for nurturing and identification.
- Continue to nurture the academic abilities of children and youth within culturally and economically diverse groups who display potential for outstanding performance.
 - Consult and train with ESL teachers, counselors, and early intervention specialists to target children that exhibit high potential in groups traditionally underrepresented in gifted programs.
 - Provide training for classroom teachers to promote awareness of cultural and economic issues impacting children needs.
- Offer a continuum of service options designed to provide a rigorous academic curriculum and to provide enriching educational experiences for students.
 - Review annually the array of service options available to gifted students K-12.
- Provide a comprehensive and ongoing staff development for classroom teachers, administrators, counselors, and specialists to ensure that highly capable students will receive differentiated learning experiences which will best develop their potential.
 - Provide training for teachers in working with students from various cultures and backgrounds.
- Provide learning opportunities which foster abstract thinking and reasoning skills, encourage creative thinking and problem solving, use higher levels of cognition, enhance self-directed learning processes, and allow for independent investigation.
 - Align DEP's to reflect rigorous and relevant learning opportunities for advanced learners.
- Provide a comprehensive program of support services which include personal counseling, guidance, career exploration, and career planning for academically gifted children and youth.
 - Provide training for counselors and teachers regarding social, emotional, and vocational needs for AIG students.
- Ensure AIG Program accountability by using system-wide and individual school-based assessment strategies which include a variety of formal and informal methods.
 - Review school and district reports of AIG student performance on state performance measures.

- Involve parents and other community members as allies to enrich and extend the learning opportunities for advanced learners.
 - Conduct annual review meetings to inform parents of program objectives.
 - Inform parents of additional learning opportunities as available.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the Academically Gifted Program.
 - Work with local and school media to publicize AIG program activities.

IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT

IDENTIFICATION

An essential step in the identification and placement of students in the Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program is the collection of data. Collection of data to support AIG consideration is the responsibility of the designated AIG teacher and will be reflected in the results from the Individual Student Eligibility Profile document for each child. This document will be completed using district data to ensure that all schools identify students for gifted programs using the same criteria.

The Individual Student Eligibility Profile reflects both qualitative measures and quantitative measures in five different areas: academic aptitude, current achievement, a gifted behavioral checklist (includes learning characteristics, motivational characteristics, creativity, leadership, and adaptability), grades, and student work samples. The Gifted Behavioral Scale also reflects characteristics that have been identified as indicative of gifted children from differing ethnic, socio-economic, and racial backgrounds.

Based on results from the screening process, the AIG Committee from each school (which shall consist of principal, guidance counselor, gifted specialist or designated lead AIG teacher, and regular education teacher) will meet to match service options with demonstrated student needs. The AIG Committee may also recommend individualized assessments which are sensitive to economic conditions, gender, developmental differences, learning differences and diversity of students so that equal opportunity for consideration is provided. Consultation with guidance counselors and school psychologists will assure that assessments are administered by appropriately trained professional personnel.

PLACEMENT

Following the collection of data the AIG committee should review the students identified and begin the determination as to the level of differentiation needed for each individual student.

After screening is complete, the AIG specialist or lead AIG teacher should prepare a summary profile sheet for each student to be considered for services. The following guidelines might be considered by the AIG committee in the AIG student service match:

- 30 or more points and a 98% - 99% aptitude - strong indicator of need for differentiated services
- 20 or more points - indicator of need for differentiated services
- Less than 20 points - possible indicator of need for differentiated services
- Less than 20 points and a 98% - 99% aptitude – strong indicator of need for differentiated services

Placement should be made using appropriate data to ensure that an accurate appraisal of the students' needs has been reached. No single piece of information should prevent a student from consideration for services which are appropriate. Information may be considered inadequate for some students, and the AIG committee may recommend either further assessment or a decision that the student does not require differentiated services at this time. Students may be placed on a "wait and watch" list so that the student may be nurtured and considered for service options at any time. If additional assessments are desired, parental permission should be obtained.

Once a student is referred for screening, he/she remains in the pool of potential candidates, even if placement may not be recommended by the AIG committee.

The AIG committee decision needs to be documented, and parents need to be notified of the recommended student-to-serve match. Documentation of parent involvement is required for placement in any service delivery options. Parents may request additional assessment and/or psycho-educational evaluations.

The AIG committee should consider the entire array for service options in making recommendations for individual students.

PROGRAM SERVICES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SERVICES

At the elementary level, services are provided to students in primary through sixth grade. Primary students receive services through the P.E.T.S. program. The Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.) program is a collaborative program. Regular classroom teachers teach whole group lessons and observe students as they work on different thinking skills. Teachers then send small groups of students who have shown a strong talent in that skill to participate in small group lessons with the AIG Specialist. This cycle continues through different thinking skills. These same skills are developed as students move from first, to second, and to third grade. The AIG Specialists also work on a consultative basis with K-3rd grade teachers to provide resources. Teachers in this grade span may recommend students for placement in the AIG program. Please refer to the criteria for services in this handbook. Students who are identified as Service Option D receive individualized services from the AIG Specialist.

Regular classroom teachers are responsible for classroom differentiation for all levels of students in their classroom with consultation and/or cooperation with the AIG Specialist. This is Service Option B. Starting in fourth grade, the entire grade level is screened for placement in the AIG program. Students who are identified as Service Option C are served in the resource room for reading and/or math. These resource classes emphasize high level thinking skills, problem solving strategies, research applications, and character education, keeping in mind student choice and interest. Students who are identified as Service Option D receive individualized services from the AIG Specialist. Students who aren't performing in a regular classroom setting, but show an aptitude of 98 -99 percentile, will be served up to three times weekly under service option A. If an identified student is not meeting their individual potential and the expectations of the classroom teacher, the student may be placed on probation. During this period, the team will determine the best course of action, including changing the student's service option. All changes will require a parent conference and signature.

Guidelines have been suggested to help manage the workload for AIG students when they leave the regular classroom for resource services. The suggestions are as follows:

1. Schedule classes to keep conflicts at a minimum.
2. Compact the curriculum for AIG students when appropriate.
3. Post assignments in the regular classroom in an easily identifiable location so that AIG students can complete essential work.
4. Structure classroom time to provide for remediation/extra practice/reteaching while AIG students are in a resource setting.
5. Ask AIG students to demonstrate mastery of a topic by completing key assignments rather than all assignments.
6. Allow extra time when necessary for completion of assignments
7. Communicate with AIG resource teachers about classroom needs or concerns.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SERVICES

Students who are identified as Service Options C and D are served in advanced classes (honors) in language arts/and or math for 90 minute blocks daily. Seventh and eighth grade math is at an accelerated pace and delves deeper into mathematical concepts. The advanced language arts classes delve deeper into vocabulary study, literary concepts, and research projects. Emphasis in both classes is placed on problem solving strategies, high level thinking, and student interest. Regular classroom teachers are responsible for differentiation for all students in the regular classroom.

HIGH SCHOOL SERVICES

The high school program focuses on content differentiation by allowing students to enroll by teacher recommendation or self-selection into academic honors courses, AP courses, and/or dual enrollment with Wilkes Community College. Opportunities for talent and interest development include but are not limited to Beta, Math, and Spanish clubs, summer leadership camps, summer SAT preparation, distance learning, and numerous community sponsored camps and tours. Students can be nominated or self-nominated to Governor's School, the School of Science and Mathematics, and the School of the Arts. Other individual needs such as mentorships and internships are handled on a case-by-case basis.

EXPLANATION OF DOCUMENTATION

Before your child can be served by Ashe County Schools, there are some papers that need to be completed. In this section, an explanation of each document will be provided as well as an example of that document. Parents, the county office and the school each receive a copy of the placement record, the service options, instructional objectives and the school site decision form. The school copies are kept in a folder and travel with the other permanent records when a child moves from one grade cluster (elementary, middle, or high school) to the next.

- Individual Student Eligibility Form

This document is a record of all the testing results, classroom performance, and teacher recommendation. It reflects why the placement decision was made. This form does not require a parent/guardian signature.

- Differentiated Education Plan

This is a list of all the options for service at each grade cluster. It is updated only when a student moves from one grade cluster to the next. The services relevant to each student while in one grade cluster are checked. Students may not exercise every option in one school year. Current offerings and student choice will determine the services. This form requires a parent/guardian signature.

- Instructional Objectives

The objectives that will be taught in each grade cluster are noted on this document. These objectives change from from one grade cluster to the next. A parent signature will be required to update objectives as a student transitions from one grade cluster to the next.

- Individual Differentiation Plan

This form documents instructional and social/emotional objectives for students who qualify for Service Option D. It is reviewed/updated yearly. It requires teacher and parent/guardian signatures.

- School Site Decision

The placement decision that is made as an AIG committee is recorded on this form. It requires the signatures of all committee members: principal, guidance counselor, classroom teacher, parent, AIG specialist, and ESL Instructor if s/he is involved in the placement process. This form also records parent contact information and student identification information.

- Elementary Progress Report

In elementary school, the AIG Progress Report is separate from the regular classroom report card and requires a parent signature each time it is sent home. In middle and high school, the student's progress is documented in the regular report card.

EXPLANATION OF PARENTS' RIGHTS

It is our hope that every student who qualifies for services in the gifted program while enrolled in Ashe County Schools would opt to receive them. However, if you do not want your child placed in the program that is your right.

If you choose to place your child into the program, there are several forms that require a parent/guardian signature. This gives you the opportunity to have input into your child's education. It is your right as a parent/guardian to have input in the placement process. You are a member of the school-based committee that determines an appropriate service match for your child. You have the right to remove your child from the program if you feel it necessary. You have the right to due process. If you or your child experience difficulties with the AIG program, contact the lead AIG teacher at your school. The next step would be to meet as a committee (AIG teacher, classroom teacher, principal, counselor, and parent/guardian) and determine the best course of action.

PROCEDURES TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS

The Academically Gifted Education Program goals, objectives, and service delivery options of Ashe County Schools should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians. In the event that a disagreement exists between parents or guardians and Ashe County Schools when a child is not identified as an academically and/or intellectually gifted student or concerning the appropriateness of services offered to the AIG student, the following procedures to resolve the disagreement will be followed:

Step 1: The first attempt to reach an agreement will be with the AIG Committee at each school.

The parent/guardian may make a request in writing to the school principal for a conference with the AIG Committee to discuss concerns about identification and/or implementation of the child's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). The committee reviews the student's record and nomination, identification, and service options decision. The committee may gather additional information about the student from teacher(s) and/or parents/guardians as needed. The AIG Committee grants the conference within 10 school days of receipt of the request and responds to the parent/guardian in writing within 5 school days after the conference.

Step 2: If the disagreement is not resolved with the AIG Committee, the parents may request an administrative review at the district level.

The parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the AIG Committee in writing to the AIG Director within 10 days of receiving the written response from the AIG Committee at the school. The parent/guardian must explain in writing the concerns and specific points of disagreement with the committee. The AIG Director will convene a panel to review the disagreement within 5 school days of receipt of the appeal. The panel will include the

Superintendent (or designee) and other members at the discretion of the Director. The AIG Director will respond in writing within 5 school days to the parent/guardian and principal concerning the outcome of the review.

Step 3: If agreement cannot be reached administratively, the parents/guardians may appeal to the Ashe County Board of Education. The Board will offer a written decision to the parents within 20 school days of reviewing the appeal.

Step 4: In the event that the local grievance procedure fails to resolve the disagreement, the parents/guardians may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the North Carolina General Statutes. This must be done within 20 calendar days after receipt of the written decision of the Board of Education. According to the law, the scope of the hearing shall be limited to:

Whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an AIG student, or whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C- 150.7 has been *implemented* properly with regard to the child. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall serve the final decision. The administrative law judge shall give a copy of written findings and the decision to the parties and to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Legal Fees are the responsibility of the parents/guardians

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

INTERNET WEBSITES

- **North Carolina Association for Gifted and Talented** <http://www.ncagt.org/>

“The North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented (NCAGT) is an organization of teachers, parents, other educators, and community leaders who foster a better understanding of the needs and capabilities of academically/intellectually gifted children.”

- **North Carolina Parents for the Advancement of Gifted Children**

Go to www.ncagt.org and click on the NC PAGE link in the navigation box on the left of the screen.

If you're searching for a specific topic, here are some suggested websites:

- **Hoagies' Gifted Education Page** www.hoagiesgifted.org

Includes articles, research, books, organizations, conferences, on-line support groups, academic programs, products, and organizations that support gifted education.

- **Learning Disabilities On-Line** www.ldonline.org

This site has a searchable database. It is a good resource for twice exceptional children.

- **Uniquely Gifted** www.uniquelygifted.org

A collection of Internet resources for gifted/special needs children.

OTHER RESOURCES

- **Free Spirit Publishing** is a company that sells a variety of books for parents and students. There are also self-help/advice books for children and teens. A catalog may be requested by calling 1-800-735-7323 or by visiting online at www.freespirit.com
- **Prufrock Press** is similar to Free Spirit Publishing, however, they do carry different titles. There are also online articles and blogs available via the Internet. Phone: 1-800-2208 or <http://www.prufrock.com/>
- **Mind Ware** specializes in games and activities for students. www.mindwareonline.com or call 800-999-0398.
- **Ashe County** has purchased some books that you may like to read for yourself or read with your student:

Gifted Kids Speak Out: Hundreds of Kids Ages 6-13 Talk About School, Friends, their Families and the Future, by Jim Delisle, Ph.D.*

Fighting Invisible Tigers: A Stress Management Guide for Teens by Earl Hipp. *

The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids by Sally Yahnke Walker. *

What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future by Peter L. Benson, Ph.D; Judy Galgrath, MA; Pamela Espeland. *

How to be a Hero to Your Teenager by Joe White

Smart Girls: The New Psychology of Girls, Women and Giftedness by Barbra A Kerr, Ph.D

* Available at Free Spirit Publishing

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advanced Classes

Classes are faster paced and offer more complexity of materials and curriculum content. Students are provided more opportunities for independent exploration.

Advanced Enrichment Clusters

Advanced skill level students are pulled together for a specific marking period or instructional unit.

Advanced Placement Courses

The Advanced Placement program consists of college level courses and examinations for high school students. The courses may be designated as AP. Advanced Placement course descriptions are carefully followed and are usually taught by teachers who have received special training. Courses and examinations are available in several areas of the curriculum.

Computer-Based Instruction and Telecommunications

Computer-based instruction can be used both to enrich the curriculum and remediate specific deficiencies. This is particularly appropriate for gifted students having specific skill gaps (gifted under achievers, learning disabled, or culturally diverse students). Care must be taken that software selected for enrichment challenges thinking, problem solving, and decision making. Many appropriate programs and services are also available through Internet sites.

Concurrent/Dual Enrollment

This option allows students to be enrolled in two levels of schooling at the same time. Students may remain at one level and attend another level for a specific course or period of time. It works best with content that is highly sequential (i.e. math, reading, foreign language). This is also an appropriate option for secondary students that might be enrolled in courses at post secondary institutions. Through dual enrollment, students may receive college credit for courses taken while still in high school.

Contracts

Contracts are agreements made between teacher and student that allow the student to work independently on either accelerated or enriched materials related to a unit of study. Contract goals must be realistic and the teacher must meet with the student on a regular basis and review progress.

Correspondence Courses

Correspondence courses offer learning opportunities for talented students who live in rural areas or small towns. Such courses carry full credit and are available at secondary and post-secondary levels. Courses may be taken as an independent study and can be an enrichment component. Students need to be self-motivated and able to work independently in order to complete a correspondence course successfully. A faculty member needs to serve as an advisor in case the student needs assistance.

Curriculum Compacting

Curriculum compacting is modifying or streamlining the regular curriculum in order to eliminate repetition of previously mastered material, upgrade the challenge level of the regular curriculum, and provide time for appropriate enrichment and/or acceleration activities while ensuring mastery of basic skills. Curriculum compacting can be implemented at any grade level. Teachers do require training and support during implementation. During compacted time, students may pursue activities in their classroom, media center, or special resource center.

Differentiated Units

Differentiated units provide a curriculum that incorporates individual learning abilities and levels of content and skill mastery. This option is appropriate for gifted students in regular classrooms, part-time classes, resource settings, and full time placements. These units advance at an appropriate pace according to the level of ability of the students participating.

Distance Learning Courses

Courses are available to high school students in North Carolina Virtual Public High School.

Exploratory Classes

Exploratory classes are designed to provide opportunities for students to pursue areas of interest or special talent. These classes should be offered in the regular school day. Exploratory options might include art, music, band, drama, and vocational classes.

Flexible Grouping

Students are grouped heterogeneously with regard to learning ability. Within the class the students may be regrouped according to skill level for instruction. To be effective, groups should be flexible and fit the instructional purpose. It is important that each student be provided tasks that are challenging and appropriate.

Grade Skipping

Students move ahead one or more years, skipping levels in the normal sequence of promotion. This has traditionally been used successfully with highly gifted students as a method of acceleration.

Honors Courses

Honors courses are advanced courses that cover traditional content but also focus on issues, problems, and themes related to topics. They are designed to help students develop a knowledge base in a specific discipline and learn to apply that knowledge at an advanced level. Although these courses are not usually limited to gifted students, they need clearly defined prerequisites and entry/exit criteria in order to be effective.

Independent Study

This may be used as a way to either accelerate or enrich learning. Students displaying content mastery or having a special interest may contract with the teacher for an independent study project. This works best for students who are self-directed and have a strong interest and a clear idea of what they would like to investigate. The teacher serves

as a resource person and meets periodically with the student to assess progress. When the independent study option is used as a secondary course, students work independently and come together periodically to share experiences in seminar.

Individualized Services

Opportunities for mentorships, apprenticeships, or independent studies to be accommodates on a case-by-case basis.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Interdisciplinary studies provide students the opportunity to approach their studies by combining areas.

Mentorships

This program provides an opportunity for students to interact with professionals in a chosen field of interest. The design of this program may be similar to an apprenticeship in a selected profession and may include time for research, interviews, and on-site interaction.

Paideia

These courses provide student opportunities to study issues through traditional and nontraditional approaches such as seminar discussion, inquiry, and primary research. The focus of the courses includes personal, community, and global issues.

Portfolio

A portfolio is a collection of a student's best work in a given area selected by the student for assessment by a committee of experts in that area.

Seminars

Seminars are special classes involving a designated number of students reading and discussing a mutually agreed upon topic. The teacher serves as a facilitator who helps students pursue knowledge in an independent fashion.

Special Electives/Interest Based Electives

Special electives are designated to provide opportunities for students to pursue an area of interest or special talent. Such electives have been used successfully at all levels.

Special Programs

Special programs are offered at both the state and county level for students who meet the entrance level criteria.

Special Schools

Schools which offer advanced courses are specialized curricula not available in most high schools. Most of the programs are located on college campuses. Such schools are committed to a diversified student body and consider geographic representation in selection of students. Specific criteria are established for admission.

Examples: Governor's School

North Carolina School of Science and Math

North Carolina School of the Performing Arts

Subject Grouping

Students are grouped for specific subjects based on their aptitudes and/or performance. Grouping may not be limited to identified gifted students but may also include other high achievers.

Subject Skipping

Based on assessment, students are allowed to bypass specific subjects or skill levels. They might receive instruction at a high level with another group of students and yet remain with their peer group for most of their instruction. This option works best in subjects that have clearly developed sequence of skills (reading or math, for example) and is appropriate at any grade level. Care must be taken that once begun, such acceleration opportunities continue to be made available to the students.

Thematic Units

Thematic units deal with information from various disciplines that are integrated under broad-based themes such as conflict, power, patterns, etc. Because it provides the opportunity to deal with content at a highly abstract level of sophistication, it is an appropriate way to modify curriculum for gifted students.