

Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

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This Local AIG Plan has been developed based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021, and 2024). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide Public School Units (PSUs) to develop, implement, and monitor 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 related to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C150.5).

These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what a PSU should have in place, and guide PSUs to improve their programs. In an effort to continue to transform AIG programs and align to the NC AIG Program Standards, each PSU has participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, involving multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process has guided PSUs in their development of this Local AIG Plan for 2025-2028. This Local AIG Plan has been approved by the LEA's local Board of Education or charter school's board of directors and sent to NC DPI for review and comment.

For 2025-2028, the Local AIG Plan is as follows:

* Mission and/or Vision Statement(s)

Vision Statement

Ashe County Schools envisions a learning community where all gifted and advanced learners are recognized, nurtured, and empowered to reach their fullest potential. Through a commitment to equitable access, whole-child development, and personalized learning, we strive to cultivate critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and compassionate leaders who will thrive in an ever-changing world.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Ashe County Schools AIG Program is to identify, support, and challenge gifted and high-potential learners from all backgrounds through intentional programming, talent development, and differentiated services. In collaboration with educators, families, and the community, we provide equitable opportunities that foster academic growth, social-emotional wellness, and lifelong learning. Our work is guided by a belief in excellence, equity, and the development of each child's unique strengths and interests.

Ashe County School's Mission and Vision for local AIG program aligns with our district vision and mission which is to collectively inspire and prepare students to live their best lives. Ashe County schools works collaboratively to improve lives and provide all students with a safe, equitable and enriching learning experience every day, without exception. Our goal for the Academically/Intellectually Gifted Program of Ashe County Schools is to provide a differentiated education for all gifted students recognizing individual strengths, interests, and needs. The successful attainment of this objective necessitates cooperation among parents, schools, and communities to maximize the potential of our gifted population. It is our belief that academically/intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services designed to meet their individual needs all day everyday. We

believe that all students with special gifts, talents, and high interest are found in all ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic groups, and they represent a source of potential innovation, creativity and leadership. The Ashe County School System recognizes that giftedness develops through discovering, nurturing, and fostering the potential of each child. Schools must provide learning environments where students feel free to take creative risks, offer conjectures, question assertions proposed by others, or have their own ideas challenged or confirmed without ridicule or fear of embarrassment. Parents and community are allies who have a critical impact in the cultivation of independent and self-reliant learners.

FUNDING FOR LOCAL AIG PROGRAM (as of 2025)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
* \$ 325,889.00	* \$ 12,910.00	* \$ 0.00	* \$ 0.00

Standard 1: Student Identification
Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0
Standard 1: Student Identification
<i>The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.</i>
<p>* Practice A Develops both screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels. Provides opportunities, including universal screening, for every student to show their strengths and talents.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools is committed to identifying and nurturing the potential of all students, particularly those who demonstrate advanced learning needs. In accordance with state guidance and best practices, the district has developed intentional, equitable, and clearly articulated screening and referral processes that are accessible to all stakeholders. Screening and referral are recognized as distinct but interrelated processes. Screening refers to the district's ongoing, proactive, and systematic efforts to review all students using multiple sources of data to identify potential candidates for gifted services. Referral, in contrast, is a more targeted process that may be initiated by teachers, parents/guardians, support staff, or the students themselves when there is evidence of advanced learning behaviors or performance. The screening and referral processes of Ashe County Schools AIG Program are rooted in reliability and equity when identifying gifted students. The program relies on the research-based best practices of universal screening and multiple indicators of giftedness. Regardless of socioeconomic status, cultural or ethnic background, physical or linguistic ability, or other demographic factors, all Ashe County School students are included in the AIG screening. Ashe County Schools also recognizes that twice-exceptional learners are enrolled in our schools and these students are not excluded from the AIG screening, referral or identification process. The district-wide AIG Plan, Handbook, and Brochures—available both online and in print—outline procedures in clear and parent/guardian-friendly language. These resources are also provided in Spanish and translated into other languages upon request to ensure accessibility for multilingual families. Annual awareness training is provided to staff to clarify referral procedures, characteristics of gifted learners, and pathways for identification.</p> <p>K-2 Talent Development and Screening: In grades K-2, students are typically not formally identified as gifted out of considerations for young students' rapidly changing academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development. However, the talent development process in these grades provides AIG Specialists a regular opportunity to directly interact with all K-2 students and their teachers in order to observe potential gifted characteristics. Through this process, AIG Specialists may use student work samples, student academic interest, teacher and/or principal recommendations, and formal observation scales completed by the classroom teacher or AIG Specialist to indicate a need for referral. All students receive whole-class enrichment instruction through the Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) curriculum, facilitated by AIG Specialists in partnership with classroom teachers. During this time, AIG Specialists collect observational data on students exhibiting characteristics such as advanced verbal skills, curiosity, problem-solving ability, and creativity.</p> <p>Students showing high potential in academic or cognitive domains are included in the AIG Watchlist for further monitoring and support. Screening for early talent includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STAR and mClass benchmark data

- DIBELS results (students at the “Blue” level receive additional enrichment during flex blocks)
- Teacher-completed observational checklists
- Student interest inventories
- Classroom performance and enrichment work samples

A comprehensive student profile is built for each learner who shows potential, including both qualitative and quantitative data. Teachers, parents, and other staff can refer a student for further review, and all data is discussed by the school-based AIG Committee (principal, AIG specialist, counselor, regular education teacher) to determine appropriate next steps and service options.

Early Entry to Kindergarten as Part of Screening and Referral

Ashe County Schools recognizes that exceptional ability can emerge at very early ages and supports Early Entry to Kindergarten in alignment with G.S. 115C-364 and State Board of Education Policy KNEC-000. This option is a component of the district’s broader commitment to equitable and developmentally appropriate screening for gifted potential. Though not formal AIG identification, Early Entry to Kindergarten serves as an early intervention opportunity within the larger talent development continuum. The screening process is rigorous and mirrors many of the referral and identification procedures used in the AIG program, such as:

- Multiple criteria: Families must submit nationally normed ability and achievement scores at or above the 98th percentile, plus evidence of advanced social and developmental maturity, work samples indicating performance 2–3 years above age peers, and documentation of motivation and interest in learning. This ensures a holistic learner profile that reflects both cognitive and non-cognitive readiness—paralleling best practices in gifted identification.
- Team-based review: A school-based team, including the principal and AIG personnel, reviews applications to determine eligibility and readiness. This team approach aligns with district screening and referral practices at other grade levels.
- Conditional placement: If admitted, students may receive a 90-day conditional enrollment period to monitor developmental fit and learning needs, ensuring decisions are student-centered and responsive.

By embedding Early Entry into the district’s screening framework, Ashe County Schools ensures that early signs of advanced potential are recognized and supported, allowing children to enter an appropriately challenging educational environment from the start. This aligns with NCDPI’s vision for talent development in the early years and supports long-term planning for gifted services.

Grades 3-12 Screening and Referral:

Beginning in grade 3, Ashe County Schools conducts universal screening using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), administered to all 3rd and 6th grade students. A composite or subtest score at or above the 90th percentile places students in the initial screening pool for AIG identification. In addition, the district reviews End-of-Grade (EOG)/End-of-Course (EOC) scores, grades, formative assessments, work samples, and behavior scales to form a holistic learner profile. Ashe County Schools recognizes that it is imperative that we look at multiple factors during both the screening and referral process. Students are identified in reading, math, both reading and math, academically and intellectually gifted or intellectually gifted. No single data point determines eligibility or disqualifies a student. All referrals are reviewed by the school-based AIG Committee. For high school

students, additional criteria such as ACT scores, EOC scores, AP coursework performance, and academic growth measures are used for identification and services planning. Each year of a student's time in the Ashe County School System, the above mentioned process is completed. Each year we create a pool of students based on the criteria so that we never miss an opportunity to screen or refer a student for services. We not only look at the pool of students each year in each grade, but do the same process for each subgroup of students.

Students in grades 3-12 may be referred for screening by:

- Teachers;
- Parents or guardians;
- Administrators;
- Peers or self-referral;
- AIG Specialists based on observation or performance data.

Yearly training is provided to all instructional staff on the use of the Gifted Behavior Rating Scale and other referral tools.

Transfer Students:

Ashe County Schools honors identification from other North Carolina districts and out-of-state programs. Upon enrollment, previously identified students retain their AIG designation. If a student lacks local documentation for services, the AIG Committee will review the existing data and determine eligibility or the need for further assessment.

- K-2 transfer students must meet local criteria for formal identification in the Ashe County Schools Academically Gifted Program
- Grades 3-12 transfer students are placed and served promptly, with annual reviews to screen for additional identification areas.

Documentation and Continuous Monitoring for screening and referral:

Ashe County Schools keeps a historical folder of any student who has been screened or referred for the program. Students who do not initially get placed in the AIG program are kept on a watch list to for the remainder of their school career as are new students added each year. Like these students, each identified student has a secure AIG folder that shows their screening, referral and identification history. The folder includes:

- Screening and identification data;
- Yearly goal-setting forms;
- Interest inventories;
- Documentation of enrichment or talent development experiences.

This folder is updated annually and follows the student during transitions to ensure continuity of services and planning. The district also maintains an AIG Watchlist of students with high potential who are being monitored for future referral and support. Ashe County Schools affirms that giftedness is not fixed and may emerge over time. Therefore, screening is not a one-time event but a dynamic, responsive process that reflects growth and readiness. Additionally, data from screening informs future talent development services as we strive to have responsive service planning that connects to identification.

*** Practice B**

Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels, K-12, that provides multiple opportunities to reveal a student's aptitude, achievement, or potential to achieve. The criteria may include both qualitative and quantitative data in order to develop a comprehensive learner profile.

Ashe County Schools is committed to identifying gifted learners through a clear, equitable, and research-based process that incorporates multiple criteria and provides various opportunities to reveal a student's academic aptitude, achievement, and potential. The district uses a multi-pathway model that balances both quantitative and qualitative indicators to build a comprehensive learner profile for each student under consideration. Ashe County Schools is committed to equitable identification practices that recognize the gifted potential of students from underrepresented populations, including English Learners, economically disadvantaged students, twice-exceptional students, and students from culturally diverse backgrounds. To support this, AIG Specialists and teachers receive training on recognizing gifted traits across populations, mitigating bias in referrals, and using qualitative data such as teacher observations, student portfolios, and interest inventories with flexibility when screening these students. Local norms and school-level top percentile rankings are used in conjunction with national benchmarks to surface high-potential students who may not meet traditional thresholds but demonstrate strong growth or unique strengths.

Identification Process and Criteria

The identification process is guided by a consistent structure district-wide and occurs through the collaboration of school-based AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and AIG Teams. Each AIG Team includes, at minimum, the AIG District lead, an AIG Specialist, a school administrator, general education teachers, school counselors, and, when appropriate, EC or EL staff to support students from underrepresented populations.

The criteria for identification include a variety of data sources such as:

- Aptitude assessments (e.g., CogAT, Naglieri)
- North Carolina EOG/EOC achievement scores or other nationally normed achievement assessments
- Academic grades
- Gifted Behavior Scales completed by multiple teachers
- Work samples or performance tasks

- Parent, teacher, or counselor referrals
- Demonstrated interest, motivation, and advanced learning behaviors

No single criterion is used in isolation to determine giftedness, and the AIG Team weighs all evidence in context to determine appropriate placement. This body-of-evidence approach ensures the identification process is inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and equitable. There are five pathways for identification starting in third grade: AR - Academically Gifted in Reading, AM - Academically Gifted in Math, AG - Academically Gifted in both Reading and Math, IG - Intellectually Gifted, and AI - Academically and Intellectually Gifted. Ashe County Schools uses a document called the **Individual Student Eligibility Profile** that helps us track data from the sources listed above.

IDENTIFICATION GRADES K-2

There is a process in grades K-2 to identify students who require intensive support and services. To qualify for AIG services, the K-2 student should:

- *Demonstrate an extreme need for differentiation before being considered for identification as documented through academic aptitude, current achievement, a gifted behavior checklist, grades, and student work samples
- *Teacher referral
- *98%ile or above on a nationally normed IQ/apptitude test administered by a licensed psychologist
- *98%ile or above in achievement for reading and or math on a nationally normed test administered by a licensed psychologist
- *Met criteria for early entrance to Kindergarten

It is not typical for Ashe County Schools to officially identify students in grades K-2 as AG, AR, or AM except under the circumstances listed above. However, Ashe County Schools recognizes that students learn at different rates/ways and develop at varied times. For this reason, the district supports K-2 Talent Development using the PETS program. Therefore, teachers and AIG specialist continuously seek to determine those students who can and will benefit from differentiated services and strategies. At the K-2 grade span, these groups will be flexible as students needs fluctuate based on the levels of exposure and maturity. Again, this differentiation may take place within the classroom and/or in school wide enrichment/flex time opportunities.

IDENTIFICATION GRADES 3-12

Students may be identified as gifted in Ashe County in one of the following areas:

Intellectually Gifted (IG) 98%tile or higher on nationally normed aptitude test

Academically Gifted in Math (AM) A combination of the following criteria with a cumulative Individual Student Eligibility Profile point score of 20-29 points (see Student Services Pathway Chart and Student Eligibility Profile) Quantitative IQ/apptitude score, Math EOG score, math grade, Gifted Behavior Scale Score, and other indicators if applicable to the student

Academically Gifted in Reading (AR) A combination of the following criteria with a cumulative Individual Student Eligibility Profile point score of 20-29 points (see Student Services Pathway Chart and Student Eligibility Profile) Verbal IQ/apptitude score, Reading EOG score, reading grade, Gifted Behavior Scale Score, and other indicators if applicable to the student

Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG) A combination of the following criteria with a cumulative Individual Student Eligibility Profile point score of 20-29 points in reading and in math, Quantitative and Verbal IQ/apptitude score, Reading and Math EOG score, reading and math grade, Gifted Behavior Scale Score, and other indicators if applicable to the student

Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI) 98th percentile or higher on nationally-normed aptitude test A combination of the following criteria with a cumulative Individual Student Eligibility Profile point score of 30 or more points: Quantitative and/or Verbal IQ/aptitude score, reading and/or math EOG score, reading and/or math grade, Gifted Behavior Scale Score, and other indicators if applicable to the student

Snapshot of Individual Eligibility Profile Form used by district to determine pathway for identification (Grades 3rd-12th each year):

Student:

School:

Date:

1. Academic Aptitude (Based on

Verbal _____ **Quantitative** _____

98 - 99 % 10 points
96 - 97% 9 points
94 - 95% 8 points
92 - 93% 7 points
90 - 91% 6 points

2. Academic Achievement (EOG, EOC, Academic test chosen by school psychologist)

Reading _____ Math _____

(Consider most current math and reading scores separately, using information from the county testing coordinator.)

Top 5% 10 points
Top 10% 8 points
Top 15% 4 points
Top 20% 2 points

3. Grades (Latest yearly average in Reading or Math)

Reading _____ Math _____

97 - 100 8 points
93 - 96 7 points
91 - 92 6 points
88 - 90 5 points
85 - 87 4 points

4. Gifted Behavior Scale (GBS) (Average of 2 teachers' scores)

(Previous grade teacher should complete one GBS and current teacher should complete a separate GBS)

Total Score Teacher 1 _____

Total Score Teacher 2 _____

180 - 189 5 points
170 - 179 4 points
160 - 169 3 points
150 - 159 2 points

140 - 149 1 point
Below 140 0 points

5. Other Indicators _____
(AIG team should consider and assign points according to rubrics.)
Student Performance/Products Rubric Score 1-5 points _____

Nomination - 1 point Form to be filled out _____

Point Total Reading _____ Point Total Math _____

Identification is not a one-time event. Ashe County's use of the Individual Student Eligibility Profile allows AIG Specialists and AIG Teams to monitor student growth and achievement over time, reevaluate service needs annually, and consider new areas of strength that emerge. This responsive model ensures students are not excluded due to a single data point and can be newly identified or served based on evolving strengths and demonstrated need.

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* Practice C

Ensures AIG screening, referral, and identification procedures respond to under-represented populations of the gifted and are responsive to LEA demographics. These populations include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, multilingual learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring that gifted identification is equitable and inclusive of all student populations, including those historically underrepresented in AIG programs such as students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, economically disadvantaged students, twice-exceptional learners, and students with limited access to enrichment opportunities. The district implements strategies designed to recognize a broad range of gifted characteristics across diverse populations and to reduce barriers to access.

Inclusive Screening and Referral Practices:

- All third and sixth grade students are universally screened using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), ensuring that students from every demographic background have the opportunity to demonstrate aptitude.
- The district supplements standardized measures with multiple qualitative data points, including teacher observations, work samples, interest inventories, student performance over time, and behavior checklists.
- Local norms are used alongside national percentiles to identify advanced ability relative to peers in similar contexts, which helps mitigate cultural and environmental bias.

Training and Awareness:

- Annual professional development is provided to all staff on gifted characteristics in underrepresented groups, implicit bias, and culturally responsive identification practices. This happens during PLCs or other school designated meetings at the school level.
- AIG Specialists coach general education teachers to recognize gifted potential beyond traditional academic performance indicators, including motivation, creativity, leadership, and problem-solving ability.
- The district provides training on the use of the Gifted Behavior Scale (GBS), which allows for a more holistic look at student potential and is completed by multiple teachers to reduce individual bias.

Collaboration and Data Analysis:

- AIG Specialists collaborate with EC and EL teachers, counselors, and social workers during screening and referral to ensure comprehensive learner profiles are developed, especially for students with learning differences or language barriers.
- The AIG District Lead monitors referral and identification data each year, disaggregated by subgroup, to assess patterns and address gaps. Schools receive these reports to guide intentional practices at the site level. Additionally, we look at the top 20% for each subgroup when we are identifying. This is in addition to looking at the population of each grade level as a whole.

Targeted Talent Development:

- In grades K–2, the PETS curriculum is used for whole-group enrichment, ensuring all students experience advanced learning opportunities early.
- Students from underrepresented backgrounds who show potential but do not yet meet formal criteria are placed on the AIG Watchlist and receive talent development services through small groups, flexible enrichment, and monitoring.
- Talent Development continues throughout students' K-12 education with opportunities to explore and discover academic and intellectual talents.

Family and Community Engagement:

- Materials about the AIG program, screening, and referral are available in English and Spanish, with translation available in other languages upon request.
- AIG Specialists and counselors communicate directly with families of nominated students and offer conferences to discuss data, next steps, and services available.

By embedding equity practices into each phase of identification—from universal screening to ongoing referral—Ashe County Schools promotes inclusive access to gifted services. These practices ensure that all students with advanced learning potential are recognized, regardless of background or circumstance.

Percent Ethnicity Identified as AIG

	Asian %	Black %	Hisp %	Native Amer %	Multi %	Pac Islander %	White %
Female	---	---	---	---	---	---	10.09%
Male	---	---	---	---	---	---	11.75%
Total	---	---	<5%	---	---	---	10.94%

Percent of Total AIG Students Identified as Dual Exceptionality

*** Practice D**

Monitors the screening, referral, and identification processes for consistent implementation across the LEA.

Ashe County Schools maintains thorough documentation for every student involved in the AIG screening and identification process, ensuring clarity, continuity, and accountability. The documentation process is guided by district-wide protocols and aligned with the North Carolina AIG Program Standards to support accurate placement, monitoring of services, and the program's ability to facilitate effective transitions.

AIG Folder Maintenance:

- Each school maintains an official AIG folder for every referred or identified student. This folder includes screening data, referral forms, work samples, rating scales, test scores, meeting notes, and placement decisions. This folder comes in two formats: hard copy and digital copy. Both are passed from AIG specialist to AIG specialist as students transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school.
- For identified students, the folder also contains the signed Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Education Plan (IIEP), service delivery documentation, and records of parent communication.
- These folders are reviewed annually and updated by the AIG Specialist to reflect changes in placement, service level, or student progress.
- A standardized checklist is used across the district to ensure that all required components are included and up to date.

Transition and Portability:

- AIG folders follow students across school transitions (e.g., from elementary to middle school and middle to high school/Ashe Early College) to provide receiving teams with a full academic and developmental profile.
- For students transferring into Ashe County from other districts, the AIG Committee reviews previous records and either honors the existing identification (if from a North Carolina LEA) or evaluates eligibility based on Ashe County Schools' criteria. All relevant documentation is added to the local folder.

Digital and Physical Recordkeeping:

- In addition to the physical AIG folder, key components of a student's AIG record are stored in secure digital systems to ensure accessibility for instructional staff.
- AIG rosters and documentation are maintained with FERPA compliance, and access is limited to appropriate personnel.

Watchlist Documentation:

- Students who demonstrate potential but do not yet meet identification criteria are included in the AIG Watchlist.
- These students have an informal profile maintained by the AIG Specialist that could include but not limited to traditional data, enrichment activities received, and progress monitoring records. This ensures that students on the cusp of identification continue to be supported and considered in future reviews. Documentation of K-2 Talent Development is kept so that it can be used to inform setting and instructional planning.

Parent and Stakeholder Access:

- Parents may request to review their child's AIG folder and receive copies of identification results, DEPs/IDEPs, and service summaries.
- Materials explaining documentation and the identification process are provided in English and Spanish, with translation in other languages available upon request.

By ensuring that documentation is complete, accurate, and consistently maintained, Ashe County Schools strengthens the integrity of the AIG program and supports personalized, responsive gifted education across the K–12 continuum.

*** Practice E**

Disseminates information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes to school personnel, parents/guardians, students, and the community-at-large.

Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders—teachers, staff, families, students, and community members—are well-informed about the district's AIG screening, referral, and identification processes. Information is clearly articulated, accessible in multiple formats, and updated regularly to support transparency, engagement, and equity.

Communication Tools and Access Points:

- The AIG Plan, AIG Handbook, Pathways to Identification Chart, and AIG Brochure are available online on both the district and individual school websites. These documents are written in family-friendly language to support understanding and transparency.
- Printed brochures summarizing key components of the identification process are distributed at parent events (e.g., Curriculum Nights, AIG parent meetings), school front offices, and are available in both English and Spanish. Translations into other languages are provided upon request.

Annual and Ongoing Staff Communication:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AIG Specialists provide annual training for all teachers and school staff to review characteristics of gifted learners, how to make referrals, and the step-by-step process for identification. These sessions include guidance on the use of the Gifted Behavior Rating Scale, the AIG Watchlist, and referral timelines. ▪ New teachers receive onboarding materials on AIG identification as part of the district's beginning teacher support program. <p>Community and Family Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/guardians of all third and sixth-grade students receive letters explaining the universal screening process and next steps for potential referrals. These letters are sent home in students' preferred home language whenever possible. ▪ AIG Specialists host parent information sessions at key transition points (e.g., 2nd to 3rd grade, 6th to 7th, 8th to 9th) to explain screening, identification pathways, and available service options. ▪ The district works closely with community partners, including afterschool programs and civic organizations, to share opportunities and raise awareness of the AIG referral process. <p>Student Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AIG Specialists and counselors collaborate to introduce the nomination process to students, particularly in grades 3–8. Emphasis is placed on normalizing advanced learning opportunities and encouraging self-advocacy through student-initiated referrals. ▪ Age-appropriate information is provided through classroom visits, enrichment sessions, or school newsletters to help students understand how and why gifted services are offered. <p>Consistency and Review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The district conducts an annual audit of communication materials to ensure accuracy, accessibility, and alignment with state guidance. ▪ AIG Specialists maintain documentation of all communication efforts and collect feedback from parents and staff to improve clarity and accessibility each year. <p>Through these deliberate and inclusive efforts, Ashe County Schools ensures that all community members—regardless of language or background—understand how to access gifted services and are empowered to advocate for students demonstrating high potential.</p>	<p>* Practice F Documents the evidence gathered and analyzed to support an AIG identification decision. This documentation is reviewed with parents/guardians and maintained in student records.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools ensures that every decision regarding AIG identification is grounded in a comprehensive and well-documented body of evidence. The district follows a standardized, equitable process to collect, analyze, and record both qualitative and quantitative data to create a clear profile of each student's learning strengths and needs.</p>
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Documentation Process:

- A Student Eligibility Profile is used to capture all identification data, including aptitude and achievement scores, academic performance, Gifted Behavior Scale ratings, work samples, and additional indicators of potential.
- This profile helps guide AIG Team decisions and is included in the official AIG folder, along with referral forms, service pathway decisions, parent communication logs, and any other relevant evidence.
- Each AIG folder is maintained at the school level by the AIG Specialist and updated annually and as needed. A digital portfolio is also housed in a secure setting for specialists.

Parent/Guardian Review:

- Prior to final placement, the AIG Specialist meets with parents/guardians to review the documentation used to support identification.
- During the meeting, the team discusses the student's profile, placement decision, and service options.
- A Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Education Plan (IIEP) is created collaboratively and signed by all stakeholders. Copies are provided to families and shared with relevant instructional staff.
- Interpreters and translated documents are available upon request to support effective communication with multilingual families.

Ongoing Recordkeeping:

- Documentation is reviewed annually and updated as new data is collected, especially at key transition points (e.g., 6th to 7th grade, 8th to 9th grade).
- Student records are maintained in both physical folders and secure digital systems, ensuring access for authorized staff and continuity of services.

By maintaining accurate and comprehensive documentation, Ashe County Schools ensures transparency, family engagement, and effective decision-making throughout the identification and placement process. This ongoing documentation helps support under-identified students or those on the Watchlist as we strive to be responsive in our practices.

*** Practice G**

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 developed and reviewed annually with parents/ guardians to ensure effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

Ashe County Schools ensures that each AIG-identified student receives services aligned to their academic strengths and learning profile through the development of an annual Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Education Plan (IIEP). This plan is the foundation for documenting

the match between student needs and differentiated services, ensuring equity, personalization, and consistency across the district.

DEP Development:

- DEPs or IDEPs are created collaboratively by the AIG Specialist, classroom teacher(s), and parent/guardian after the student is formally identified.
- The DEP/IDEP outlines:
 - The area(s) of identification (AR, AM, AG, IG, AI)
 - The service option and instructional delivery model (e.g., cluster grouping, pull-out services, consultative services, acceleration)
 - The curricular and instructional modifications planned to meet the student's needs
 - Goals related to student growth, interest, or academic challenge
- DEPs/IDEPs also note any accommodations, interventions, or supplemental supports for twice-exceptional (2e) learners or students transitioning between schools.

Annual Review Process:

- DEPs/IDEPs are reviewed and updated at least once per year, typically in the fall, during a formal meeting with the parent/guardian.
- During the review, AIG Specialists discuss the student's current progress, gather input from families and teachers, and adjust services as needed.
- Any changes to services or placement are documented, and a new DEP/IDEP is signed by all parties.


Transition and Continuity:

- At key transition points (e.g., grade 6 to 7, grade 8 to 9), DEPs/IDEPs are shared with the receiving school's AIG Specialist and teachers to support continuity.
- DEP/IDEP goals are considered in course planning, placement in advanced classes, and alignment with extracurricular or enrichment opportunities. Additionally, we have a secure digital folder to share between specialists at each school.

Documentation and Access:

- A signed copy of the DEP/IDEP is stored in the student's official AIG folder and in a secure digital system accessible to authorized instructional staff.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families receive a copy of the DEP/IDEP, and translation/interpretation services are offered as needed to ensure clear communication with all parents. <p>By documenting the personalized learning pathway of each AIG student, Ashe County Schools affirms its commitment to a continuum of services, academic challenge, and strong communication with families. Middle and High School-age students are invited to promote ownership and engagement. Progress monitoring of the DEP/IDEP can inform future instructional planning or identification in new areas.</p>	
<p>* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard</p> <p>In order to ensure accountability and support tracking during school audits or transitions, we will maintain a digital checklist or form where AIG Specialist can record when DEP/IDEP meetings are held, who attended and any follow-up needed.</p> <p>To incorporate more student voice to promote ownership, self-awareness, and engagement in advanced learning opportunities, we will start inviting all 6-12 grade students to contribute to their DEP/IDEP goals so they can reflect on their learning experiences.</p>	
<p>Planned Sources of Evidence</p>	
* Identification and Services Chart	
* Placement paperwork	
* Gifted Behavior Checklist	
* Student Eligibility Profile	
* Student Nomination Form	
* School Site Decision Form	
* District and school websites	
* Testing Calendar (CogAT Testing)	
* Agendas/Notes from Stakeholder meetings	

* Documentation of parent annual review meetings		
* Evidence of AIG paperwork in student digital and hard copy folders		
Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A	 Individual Student Eligibility Profile Form

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

The LEA provides a K-12 AIG program with an array of services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners. These services will develop students' strengths through intentional learning experiences in various domains that are not dependent on the students' demographic background or economic means.

*** Practice A**

Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the academic and intellectual needs of AIG students, across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel. Services are aligned to students' advanced learning needs and AIG identification.

Ashe County Schools provides a continuum of K-12 services tailored to meet the academic and intellectual needs of gifted learners. Programming is intentionally aligned with a student's specific AIG identification area—academically gifted in reading, math, or both; intellectually gifted; or dually identified—to ensure appropriate and personalized services. ACS also recognizes the role of gifted education within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and uses this framework to inform the services gifted students receive and the settings in which those services are provided.

Once the AIG specialist identifies a nominated student, the AIG Specialist consults with the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), and any other relevant stakeholders (e.g. educational support specialists such as Exceptional Children's or English Learner teachers, School Counselors, School Social Workers, etc) to develop a service delivery plan matched to the student's identification area (academically gifted in Math, Reading, or both subjects; intellectually gifted; or academically and intellectually gifted; (see Standard 1, Practice B for more information on these identification areas). Service delivery plans are developed based on available data, the identification criteria, and the array of services (described in this section). All differentiated services are documented in a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or, if appropriate, an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). To ensure identified AIG students are matched to appropriate services, AIG Specialists annually review DEPs and IDEPs. (See Standard 3, Practice I for more information about documentation and review of student services). Service delivery settings can vary depending on student needs, human capacity, scheduling considerations, and other school-specific factors; options may include delivery within the general education classroom (also known as cluster grouping/inclusion), within an AIG Specialist's classroom (also known as "pull out" services), during scheduled periods designated specifically for intervention and/or enrichment as part of MTSS (e.g. "I/E Time," "FLEX Time," "Climb Time," "Husky Hall," etc) or in a variety of other settings as described below:

Kindergarten through Grade 2:

In grades K-2, Ashe County Schools implements a research-supported Talent Development model rather than formal identification. This aligns with the recommendations of NAGC and NCDPI to delay formal identification until after students have had equitable exposure to foundational curriculum and enrichment experiences. During these formative years, AIG Specialists deliver whole-group and small-group enrichment lessons, such as through the PETS (Primary Education Thinking Skills) program, which nurtures potential giftedness and introduces divergent thinking, logic, and verbal and non-verbal reasoning skills. However, students demonstrating exceptional readiness or potential may receive consultative services and enrichment tailored to their strengths. In rare cases of compelling evidence, students may be formally identified prior to third grade; such decisions are guided by robust criteria and detailed in Standard 1, Practice B.

- Flexible or heterogeneous grouping during enrichment lessons
- Interest-based learning centers, instructional activities, and clubs (science fair, art and writing contests, etc.)
- Classroom enrichment aligned with student interests and readiness
- Guest speakers, cultural arts programs, and community partnerships
- Summer enrichment programs and academic camps
- Early subject and grade acceleration (as appropriate, per AIG team and stakeholder review)

Grades 3-6

In grades 3-6, services are tailored based on a student's AIG identification area(s)—Reading, Math, or both, Intellectually Gifted, Dually identified, or Intellectually and Academically Gifted—and are outlined in the student's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). Services include:

- Enrichment pull-outs in math and reading led by AIG Specialists
- Cluster grouping within general education classrooms
- Advanced learning tasks and interdisciplinary projects
- Access to research-based materials and problem-based learning opportunities
- Acceleration and curriculum compacting as needed
- Collaboration between AIG Specialists and classroom teachers to co-plan and differentiate instruction

Middle School (Grades 7-8)

At the **middle school level**, identified students are served through:

- Cluster grouping in core content areas
- Pull-out enrichment services during "Climb Time" and extension options from regular curriculum
- Advanced coursework, including pre-algebra in 7th grade and Math I and Earth & Environmental Science in 8th grade
- Virtual course access via NCVPS for students with specialized needs



- Clubs and exploratory classes (School yearbook, Newspaper, Project Lead the Way, Band, Agriculture, Art, Exploring Careers, and Broadcasting, Clubs: Math Counts, Chess Club, Battle of the Books, Reality of Money, Odyssey of the Mind, and Junior BETA Club

High School (Grades 9-12)

At the high school level, students access a range of options including:

- Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses
- CCP Options- Dual enrollment through Wilkes Community College (and other colleges if WCC doesn't offer the courses needed). WCC is on the same campus as Ashe County High School and Ashe Early College
- Ashe County Early College
- Online courses through NCVPS
- Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) for acceleration without seat time
- Internships with community businesses and partners based on student choice and interest, apprenticeships, and job shadowing
- Community Service Projects, Independent studies, mentorships
- Academic Clubs and Competitions: BETA, HOSA, Student Government, FFA, Mu Alpha Theta, Science Olympiad, Outdoor Club, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Spanish Club, Creative Writing, Battle of the Books, Fire Academy, National Art Honor Society, FCCLA
- Early graduation and/or admission to college
- Governor's School (open to Juniors each year and is funded by Ashe County Schools)
- Residential schools (NC School of Arts, NC School of Science and Math- these options are offered outside of ACS at the expense of a student's parent/guardian
- Online courses through the North Carolina School of Science and Math
- Elective Courses include but are limited to: Jazz band, steel pan band, marching band, symphonic band, JROTC, Lifetime sports, weight lifting, adaptive PE, Honors Art, Honors Ceramics, Culinary, Automotive, Construction Core, Adobe Pro and Advanced Graphic Design, Engineering, Project Lead the Way, Cybersecurity, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Animal Science, Horticulture, Honors Excel, Statistics, Health Sciences I&II, Biomedical Technology, Nursing Fundamentals, Apparel and Design, Child Development, Forensics, Bible History, Zoology, Wildlife Biology, Physics, Computer Science, Welding, Electrical Engineering, Holocaust Studies, Anatomy and Physiology, Sociology, Psychology, Discreet Math, Yearbook, Media and Broadcasting, Genetics, Appalachian History, Teacher Prep Training, Drama and Theater, Sports Medicine I & II, Career Management, Spanish I,II,III, Aerospace, Civil Engineering, Artificial Intelligence, Fashion and Textile and Adobe Academy

The AIG program uses a collaborative approach to match students with services. Personnel, including AIG Specialists, regular education teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff—work together through PLCs and MTSS teams to ensure services are tailored to students' identification and growth data. Ongoing progress monitoring, stakeholder feedback, and formative assessments guide adjustments to the DEP or IDEP, ensuring students are challenged appropriately and supported in their development. This comprehensive framework is supported by district policies that emphasize flexible grouping, equity of access, and service differentiation, aligning with both the NCDPI AIG Standards and Ashe County Schools' Strategic Priorities of growth mindset, personalization, engagement, and relationships. The programming model reflects current research that recognizes giftedness as dynamic and responsive to environmental opportunities, and it supports best practices for ensuring high expectations, inclusive practices, and rigorous learning for all advanced learners. Although there are AIG Specialists in our K-12 schools, the majority of students' instructional time is spent with their general education teacher(s). Therefore, AIG Specialists provide direct and indirect support for general education teachers and other school personnel to meet the needs of gifted learners. These efforts may include: coaching, consulting, resource development and support, content acceleration, and professional development. Giftedness is part of a student's identity that cannot be taken away, and gifted services are a key component of their educational experience necessary to ensure continued success and growth, not a privilege to be earned or revoked as stated in Standard 1, Practice F. The Ashe County Schools AIG Program does not "de-gift" students due to unsatisfactory performance on their DEP/IDEP. Rather, this situation describes a need for adjusting services that more appropriately meet the needs of the student. The AIG Specialist will work with all stakeholders, including the District AIG Coordinator, to create a new DEP/IDEP for the student.

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*** Practice B**

Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the social and emotional needs of AIG students, across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel based on student needs.

Ashe County Schools recognizes that gifted learners often possess unique social and emotional characteristics that must be nurtured alongside their academic growth. Our district's AIG program addresses these needs through coordinated support across multiple levels and personnel.

AIG Specialists work collaboratively with general education teachers, school counselors, social workers, special education teachers, EL teachers, and school psychologists to ensure a holistic approach to gifted education. During annual staff presentations and regular PLCs, AIG Specialists emphasize the affective needs of gifted learners and provide strategies to support empathy, perfectionism, underachievement, and asynchronous development. They also conduct informal check-ins and offer just-in-time coaching as issues arise.

At all levels, school counselors provide individual and group counseling for gifted students, with referrals coming from teachers, parents, AIG Specialists, or the school assistance team. In collaboration with AIG Specialists, counselors participate in DEP and IDEP meetings to incorporate social-emotional goals where needed. These meetings offer a shared space to identify interventions, discuss classroom behaviors, and ensure the needs of twice-exceptional students are addressed in a coordinated manner. The social-emotional needs of all students, including the gifted, are also supported through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) operating within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. In regular PLC meetings, grade level and/or subject area teams discuss not only students' academic performance, but also observations and

quantitative data related to their social-emotional needs, allowing for a whole-child approach that considers and addresses the interplay between academics and behavior. In cases of more intense student needs, PLCs elevate these discussions to school-level MTSS Teams for further problem-solving and intervention planning.


Social and emotional supports are embedded within regular classroom experiences and enrichment pull-outs. Programs like Leader in Me (K-12) provide direct instruction in communication, self-management, and leadership. Students regularly engage in self-reflection, peer discussions, and interest-based projects that affirm their identities and promote resilience. The school lighthouse teams have multiple students that are identified as gifted and they serve as ambassadors for not only their student body, but for the gifted population.

In elementary schools, the Second Step curriculum is implemented to help students build foundational SEL skills. These lessons are taught explicitly and reinforced through classroom practice. Across all grade levels, CASEL-aligned strategies are integrated into instruction and counseling supports to create self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and interpersonal skills. In grades 3-8, the Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension/SEL Program is used during pullout services to support both cognitive and affective development, including student reflection on personal values, identity, and relationships.

Transition planning between schools includes counselor-led sessions and individualized support for navigating academic and emotional adjustments. The district also employs a Career Coach and Career Development Coordinator who assist students with future planning, including college and career pathways that align with student interests and emotional readiness.

Panorama Education tools and student survey data are used to inform practices and guide planning for SEL interventions. Additionally, mental health support is provided through contracted therapists at all elementary schools and the ASC Center at the high school.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and MTSS teams use both quantitative and qualitative data to assess academic and behavioral progress. When warranted, concerns are elevated to the MTSS team to create personalized intervention strategies. These coordinated, ongoing efforts are aligned with the NC AIG Program Standards to ensure that social and emotional programming is not supplemental, but integral to the services provided for AIG students.

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*** Practice C**

Integrates and connects the AIG program and services with the district's priorities and resources through policy and practice.

Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring that the AIG program is integrated within the total instructional framework of the district, not operating as an isolated initiative. The AIG program is intentionally aligned with the district's strategic priorities—Growth Mindset, Personalization, Relationships, and Engagement—to ensure that services provided to gifted and high-potential learners are rooted in district-wide goals and support the holistic development of each student.

The AIG Director, who also serves as the K-12 Curriculum and Federal Programs Director, maintains active membership on district leadership teams and collaborates regularly with departments including Exceptional Children (EC), English Learners (EL), Accountability, and Federal Programs. This ensures that gifted education is part of every instructional and operational decision-making process. The AIG Director attends all district and state

curriculum meetings and participates in local leadership team meetings to advocate for advanced learners and ensure alignment of AIG services with other academic initiatives, such as LETRS implementation, MTSS, differentiated instruction, and STEM integration.

AIG Specialists participate in site-based School Improvement Teams (SITs), MTSS teams, grade-level PLCs, and vertical articulation teams. These structures build consistent collaboration between general education teachers, support personnel, and AIG staff, ensuring that enrichment and acceleration are embedded into the total school curriculum. Specialists also support school leaders by contributing to professional development and guiding the integration of gifted strategies within classroom instruction.

At the policy level, the AIG Director reviews and advises on Board of Education policies that affect curriculum and instruction, including early admission, CDM, dual enrollment, and advanced learning pathways. The AIG Plan is developed in alignment with district-wide improvement goals and is reviewed annually by district leaders, AIG staff, and stakeholders including teachers and parents. These reviews help ensure that policies reflect current research, best practices, and feedback from the community.

Resource allocation is also driven by this alignment. Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds are leveraged to support professional development for teachers serving gifted learners, social-emotional learning supports (e.g., Panorama, Second Steps), and access to extracurricular and enrichment opportunities for underrepresented populations. Materials and programming are selected based on teacher and student feedback, as well as guidance from the AIG Specialists.

This systemic integration enables the AIG program to support the academic, social, and emotional development of gifted students while advancing district-wide goals and initiatives. Through strong collaboration, shared policy development, and strategic resource alignment, Ashe County Schools ensures that gifted education is central to its mission of providing an equitable and enriching learning environment for all students.

*** Practice D**

Develops procedures for intentional, flexible grouping practices to facilitate the achievement and growth of AIG and other students with advanced learning needs.

Ashe County Schools emphasizes intentional and flexible grouping practices as foundational for ensuring that the academic needs of AIG and advanced learners are met. Flexible grouping is informed by research (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Robinson et al., 2007) and supports differentiation by readiness, interest, and learning profile. AIG Specialists collaborate with teachers to review formative and summative data—such as STAR, mClass, Check-Ins, EOGs, classroom performance, and work samples—to determine the best grouping structures for each unit or instructional cycle.

Grouping strategies include within-class flexible groups, across-class cluster groups, cross-grade grouping in advanced subjects, and one-on-one mentoring. These groupings are regularly revisited and adjusted during Data Days, PLC meetings, and MTSS discussions.

In elementary grades, AIG students identified are cluster grouped and provided pull-out services by the AIG Specialist during FLEX or enrichment blocks. These groups are based on DEP/IDEP goals and updated as needed. Students also receive differentiated support in the regular classroom through co-planning and consultation between the AIG Specialist and the classroom teacher. Talent Development through PETS is taught by the regular education teacher and the AIG specialist pulls out flexible groups based on student need and performance.

At the middle school level, students are placed into cluster groups for core content, and flexible groupings occur during Climb Time, which is dedicated to enrichment and intervention. AIG Specialists and content teachers collaborate weekly to analyze student performance data and revise groupings accordingly. High-performing math students are accelerated into advanced pathways culminating in Math I by eighth grade. High achieving 7th graders are placed in a compacted math class that integrates 7th grade and 8th grade math standards so that students will be ready for compacted 8th grade math blended with Math I.

<p>In high school, while students largely self-select advanced coursework, intentional grouping is supported through shared departmental planning time, where teachers consider DEP/IDEP goals and student growth data to scaffold instruction. Honors and AP courses reflect natural clustering of AIG and high-achieving students, and academic coaching is offered through guidance and curriculum support. The Curriculum Coach also serves as the AIG specialist at our one traditional high school in Ashe County Schools. She helps lead PLCs and guides teachers to group students for extension, enrichment, acceleration, and differentiation in the Honors and advanced courses. She also ensures that students are signing up for the correct level of challenging classes and communicates to students and parents that she is available if there are any concerns over the level of rigor in students' classes.</p> <p>The AIG Director and Specialists provide professional development for staff on grouping practices, differentiation, and advanced learner needs. These sessions are reinforced through co-teaching, modeling, and resource sharing. Specialists support teachers in using flexible grouping as part of a responsive instructional model that adjusts to ongoing assessment.</p> <p>Across all levels, the district aligns grouping with its MTSS framework. Regular school-based team meetings, district-wide vertical PLCs, and administrative planning ensure that grouping decisions are equitable, data-driven, and consistent with best practices. Documentation of grouping strategies, outcomes, and student progress is maintained as part of each student's DEP or IDEP and monitored for effectiveness.</p>	<p>* Practice E 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.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring that all teachers, administrators, and support personnel have the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively serve academically and intellectually gifted students. The district provides consistent and timely communication about the delivery of differentiated services and instruction, state regulations related to gifted education, and all components of the Local AIG Plan.</p> <p>At the start of each school year, AIG Specialists lead building-level trainings that review critical elements of the AIG program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ North Carolina's AIG legislation and program standards ▪ Multiple criteria used for identification ▪ Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individual DEP (IDEP) procedures ▪ Expectations for differentiation in the general education classroom ▪ Roles and responsibilities of staff supporting AIG students <p>These trainings are reinforced throughout the year during PLC meetings, grade-level planning sessions, MTSS team discussions, and school-wide faculty meetings. AIG Specialists also hold one-on-one or small-group coaching sessions with new teachers and staff needing additional support.</p> <p>All teachers have access to the digital AIG Handbook at the beginning of the year that outlines the local AIG Plan, service options, identification procedures, and contact information for district AIG staff. The AIG Plan, brochures, frequently asked questions, and identification criteria are made</p>
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publicly available on the district website in both English and Spanish, ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders.

DEP and IDEP plans are shared with classroom teachers and other relevant support staff (e.g., EC, ESL, and counselors) through secure digital folders and in-person meetings. These plans detail the student's area(s) of identification and required differentiation strategies. At the high school level, the curriculum coach/AIG specialist collaborates with the AIG Director to ensure each teacher is aware of AIG student rosters and can access the appropriate supports, including professional learning on differentiation within Honors, AP, and dual enrollment courses.

The AIG Director provides district-level updates to the Curriculum & Instruction team, Central Office, and school leaders throughout the year to ensure alignment with strategic priorities. The Director also attends Board of Education meetings as needed to provide updates on gifted programming, implementation, and compliance with state policy. Through this comprehensive communication structure, Ashe County Schools ensures that all instructional personnel understand how to support gifted learners, maintain compliance with state regulations, and foster an inclusive and enriching learning environment for all advanced students.

*** Practice F**

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

Ashe County Schools ensures the effective continuation of AIG services through systematic communication between teachers, schools, and AIG personnel, particularly at key transition points such as the move from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school. This intentional communication ensures consistent, equitable services aligned with students' identification and evolving needs.

At the elementary level, AIG Specialists meet regularly with grade-level teachers to review student progress, update Differentiated Education Plans (DEP/IDEP), and plan for service continuation. At the end of each academic year, AIG Specialists collaborate with administrators and review grade-level teams in order to transfer student information, review service plans, and suggest appropriate cluster group configurations for the following year.

Each spring, elementary and middle school AIG staff meet to discuss rising seventh-grade students, share updated DEP/IDEPs, and coordinate the continuation of services such as enrichment pull-outs and advanced math placement. Similar meetings are held between middle school counselors, the AIG Director, and high school personnel/AIG specialists to prepare for rising ninth graders. These transition meetings include a review of identification documentation, service history, student strengths and challenges, and affective needs. To support these efforts, the district uses a shared secure digital platform for housing all DEPs and Individual DEPs (IDEPs). These documents include identification areas, recommended instructional strategies, acceleration options, and any relevant social-emotional considerations. Rosters of AIG students are shared with receiving teachers at the beginning of the year to ensure early support and familiarity with student profiles. Counselors and AIG staff facilitate orientation sessions for students and families during transitions. These events, such as sixth to seventh grade orientation and eighth-to-ninth grade high school registration nights, help communicate changes in service delivery, available advanced courses, and social-emotional support systems. Families are provided with updated AIG brochures and given opportunities to ask questions and discuss their child's learning pathway.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) structures are also used to elevate communication across schools and levels. AIG Specialists participate in vertical PLCs each quarter to review data, adjust pacing guides, and ensure consistency in programming across the district. By maintaining this intentional, multi-layered communication approach, Ashe County Schools ensures continuity and coherence in services for AIG students throughout their academic journey, with particular attention to smooth transitions and early relationship-building in new settings.

* Practice G

Develops policies and procedures for a variety of acceleration opportunities, including compacted content, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, dual enrollment, subject and/or grade acceleration.

Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring personalized learning pathways for advanced and gifted learners through a range of acceleration options that reflect students' readiness, motivation, and demonstrated mastery. These opportunities are aligned to state policy and designed to provide responsive services for students whose academic needs exceed the grade-level curriculum.

▪ **Early Admission to Kindergarten**

Parents seeking early entrance to kindergarten for their student(s) can get information about this process from the District AIG Coordinator, and/or school principal. These children must meet the following criteria as explained in Ashe County Board Policy 4100, Age Requirements for Initial Entry (as well as the cross-referenced components of North Carolina General Statutes 115C-364 and North Carolina State Board of Education policy Standards for Early Admission to Kindergarten, policy ID KNEC-001) state:

- * The child reached the age of four on or before April 16;

- * Student is presented for enrollment no later than the end of the first month of the school year;

- * Student demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity as evidenced by the following documentation to be furnished by the parent/guardian "within the first 30 calendar days of the school's instructional year" (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b):

 - * A score of 98th percentile on an individual aptitude test given by a certified psychologist

 - * A score of 98th percentile on an individual academic achievement test given by a certified psychologist

 - * An achievement level "two to three years beyond the child's peers" (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b) as evidenced by a 98th percentile score on a standard test of achievement;

 - * Student work samples documenting performance "well above age peers as evidenced by behaviors in one or more areas such as independent reading, problem solving skills, advanced vocabulary, and some writing fluency" (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b);

 - * Letters of recommendation with specific documentation of physical and social maturity.

In determining eligibility for early entrance to Kindergarten, the principal shall convene the AIG Team to assist in making decisions about each case. In addition, the principal and the school AIG Specialist will conduct an informal interview with the child to determine his/her level of curiosity and interest in learning, as well as a more structured interview with the parents to explain school expectations. The principal will reach a decision regarding early kindergarten entry within three weeks after receiving the required information from the parent/guardian, and the principal may decide to implement a conditional enrollment period of up to 90 days "in order to observe whether the child is able to adjust to the school setting" (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b). Early entrance to kindergarten does not constitute AIG identification. However, AIG Specialists will review the files of students admitted to school according to these guidelines after the first ninety calendar days of the child being enrolled in school, if the principal deems it appropriate for the child to continue in kindergarten. If the records indicate gifted potential, then the school AIG Team will proceed with reviewing the nomination as described in Standard 1, Practice B.

Subject and Grade Acceleration

Ashe County Schools uses a case-by-case approach to determine whether subject or whole-grade acceleration is appropriate. Considerations include classroom performance, teacher and parent input, aptitude and achievement data (e.g., EOG/EOC scores), and student motivation and maturity. AIG Specialists collaborate with regular education teachers, administrators, school psychologists, and counselors to ensure the student's academic and social-emotional readiness for acceleration.

Decisions about grade-level acceleration involve:

- A school-level team meeting with the AIG Specialist, EC/ML staff (if applicable), counselor, teacher, psychologist, and administrator;
- A formal review of student data and student observation;
- Parent/guardian input and written consent;
- A personalized DEP/IDEP outlining support and monitoring;
- Final approval by the principal, with consultation from the AIG Director and Superintendent/designee.

Curriculum Compacting

Students who demonstrate advanced mastery in specific content areas may engage in curriculum compacting. Compacting is offered primarily in grades 3–8 during enrichment or intervention blocks and allows students to bypass mastered content and engage in more complex, in-depth explorations. AIG Specialists support teachers in developing pre-assessments, tiered activities, and alternate assignments that allow students to pursue meaningful learning aligned with their DEP. Compacting in mathematics is practiced in grades 6-8 to prepare students to be ready for Math I in 8th grade.

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM)

Ashe County Schools adheres to State Board of Education policy CCRE-001 for CDM. This two-phase process allows students in grades 9–12 to earn credit for courses without seat time by demonstrating deep understanding and application of content.

- **Phase One** includes a state- or locally-developed summative assessment aligned to course standards.
- **Phase Two** requires a student-produced artifact or project evaluated by a CDM Review Panel, composed of content experts, school leadership, and an AIG or Curriculum specialist.

Students may apply during designated windows in fall and spring. Successful completion of both phases results in course credit (without GPA impact), freeing the student's schedule for further acceleration or electives.

Dual Enrollment for High School Students & Cooperative Innovative High Schools (Ashe Early College)

Through partnerships with Wilkes Community College (WCC), students at Ashe County High School and Ashe Early College can enroll in Career and College Promise (CCP) pathways. These include:

- College Transfer Pathways;
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways;
- Opportunities to earn associate degrees or workforce credentials while completing high school.

<p>Eligibility is determined by GPA, grade level, and standardized test scores (e.g., Pre-ACT, PSAT, or placement exams). School counselors, the college liaison, and AIG staff provide students and parents with registration information and advising. Students can take WCC courses on campus or virtually. High schoolers also access advanced courses through NC Virtual Public School, offering flexibility for highly motivated learners seeking rigorous coursework outside the traditional school day.</p> <p>Independent Study</p> <p>Highly gifted students also have the opportunity to pursue independent studies on higher level tasks or areas of interest. Appropriate supervising personnel (e.g. AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, School Counselors) will direct these activities, which may result in mentorships, job shadowing opportunities, or any number of other individualized projects. Internships can be honors level if the criteria set by the Career Development Coordinator is met during the course of the Internship experience per semester.</p> <p>Communication and Monitoring</p> <p>Acceleration procedures and policies are communicated via parent nights, by the AIG specialists, and the high school registration guide. AIG Specialists and school teams meet annually to review the appropriateness of service options, including acceleration, and adjust DEPs/IDEPs accordingly. Ashe County Schools recognizes that when supported appropriately, academic acceleration has consistently shown positive academic and psychological outcomes for gifted students. Therefore, our district ensures these opportunities are equitably available and monitored through collaborative decision-making.</p>	<p>* Practice H</p> <p>Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students with early intervention and talent development opportunities through purposeful and intentional programming.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools is committed to nurturing the potential of all young learners through a strong foundation of intentional talent development programming in kindergarten through third grade. Recognizing that giftedness may emerge at different stages and in different ways, particularly in early childhood, the district prioritizes equitable access to enrichment and advanced learning opportunities for all students in these foundational years—before formal identification typically begins in third grade.</p> <p>In grades K–2, Ashe County Schools does not formally identify students as AIG in most cases. Instead, a research-based talent development model is implemented to observe and cultivate students’ abilities. AIG Specialists collaborate with K–2 teachers to deliver enrichment through whole-class and small-group instruction using the Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) curriculum. This program develops creative and critical thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving—skills that lay the groundwork for future advanced learning.</p> <p>These lessons are integrated into the general education classroom to ensure all students, regardless of background or readiness level, receive access to enriched learning experiences. AIG Specialists also co-teach and model strategies that support intellectual curiosity and higher-order thinking, allowing teachers to identify emerging strengths across a variety of domains.</p> <p>In grade 3, students begin to participate in more targeted enrichment and talent development groups based on formative and benchmark data, classroom performance, teacher recommendations, and observed behaviors aligned with gifted characteristics. The Jacob’s Ladder Reading</p>
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Comprehension Program, which integrates rigorous, SEL-infused literacy activities, is used in grades 3–5 to build advanced reading and thinking skills while also supporting the social-emotional needs of young learners.

In addition, Second Step curriculum—a research-based social-emotional learning program aligned with CASEL competencies—is implemented at the elementary level to support the development of skills such as self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship-building. These SEL foundations are critical for cultivating resilience, perseverance, and empathy in high-ability students.

As part of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), AIG Specialists work with school teams to analyze K–3 student data and participate in collaborative problem-solving to provide early interventions. These may include flexible enrichment clusters, interest-based learning projects, or differentiated instruction in content areas where students demonstrate advanced understanding.

By using universal access strategies, embedding talent development into classroom instruction, and offering ongoing collaboration between general education teachers, support staff, and AIG personnel, Ashe County Schools ensures that young students—especially those from traditionally underrepresented populations—have the opportunity to develop their gifts and talents in an inclusive and supportive environment.

This early intervention and enrichment model is essential to removing barriers to access, reducing bias in identification, and fostering a strong pipeline of future gifted learners who have been supported from the start.

*** Practice I**

Develops mindsets, policies, and practices to promote equity and excellence by broadening access to advanced learning opportunities through a variety of talent development efforts, including frontloading, in grades 4-12.

Ashe County Schools is committed to cultivating both excellence and equity by intentionally expanding access to advanced learning opportunities for students in grades 4–12, especially those from historically underrepresented populations. The district understands that talent is found in every zip code, and therefore proactively identifies and nurtures potential through a comprehensive talent development model that includes frontloading opportunities, academic enrichment, and continuous collaboration between AIG personnel and general education staff.


In upper elementary grades (4–6), AIG Specialists work closely with teachers to identify students with high potential through multiple data points including benchmark scores, classroom performance, teacher observation, and informal assessments. This process ensures that students who may not yet meet formal AIG criteria but demonstrate readiness for advanced instruction are not overlooked. These students are invited to participate in enrichment opportunities during intervention/enrichment blocks, including projects that emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Students who score a Level 5 on state EOGs are automatically considered for advanced math groupings or enrichment clusters.

In middle school, the district uses flexible grouping and enrichment during Climb Time to frontload content and skills necessary for success in Honors and high school credit-bearing courses such as Math I and Earth and Environmental Science in 8th grade. AIG Specialists and counselors work in tandem to ensure these opportunities are communicated clearly and that students from underrepresented populations—including multilingual learners, economically disadvantaged students, and twice-exceptional learners—are actively encouraged and supported to participate.

To ensure equitable access, the AIG team regularly analyzes enrollment trends and performance data by subgroup. When gaps are identified, the team collaborates with EC, EL, and Title I personnel to design responsive supports, such as targeted interest-based enrichment, mentorship, and individualized planning. Through these cross-departmental partnerships, students who show potential but may lack external academic support receive the encouragement, tools, and instruction necessary to thrive.

<p>At the high school level, Honors, AP, and dual enrollment opportunities are promoted widely, and students are encouraged to self-select into challenging coursework with guidance from counselors and the Curriculum Coach/AIG Specialist. The proximity of Ashe Early College and Wilkes Community College (WCC) to Ashe County High School allows seamless dual enrollment access. Efforts have been made to increase awareness and remove barriers to entry through parent nights, registration events, counselor meetings, and Spanish-language resources for families.</p> <p>Frontloading strategies are used intentionally across content areas to prepare students for advanced academic pathways. For example, students may receive accelerated reading groups in middle school to prepare them for Honors English in high school or early exposure to lab-based inquiry to foster STEM readiness. The district also promotes real-world learning through career fairs, leadership development programs, STEM challenges, and project-based learning, all of which are designed to ignite student passions and promote a growth mindset.</p> <p>Ashe County's small, rural context enables highly personalized communication and tracking of student progress. AIG Specialists, instructional coaches, and school counselors maintain active rosters and meet regularly with students to set goals, address barriers, and refine services. This ongoing relationship-building helps students envision themselves as capable and worthy of advanced opportunities—one of the most powerful tools in closing opportunity gaps.</p> <p>By reframing mindsets, engaging in culturally responsive teaching, and strategically frontloading content and skills, Ashe County Schools broadens access to advanced learning for all students. The result is a system that not only identifies giftedness where it already exists, but also cultivates it in students whose potential is still emerging.</p>	<p>* Practice J Enhances and further develops the talents and interests of AIG students through extra-curricular programming during and outside of the school day.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools recognizes that meeting the needs of gifted learners extends beyond the traditional classroom. To foster the intellectual, creative, and leadership potential of AIG students, the district offers a robust menu of extracurricular programming that enhances student learning and allows students to pursue their passions in meaningful, real-world contexts.</p> <p>These enrichment opportunities are intentionally designed to support both identified and potentially gifted students. They promote engagement, creativity, collaboration, and personal growth by providing access to diverse, high-interest activities that encourage students to explore topics in greater depth. Offerings are available across all grade spans and are frequently aligned to content standards, STEM competencies, career readiness, and leadership development.</p> <p>Extracurricular programming includes (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Battle of the Books (elementary and middle grades) ▪ Science Olympiad and STEM-based challenges ▪ Spelling Bee, Geography Bee, and Soil & Water Conservation Contests ▪ Chess Club, MathCounts, and Robotics Club ▪ Model United Nations and Mock Trial (middle and high school)
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summer Leadership Camps and Adventure Days ▪ TSA (Technology Student Association), Beta Club, and HOSA ▪ Arts Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta, Rho Kappa, and National Technical Honor Society ▪ Field trips, guest speakers, career exploration days, and job shadowing experiences ▪ Dual enrollment field experiences and campus visits at Wilkes Community College ▪ YES Program, GEAR UP Events, and Appalachian State University summer camps as well as other college/university sponsored camps <p>Ashe County Schools has leveraged Title IV and ESSER funds to expand equity in access by supporting "Closing the Gap" clubs such as the Outdoor Club, Fishing Club, Girls on the Run, Robotics Club, and Yoga Club—offering students low-cost or free access to high-quality enrichment. These opportunities are specifically designed to develop confidence, well-being, and connection to peers and mentors.</p> <p>AIG Specialists, counselors, and instructional staff collaborate to ensure students from underrepresented populations are actively recruited and encouraged to participate. Regular student data reviews and feedback surveys help refine and expand programming options. These efforts align with the district's core values of Growth Mindset, Relationships, Personalization, and Engagement, as well as the AIG Program's commitment to supporting the whole child.</p> <p>By connecting extracurricular activities to students' strengths and interests, Ashe County Schools empowers gifted learners to extend their learning beyond the school day and cultivate their unique gifts in environments that are flexible, student-centered, and culturally responsive.</p>	<p>* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ While acceleration options exist, there's room to improve visibility and equity of access. Host an annual Advanced Learning Options Showcase (virtual or in-person) for families and students grades 3–12 to spotlight opportunities such as CDM, dual enrollment, AP, internships, and NCSSM. Include multilingual materials and real student testimonials to build understanding and interest. ▪ Strengthen and expand talent development programming in K-3 The updated AIG state standards emphasize early intervention and intentional programming in primary grades. Potentially naming the program or referring to it in a way other than PETs would be a goal. A possible pilot called Young Scholars enrichment cohort that grouped like ability K-2 students using a rotating schedule for high interest, problem based learning units that includes flexible criteria is a possible idea. We could also do a more efficient job of documenting our talent development lessons/activities to hold ourselves accountable and ensure that these activities/opportunities happen consistently ▪ Develop and implement Transition Portfolios that follow each AIG student through elementary, middle, and high school. Include academic data, personal strengths/interests, and student reflections. Involve students in yearly DEP/IDEP review meetings starting in Grade 8 to build agency and ensure needs are fully met. ▪ Translate all AIG forms and resources to ensure equitable access and parent engagement for non-English speaking families. This would include DEPs and IDEPs and nomination forms.
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Planned Sources of Evidence		
*	AIG Handbook (digital and printed)- English and Spanish version	
*	Grades 3-6 DEP	
*	Grades 7-8 DEP	
*	Grades 9-12 DEP	
*	AIG Brochure- English and Spanish version	
*	Rosters of parent participation in school nights, district level AIG events/meetings	
*	PLC Data/agendas	
*	Individualized DEP Template	
*	PETS Schedules/AIG specialist schedules	
Type	Documents	Document/Link
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A	 AIG Brochure

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

*** Practice A**

Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS) K-12 to address a range of advanced ability levels in language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as appropriate by differentiating curriculum and instruction, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration strategies.

Ashe County Schools (ACS) grounds all instruction in the NC Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) while ensuring gifted learners access a curriculum that is rigorous, enriching, and responsive to their academic strengths. The AIG program supports the differentiation of the NCSCOS through instructional practices that promote acceleration, depth, complexity, challenge, and creativity. These adaptations are developed collaboratively between AIG Specialists and classroom teachers to meet the individual learning profiles of AIG students.

Differentiation strategies used across K-12 include:

Acceleration:

- Pre-assessment of student readiness and mastery of grade-level standards.
- Curriculum compacting for mastered skills to allow for faster pacing or deeper exploration.
- Flexible grouping and subject/grade-level acceleration based on student data and readiness.
- Advanced course offerings in middle and high school, including Honors, AP, dual enrollment, NCVPS, NCSSM, and Early College options.

Complexity:

- Integration of multiple higher-order thinking skills within tasks and assessments.
- Use of open-ended questions and multi-variable problem-solving scenarios.
- Exposure to multiple and diverse texts and resources to deepen understanding.

Depth:

- Interdisciplinary units and project-based learning requiring synthesis of ideas.
- Emphasis on independent research and exploration of topics beyond the grade-level scope.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of authentic products to demonstrate conceptual understanding. <p>Challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of sophisticated and advanced-level texts and problem sets. ▪ Real-world applications of content across disciplines. ▪ Enrichment activities, academic competitions, and self-selected investigations. <p>Creativity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student choice in projects, tasks, and assessment products. ▪ Emphasis on real-world audiences through presentations, exhibitions, or publishing opportunities. ▪ Support for passion-based learning and talent development in areas of student interest. <p>In grades K-2, while formal identification may not yet be in place, ACS provides talent development and consultative services. AIG Specialists collaborate with K-2 teachers to incorporate early enrichment using tools such as PETS (Primary Education Thinking Skills), flexible grouping, and differentiated centers to support students showing signs of giftedness. Teachers in all grade bands receive support and coaching from AIG Specialists to implement tiered assignments, curriculum compacting, and formative assessment practices aligned to the needs of gifted learners. The AIG team works with PLCs to embed differentiation strategies in instructional planning and ensures vertical alignment through regular collaboration. Through these efforts, ACS ensures the NCSCOS is adapted in meaningful, data-informed ways that promote academic excellence and growth for all gifted learners.</p>	<p>* Practice B Uses students' identified abilities, readiness, and interests to address a range of learning needs K-12.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools (ACS) is committed to meeting the diverse academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners by using a broad spectrum of instructional strategies and supports tailored to their identified strengths, readiness levels, and personal interests. These practices are embedded throughout the K-12 continuum and are aligned with the NC Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and the district's Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS).</p> <p>Grades K-2: ACS fosters early talent development through the systematic use of the Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) program, which is delivered to all students in their regular classrooms. PETS lessons introduce various thinking styles and help teachers and specialists identify students demonstrating advanced reasoning or creativity. Students who demonstrate higher levels of aptitude are provided with additional enrichment opportunities through flexible grouping, targeted lessons, and differentiated center activities. K-2 teachers and AIG Specialists collaborate closely to adjust instruction to meet the unique needs of early learners and to nurture emerging gifted behaviors.</p> <p>Grades 3-6: Identified AIG students are served through a combination of cluster grouping within the regular classroom and enrichment pull-out programs in language arts and math. Sixth-grade students receive advanced daily math instruction delivered by an AIG Specialist. Instructional strategies include curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, project-based learning (PBL), and use of student choice boards and learning menus.</p>
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<p>Interest and learning style surveys are administered at the beginning of the year to personalize instruction. Specialists develop interdisciplinary units aligned with student interests and strengths and collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate high-level thinking tasks and differentiated instruction.</p>	<p>Middle School: AIG students in grades 7 and 8 continue to receive services through cluster grouping, pull-out enrichment during "Climb Time," and access to advanced coursework. Seventh-grade students participate in advanced mathematics, while eighth-grade students may take high school-level Math I and Earth/Environmental Science. Instructional supports include differentiated content, interest-based projects, service learning, and opportunities for independent study. Students are also supported through the use of digital learning platforms such as NCVPS for specialized coursework. The AIG Specialist collaborates with teachers to co-plan and embed instructional strategies such as Socratic seminars, problem-based learning, and interdisciplinary connections into regular instruction.</p> <p>High School: At the high school level, AIG students have access to a wide range of advanced learning opportunities, including Honors and AP courses, Early College enrollment, dual enrollment through Wilkes Community College and other colleges, and, NCSSM courses, NC Virtual Public School (NCVPS) courses. Additionally, students may pursue Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) through assessment and performance-based tasks. Within these courses, teachers differentiate instruction by using strategies such as analytical writing prompts, Socratic dialogue, curriculum compacting, independent research projects, and seminar-style discussion. The curriculum coach/AIG Specialist provides consultative support to high school staff to ensure student needs are met and enrichment opportunities are integrated. This specialist also helps administration ensure that Honors level courses are comprised of acceleration, enrichment, extension, depth/complexity and differentiation that meets students' needs. The AIG director and high school AIG lead plan and implement professional development to help teachers learn strategies that assist in creating a true honors level setting that appropriately challenges gifted learners.</p>
<p>Instructional Supports Across K-12: Students who are identified as gifted are AIG all day, everyday and are to be provided the appropriate instruction by all teachers and not just when working with AIG specialists. Throughout all grade levels and content areas ACS employs research-based strategies to address a range of learning needs for gifted students. These include but are not limited to: Socratic seminars, literature circles, essential questions, logic and problem-solving tasks, Math/STEM challenges, Jacob's Ladder activities, menu choice boards, flipped classrooms, interest inventories, RAFT, thinking maps, tiered assignments, independent learning contracts and differentiation using Bloom's Taxonomy. Specialists work with teachers during PLCs, modeling lessons, co-planning, and analyzing student data to ensure differentiated services are aligned with student needs. Through these intentional practices, ACS ensures that gifted learners are provided with responsive and rigorous instruction that develops their potential and supports continuous growth aligned with best practices in gifted education.</p>	<p>* Practice C Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that address the range of academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of AIG students.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools is committed to incorporating current, evidence-based resources and practices to support the academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. AIG and instructional funds are used strategically to purchase high-quality ancillary materials and digital resources that support differentiated instruction across grade levels and content areas.</p> <p>Each school houses a resource library managed by the AIG Specialist, which includes a range of materials aligned with enrichment, acceleration, and talent development. These resources are available for classroom teachers to check out and integrate into their instruction throughout the school year. Teacher surveys help determine specific classroom needs and student interests, informing decisions about resource purchases.</p>

The AIG Director and Specialists continually evaluate and select research-based materials suited for gifted learners. The team also collaborates to review new instructional programs and supplement core instruction. Resources are updated annually and shared regularly through email, newsletters, and professional learning opportunities.

Common instructional strategies and resource tools include:

- Flexible grouping and compacting based on assessment data.
- Learning pathways tailored to individual readiness and interests.
- Project- and problem-based learning modules.
- Technology integration to enhance engagement and personalization.
- Enrichment curriculum such as William and Mary units, Junior Great Books, Differentiated Wit and Wisdom ELA curriculum, and Jacob's Ladder.
- STEM lessons and vetted resources shared through Appalachian State and GearUp, and others
- Social-emotional learning frameworks such as Leader in Me and PBIS for behavior
- Digital programs like STAR, Panorama SEL Lessons, NCVPS, HillRap (dually identified), Letterland, DIBELS, and Reading/Math Foundations.
- Critical and creative thinking tools including Thinking Maps, Socratic Seminars, Shared Inquiry, and Perfection Learning materials.
- Resources for diverse learners including Gifted Guru and Ian Byrd tools, Prufrock Press materials, and Language Live for dually identified students.
- Ashe County Schools' middle school advanced math teachers developed and continue to implement a compacted math pacing guide for sixth-eighth grade. AIG Specialists provide advanced math support to the students in this cohort that allows Level 5 students to participate in Math I in eighth grade.
- High school level Earth and Environmental Science is taught in the 8th grade which allows students to accelerate their learning in STEM/science and take more science classes while in high school

Specialists also ensure teachers have access to AP College Board materials, NC AP resources, Scholastic and Edmentum resources, and online tools curated from state and national gifted organizations. AIG Specialists and classroom teachers work collaboratively to integrate these resources into daily planning and instruction. These efforts ensure gifted learners are challenged and supported through responsive, evidence-based curriculum and instruction aligned with their cognitive and emotional development.

*** Practice D**

Fosters the development of durable skills and mindsets which support post-secondary success. These skills include adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility.

<p>Ashe County Schools is dedicated to equipping gifted learners with durable skills and mindsets that prepare them for future success beyond K-12. These 21st-century competencies—adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, empathy, learner’s mindset, and personal responsibility—are embedded throughout instructional practices, enrichment programs, and leadership initiatives across grade levels.</p> <p>Every classroom is equipped with a digital presentation system and 1:1 student device access, enabling interactive learning experiences and the integration of creativity, collaboration, and communication into daily lessons. Instructional platforms such as Canvas and a wide range of digital tools allow students to explore real-world issues, develop independent projects, and share their ideas through multimedia formats.</p> <p>Teachers have participated in professional development pertaining to engagement and differentiation to design instructional units that cultivate student voice and ownership of learning. Through project-based learning, service-learning projects, and authentic assessments, students develop problem-solving skills and empathy.</p> <p>The district’s AIG specialists provide hands-on STEM lessons, helping students explore scientific inquiry, engineering design, and teamwork. Additionally, the implementation of the district-wide elementary reading plan, supported by LETRS, the Wit and Wisdom curriculum, and Reading Foundations, focuses on developing communication skills that support student success.</p> <p>A wide variety of extracurricular and co-curricular programs across K-12 promote durable skills and personal growth. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career and leadership programs: Project Lead the Way, Reality of Money, Career Fairs, YES Program, Gear Up, JROTC, Internships that match future interests, career and college plan, Beta Club ▪ Academic competitions and clubs: Science Olympiad, Spelling Bee, Battle of the Books, Jr. Beta Club, Math Counts, Odyssey of the Mind, Culinary Club. ▪ Interest-based and wellness programs: Girls on the Run, Outdoor Trailblazer Club, Maker Days, HOSA, FFA. ▪ College and career readiness: Early College, dual enrollment (CCP), summer camps, and Camp Med, NC Governor’s Schools, North Carolina School of Math and Science, Gear Up Camps, Career Accelerator Camps <p>Instructional observations, student products, surveys, and reflections are used to assess the development of durable skills. AIG Specialists intentionally incorporate leadership opportunities, self-directed learning tasks, and collaborative group projects that help students apply these skills in meaningful contexts. ACS will continue to prioritize programs and practices that promote academic excellence while also nurturing the durable, future-ready mindsets necessary for long-term success.</p>	<p>* Practice E Uses ongoing assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools employs a variety of ongoing formative and summative assessments to drive instructional decision-making and ensure appropriate differentiation for gifted learners. Assessments are used not only to monitor student progress but to inform flexible grouping, curriculum compacting, and personalized instructional strategies.</p>
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Universal screeners such as STAR Reading and Math are used diagnostically three times a year to identify student strengths and areas for growth. These results help teachers group students by readiness levels and determine who may benefit from acceleration, enrichment, or targeted support. NC Check-Ins, locally-designed assessments, and mClass provide additional benchmarks that allow teachers to monitor growth over time and adjust instruction accordingly.

At the classroom level, teachers use ongoing formative assessments, exit tickets, student reflections, and classwork analysis to determine flexible groups that change based on student needs. This responsiveness ensures students are challenged at appropriate levels and engaged in tasks aligned with their learning profiles.

To support data-informed instruction, teachers across grade levels participate in Data Days and PLC meetings where they collaboratively analyze data sets to:

- Group students by mastery level for targeted small group instruction.
- Identify students who may need curriculum compacting or additional extension activities.
- Modify or tier assignments and adjust pacing based on assessment results.
- Discuss trends and plan intervention or enrichment strategies.

Kindergarten students are assessed through the NC ELI (Kindergarten Early Learning Inventory), which informs early talent development efforts. These assessments help guide differentiated instruction and are used by teachers to implement flexible centers and enriched learning experiences for high-ability learners.

Additionally, Panorama survey data provides insight into students' social-emotional well-being, allowing AIG Specialists and teachers to tailor instruction and support the affective needs of gifted learners.

Evidence of data-informed differentiation is consistently visible in:

- Lesson plans reflecting tiered tasks and grouping structures.
- Classroom walkthroughs and observations noting flexible grouping, high-yield strategies and scaffolded activities.
- Guided Learning Observation walks teach administration what to look for in a classroom to ensure integrity of curriculum and NCSCOS
- Teacher PDP goals focused on data-based instructional decisions.
- Student products aligned with diagnostic data and readiness levels.

Through these intentional practices, ACS ensures that assessment data is used in an ongoing cycle of planning, instruction, and reflection—leading to high-quality, differentiated instruction that meets the needs of AIG students.

*** Practice F**

Collaborates with a variety of personnel, based on student needs, to implement differentiated curriculum and instruction.

Ashe County Schools ensures that differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners is supported through consistent and strategic collaboration among AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, instructional coaches, counselors, administrators, and support staff. This collaboration is both formal and informal, taking place during scheduled PLCs, MTSS meetings, coaching sessions, and through shared planning tools.

At the school level, AIG Specialists work closely with general education teachers to design and refine instruction that challenges advanced learners. This includes co-developing differentiated units, modeling strategies in classrooms, and providing resources tailored to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Specialists frequently attend PLCs where they assist teams in planning enrichment, compacting curriculum, designing tiered assignments, and using formative data to inform instructional decisions. They also collaborate with instructional facilitators and support staff to ensure vertical alignment and continuity of services across grade levels.

Specialists contribute to school-level and district MTSS teams by advocating for and supporting advanced learning strategies, including flexible grouping, academic acceleration, and tiered interventions for underachieving gifted students or twice-exceptional learners. This ensures that differentiation for AIG students is embedded in the broader instructional framework and not seen as a separate initiative.

To support ongoing collaboration, a shared Google Drive is maintained for AIG Specialists, housing curriculum resources, pacing guides, and best practice instructional strategies. In addition, the AIG Director leads quarterly district-wide AIG PLCs that bring together all specialists to collaborate on compacted math pacing guides, share resources and materials, and analyze student data to drive programming decisions. These sessions often include discussion prompts aligned to DPI's guiding questions to evaluate differentiation effectiveness, such as:

- Are students receiving content that extends their learning beyond grade-level expectations?
- Are students engaging in inquiry, research, and advanced problem-solving?
- Are learning experiences designed to challenge students appropriately and build resilience?

AIG personnel also partner with school counselors and EC staff to design appropriate supports for twice-exceptional students, ensuring strengths and challenges are addressed through tailored instruction. Collaboration is additionally supported through joint professional development and co-planning of student-led events, competitions, and enrichment opportunities.

This intentional, multi-tiered collaboration ensures that differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners in Ashe County Schools is sustained, equitable, and fully integrated across all learning environments.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

Implement an AIG Differentiation Walkthrough Protocol

Provides coaching support and improves implementation fidelity across classrooms. It would include the following:

- A simple observation form focused on differentiation indicators (based on NCDPI indicators of effective AIG practices)
- Walkthroughs by AIG Specialists or Instructional Coaches to provide feedback

- Optional peer observations to promote collaboration to encourage reflective practice and ensure that strategies reach students daily and allow leader to provide targeted PD and support

Provide a toolkit for AIG Strategies for the teachers who have students in a cluster group setting. It could contain the following: Tiered lesson plan templates, sample choice boards, compacting plans, and project rubrics, interest inventories and learning profile surveys, and quick guides for content acceleration and depth of knowledge prompts

Planned Sources of Evidence

* AIG Specialist Job Description	
* Elementary AIG Progress Report	
* List of AP and Honors classes offered at Ashe County High School and Ashe Early College	
* Walkthrough protocol forms to check for use of high yield strategies/evidence of Honors Course Guide expectations	
* Handbook/Brochure for parents	

Type	Documents	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources		N/A	

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

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

*** Practice A**

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

Ashe County Schools (ACS) employs a K-12 Curriculum and Federal Programs Director who also serves as the AIG Director and Lead Coordinator. This individual holds a valid North Carolina AIG add-on license and brings over 29 years of experience directly serving AIG students within Ashe County Schools. Her extensive experience, both in classroom instruction and district-level leadership, enables her to provide expert guidance in the development, implementation, and oversight of the district's AIG programming. Ashe County Schools also employ three specialists who serve each of our three elementary schools and a curriculum coach at the middle school serves a dual role as also being the AIG specialist. This hold true for our one high school with the curriculum coach overseeing our AIG program/students at the high school level.

The AIG Director is responsible for overseeing the planning, monitoring, and revising the Local AIG Plan in alignment with state legislation, SBE policy, and local goals. She leads the district's efforts in advocating for AIG students, collaborating across departments, and maintaining a culture of excellence and equity for gifted learners.

The AIG Director's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Guiding the development, implementation, and revision of the Local AIG Plan in collaboration with stakeholders, including school-based personnel, families, and community members.
- Serving as the primary liaison with NCDPI and regional AIG organizations, attending state and district meetings to stay current with legal requirements, research-based instructional practices, and emerging trends in gifted education.
- Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, particularly those who demonstrate effectiveness with gifted learners, and encouraging them to pursue AIG licensure through regional professional development and Praxis exam support.
- Supervising and supporting AIG Specialists, providing them with current resources and training on best practices to ensure program fidelity and growth.
- Leading and facilitating AIG PLCs, coordinating professional learning, and supporting collaboration between specialists and general education staff.
- Overseeing referral, screening, and identification procedures to ensure equitable access for all students, including those from underrepresented populations, and working with the accountability department to manage CogAT administration logistics.

- Monitoring the use of student AIG folders and ensuring that identification and service documentation follows students from one level to the next.
- Visiting schools regularly to observe services, support instruction, and ensure consistency across all campuses.
- Reviewing educational research and promoting best instructional strategies across K-12 to support gifted learners in alignment with the district's vision.
- Coordinating community partnerships and exploring grant opportunities to enhance enrichment programming for AIG students.
- Managing data and compliance documentation, including AIG program schedules, procedures, and local, state, and federal requirements.

The Director also ensures that the PETS (Primary Education Thinking Skills) program is implemented with fidelity in early grades and that transition points (e.g., 3rd, 6th, and 9th grades) are supported by well-defined communication and placement practices. Through advocacy, collaboration, and instructional leadership, she works to create a cohesive vision that integrates gifted education into the broader instructional framework of the district. This position serves as the anchor for AIG leadership across the district and demonstrates Ashe County's continued commitment to excellence in gifted education. The Director's dual roles allow for seamless alignment of AIG services with the district's larger academic and equity initiatives, helping ensure that the needs of gifted learners are met every day—without exception.

*** Practice B**

Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of K-12 AIG students and supports the implementation of the local AIG program and plan.

Ashe County Schools (ACS) is committed to employing highly trained personnel to support the unique needs of gifted learners across K-12. The district ensures that AIG-licensed specialists are engaged in tasks that directly and indirectly support the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional growth of AIG students, as well as the implementation of the local AIG plan.

Each elementary school is served by a dedicated AIG-licensed specialist who delivers direct services and consultative support. At the middle school level, a certified literacy coach with state AIG licensure oversees the implementation of the AIG program and services. At the high school level, a curriculum coach and counselor collaborates with the AIG Director to ensure students receive appropriately differentiated instruction, advanced course opportunities, and support with long-term academic planning.

The role of AIG Specialists is comprehensive and aligned to the NC AIG Standards. They provide both direct student services and indirect teacher support in the following ways:

- Delivering Talent Development programming for K–2 students, including Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) follow-up lessons to nurture early potential and creativity.
- Providing resource pull-out instruction at the elementary level, as documented in each student's service chart, to meet academic needs beyond the regular curriculum.
- Facilitating flexible cluster-grouping services for grades 3–8 within the general education setting, collaborating with classroom teachers to provide enriched and differentiated instruction.

- Supporting middle and high school students through access to advanced learning options, including Honors, AP, dual enrollment, North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) offerings, and enrollment in Ashe Early College.
- Creating and sharing AIG-specific units of study, extension activities, and model lesson plans that integrate higher-level thinking, depth, and complexity into daily instruction.
- Leading or participating in parent meetings for Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs), including goal-setting conferences, future planning conversations, and addressing student needs or concerns as they arise.
- Facilitating and participating in a variety of service delivery models, tailoring supports based on student readiness, interest, and learning profiles.
- Organizing and promoting student participation in academic competitions and enrichment opportunities, such as Science Olympiad, Quiz Bowl, Math Counts, and local showcases.
- Collaborating regularly with classroom teachers and support personnel, including participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), faculty meetings, and MTSS teams to ensure AIG students are being appropriately challenged and supported.
- Maintaining and updating student AIG folders, ensuring accurate documentation of services, identification, progress monitoring, and transitions.
- Delivering professional development to general education teachers, focused on gifted characteristics, differentiation strategies, and equity in identification and instruction.
- Collaborating with CTE and CDC leads to ensure internships are offered and assigned that appropriately challenge AIG students.

Specialists also serve as instructional leaders in their schools by:

- Collaborating with classroom teachers on the AIG referral and screening process to ensure early and equitable identification.
- Developing and updating DEPs, working closely with parents and teachers to align services with student needs and academic goals.
- Educating staff on the characteristics and needs of gifted students, using both formal training sessions and informal coaching and consultation.
- Providing instructional support, including co-teaching, lesson modeling, and differentiation coaching to help teachers integrate gifted strategies into their everyday instruction.
- Monitoring student progress using formative and summative assessment data, and adjusting services and supports based on individual student growth and response.

These responsibilities and practices reflect a commitment to a comprehensive, student-centered AIG program. AIG specialists in Ashe County are not only service providers, but also collaborators, advocates, and instructional leaders who help build the capacity of all educators to support gifted learners across the continuum of the K-12 experience.

*** Practice C**

Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, student services personnel, and school administrators.

Ashe County Schools acknowledges the importance of providing high-quality, sustained professional development to ensure all staff are equipped to meet the unique academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. While professional development related to AIG is not currently mandated for all instructional staff, the district has outlined a comprehensive plan to build the capacity of educators through relevant and accessible learning opportunities. The district will provide professional development that will align with our strategic plan while also teaching educators best practices in providing rigor and differentiating instruction.

Currently, Ashe County Schools encourages teachers to participate in NWRESA AIG Summer Institutes, which offer training aligned with state standards and gifted best practices. We are also in the process of designing building-based AIG training modules to ensure new teachers receive consistent onboarding on screening, referral, identification, and service delivery protocols. Each AIG specialist will be responsible for providing this orientation to new staff each year.

Professional development efforts moving forward will be aligned with the district's Strategic Plan goals of personalization, engagement, growth mindset, and relationships. Training will be offered in areas such as:

- Differentiation strategies within a 90-minute block schedule
- Guided Observation Learning walks for leaders as we implement new rigorous ELA curriculum
- Cluster Grouping models (this training will not only be geared for classroom teachers, but administration since they are in charge of scheduling students in the most appropriate settings)
- Best practices in PETS and early talent development for K-2 teachers
- Strategies to meet the needs of underrepresented gifted learners, including twice-exceptional and multilingual students
- Engagement through Project-Based Learning (PBL), co-teaching models, and instructional technology integration

AIG specialists will continue to lead school-based PD sessions, model lessons, and co-plan with classroom teachers to integrate advanced learning strategies. Teachers attending external conferences (e.g., NCAGT, ISTE, NCTIES, and NCATLL) will return to share key takeaways through grade-level meetings, PLCs, or district-led instructional summits. In collaboration with MTSS teams and other instructional support personnel, the AIG Director and Specialists will also ensure that gifted education PD is embedded within broader district initiatives, including literacy training, equity work, Pocket PD sessions at the secondary level and instructional coaching. As we build internal expertise and momentum through these strategies, Ashe County Schools remains committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of background, are supported by educators who are knowledgeable, confident, and equipped to meet the needs of advanced learners.

*** Practice D**

Provides general education services by personnel who have earned an AIG add-on license or have met the LEA requirements for that position.

<p>Ashe County Schools acknowledges the importance of having qualified personnel provide instructional services to gifted learners. While the district currently faces a shortage of general education teachers holding the AIG add-on license due to retirements and limited financial incentives at the state or local level, we are actively developing systems to strengthen teacher capacity and maintain fidelity to state expectations and are increasing in number of certified teachers for AIG each year.</p> <p>All AIG-identified students in Ashe County Schools are served by fully licensed AIG Specialists approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. In elementary schools, students receive direct pull-out or resource services from AIG-licensed educators. At the middle and high school levels, services include advanced coursework, cluster grouping, flexible grouping, and enrichment—all supported through collaboration between licensed AIG Specialists and classroom teachers. To expand our qualified teaching pool and strengthen services within general education settings, the district is working with our Northwest region to provide certification pathway that allows teachers to earn regional AIG credentials through a combination of professional development hours and applied classroom strategies. In addition to our regional collaboration, the district is working to develop series of professional development sessions focused on differentiation and strategies for serving gifted learners within the general education classroom. This initiative builds upon our success with locally designed professional development and will ensure greater flexibility and accessibility for educators pursuing AIG knowledge and training. When making cluster grouping decisions, Ashe County Schools prioritizes placing AIG students with teachers who either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold the AIG add-on license, ▪ Have completed the local certification process, or ▪ Demonstrate effectiveness in serving gifted learners as evidenced by student growth data and administrator feedback. <p>Our AIG Director and building-level administrators monitor placement decisions to ensure that students are receiving services from staff equipped to meet their unique needs, and that service delivery aligns with the goals of the Local AIG Plan. Always looking ahead to future improvements, the district remains committed to strengthening its pipeline of AIG-prepared educators and ensuring that every gifted learner receives instruction that challenges, supports, and affirms their potential.</p>	<p>* Practice E Develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of AIG-licensed professionals, including those of diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools is committed to recruiting and retaining high-quality educators who are well-prepared to meet the unique academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. The district values diverse perspectives and experiences and is an equal opportunity employer dedicated to supporting staff growth and fostering an inclusive learning environment. Our Human Resource Director attends teacher recruitment fairs across our state at diverse colleges trying to recruit the most qualified teachers in all areas including those most qualified to teach academically gifted students. Retention efforts begin early in a teacher's career through Ashe County's partnership with Appalachian State University's Beginning Teacher Mentor Program. Each beginning teacher is paired with a mentor who provides weekly coaching and support throughout their first three years. As part of this collaboration, beginning teachers receive professional development that includes strategies for working with gifted learners, which strengthens their pedagogy and encourages continued development in gifted education. Each new teacher is paired with a building-level mentor who can also guide new teachers to the AIG specialists for help with instruction and differentiation for AIG students. To build internal capacity, Ashe County Schools is collaborating with the Northwest RESA to support a local and regional AIG certification pathway. These efforts help increase the number of staff prepared to deliver effective instruction and services for AIG students. In addition, the district is exploring ways to incentivize AIG licensure, including potential funding support for Praxis exam fees and coursework reimbursement. This incentive would target teachers in schools</p>
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with limited AIG-licensed staff and those demonstrating strong effectiveness with gifted learners. Ashe County Schools uses a statewide employment platform to advertise open positions and carefully screens applicants based on qualifications, licensure, and effectiveness with a variety of learners. Applications are reviewed for evidence of experience with advanced learners, and interview protocols are being updated to include questions specific to differentiation and gifted instruction. Once hired, AIG-licensed teachers are strategically assigned to cluster groups and advanced coursework settings, ensuring their expertise is directly aligned to student needs. The district also publicly recognizes AIG licensure achievements at school board meetings and in district-wide communications, reinforcing the value placed on gifted education expertise. These efforts—combined with a growing culture of support, mentorship, and targeted professional development—help ensure that Ashe County Schools continues to attract and retain AIG-licensed educators dedicated to equity and excellence in gifted education.

*** Practice F**

Provides focused professional learning opportunities to realize equity and excellence in gifted education including changing mindsets, policies, and practices.

Ashe County Schools is committed to creating equity and excellence in gifted education by providing ongoing, targeted professional learning opportunities designed to address the needs of all gifted learners, particularly those from underrepresented populations. While the district recognizes that this is an area of continued growth, several strategic actions have been implemented to ensure that teachers and staff are supported in changing mindsets, examining policies, and applying effective practices in the classroom.

Ashe County Schools leverages the resources provided by NCDPI, including the *Call to Action, Guidebook, Guidebook 2.0*, and relevant guidance for working with Multilingual Learners (MLs) and Twice Exceptional (2e) students. These materials are used to guide internal professional development and team discussions, and they serve as core references for PD offerings. AIG Specialists collaborate with ML Specialists and EC staff to facilitate learning sessions focused on equity-driven strategies such as culturally responsive teaching, identification of giftedness in nontraditional learners, and differentiated approaches for students with exceptionalities.

During the 2025–2028 plan cycle, the district will implement the following to align with this standard:

- AIG Specialists will offer quarterly PD sessions focused specifically on equity in gifted education, including how to recognize giftedness in underserved populations. We also realize a big area for us is to ensure economically disadvantaged students are not underrepresented.
- Continue to look at each subgroup individually when creating pools of students who need to be analyzed for gifted services.
- Partnerships with the EC and ML departments will continue, creating cross-departmental opportunities to identify and nurture potential in students who may be overlooked in traditional identification methods.
- Feedback from staff surveys and student performance data will be analyzed annually to determine gaps in access and opportunity, with adjustments made to PD topics and delivery as needed.
- Provide specialized PD for the 2025-2028 plan cycle on the following topics: Gifted 101, Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners, Growth Mindset and Differentiation with Rigor

Additionally, all AIG Specialists will serve as advocates and trainers within their schools by modeling lessons and co-teaching in classrooms to help general education teachers better identify and serve gifted students across various subgroups. Collaboration will also continue with the Northwest RESA to provide PD sessions and regional certification opportunities to support equity-based practices in gifted education. This intentional focus on

<p>equity and excellence through professional learning ensures that Ashe County Schools remains committed to serving all AIG learners with high expectations, cultural responsiveness, and academic rigor.</p>	<p>* Practice G Aligns professional development opportunities with local AIG program goals, other district initiatives, and best practices in gifted education with opportunities to refine applications of professional learning.</p>	<p>Ashe County Schools recognizes the importance of providing coordinated and integrated professional learning that supports both the district's strategic goals and the academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. To achieve this, professional development for AIG is intentionally aligned with local AIG program goals, School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and the district's Strategic Plan focus areas: growth mindset, personalization, engagement, and relationships.</p> <p>AIG specialists and general education teachers regularly collaborate to embed gifted education strategies within schoolwide and districtwide professional learning. AIG strategies are integrated into PLCs, faculty meetings, and targeted PD sessions, particularly in areas such as differentiated instruction, data-informed teaching, and learner engagement. For example, engagement strategies have been the focus for secondary professional development and one full day session a each year is focused on strategies for advanced learners. These strategies are emphasized during our dedicated PD days, with AIG differentiation included in sessions focused on personalized learning and standards-based instruction. Elementary AIG Specialists offer PD for classroom teachers at school sites upon requests. The topics cover a range of best practices in gifted education and may include some of the following topics: *K-2 and/or 3-5 Differentiated Reading Strategies for Advanced Learners *K-2 and/or 3-5 Differentiated Math Strategies for Advanced Learners *Social/Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners and/or Growth Mindset *Jacob's Ladder (William and Mary) Reading Strategies, Talent Development (PETS) resources and methods and *Socratic Seminar/Paideia methods.</p> <p>The district promotes best practices in gifted education by supporting participation in local, regional, and national professional development events. Teachers who attend conferences such as NCAGT, NCCAT, ISTE, Socratic Seminar Training, and NCTIES are expected to share takeaways through school-based PLCs and district-led sessions. To further support teacher learning, AIG specialists provide model lessons, coaching, and digital resources, including exemplar units, extension menus, and critical thinking frameworks. Shared drives and LMS platforms house these tools for staff to access anytime.</p> <p>To build AIG capacity across the system, the AIG Director and specialists facilitate quarterly districtwide AIG PLCs. These meetings allow specialists to align efforts, examine student data, share resources, and plan cross-school programming. Additionally, AIG staff collaborate with other departments (e.g., MTSS, EC, ML) to deliver cross-disciplinary PD sessions addressing the needs of twice-exceptional students and multilingual learners with high potential.</p>	<p>* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard</p>	<p>Launch a Local AIG Certification Pathway for General Education Teachers Many teachers in Ashe County do not currently hold AIG licensure due to cost or lack of incentives. A local pathway will increase staff capacity and improve instruction for advanced learners in all classrooms.</p>
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- Partner with NWRESA to deliver a district-recognized local AIG endorsement (already in progress).

- Offer the coursework virtually with flexible modules aligned to your strategic PD focus (e.g., engagement, personalization, differentiation).
- Incentivize participation with stipends, CEUs, and covered Praxis exam fees for teachers who complete the program.

Embed AIG Instructional Strategies into All Districtwide PD Initiatives

AIG students benefit most when differentiation is embedded across all classrooms—not only in specialist services.

- Require every district- or school-led PD (e.g., LETRS, data digs, curriculum training) to include a 5–10 minute component on AIG implications.
- Use AIG specialists to co-lead or consult during PD planning.
- Provide short “AIG Spotlight” videos or handouts on adapting content for advanced learners, posted to the PD library or LMS.

Strengthen Collaboration Between AIG and MTSS Teams

Gifted students, including twice-exceptional and under-identified learners, thrive when MTSS systems include their needs.

- Assign an AIG representative to school and district MTSS teams.
- Train MTSS team members in recognizing gifted characteristics in all tiers.
- Use data from MTSS screenings (academic/behavioral) to identify students who may benefit from talent development, even if not formally identified as AIG.

Planned Sources of Evidence

*	Sample schedule of AIG specialist	
*	Sample of PETS schedule	
*	Spreadsheet of AIG state, local and regionally certified AIG teachers	
*	Sample List of PD options	
*	AIG specialist lesson and unit plans	

*	EVASS Data for AIG specialists/teachers who have cluster grouped students		
	Job Description for AIG Specialists		
	Talent Development opportunities- pictures, advertisements, invitations, meeting notes, etc.		
	Survey results from students, parents, teachers about AIG programming		
Type		Documents	Document/Link
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources		Document Template	N/A

Standard 5: Partnerships	Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0
Standard 5: Partnerships <i>The LEA ensures ongoing and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program to develop strong partnerships.</i>	<p>* Practice A Develops intentional, two-way partnerships with parents/guardians to support the following needs of AIG students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ academic and intellectual ▪ social and emotional. <p>Ashe County Schools (ACS) values the critical role that parents and guardians play in the academic and personal development of AIG students. The district is committed to building meaningful two-way partnerships with families by creating multiple avenues for collaboration, communication, and involvement in the AIG program. These partnerships ensure that parents and guardians not only receive information but also have opportunities to contribute their perspectives and expertise to the program's development.</p> <p>ACS provides a variety of opportunities for parents to engage with the AIG program, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School-Based AIG Councils – Each school will offer an AIG council that includes parents, teachers, and administrators to provide feedback on program implementation and student needs. ▪ Parent Advisory Meetings – Quarterly meetings allow families to voice concerns, offer suggestions, and learn more about advanced learning opportunities. ▪ Parent sessions and Support Resources – Sessions designed to help parents understand strategies for supporting gifted learners at home and navigating advanced coursework options. ▪ Guest Speaker and Mentorship Opportunities – Parents with expertise in specific areas are encouraged to speak at student seminars, mentor AIG students, or lead enrichment activities. ▪ Parent Surveys and Feedback Mechanisms – Regular surveys are conducted to assess parent satisfaction with AIG services and identify areas for growth. <p>Additionally, ACS works to ensure equitable access to parent engagement by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpreters and Translated Materials – Communications are available in multiple languages to support multilingual families. ▪ Flexible Meeting Formats – In-person, virtual, and recorded meetings accommodate varying schedules and needs. ▪ AIG Family Resource Hub – An online portal with essential AIG information, enrichment opportunities, and strategies for supporting gifted learners at home.

The AIG Specialist in each of our schools are the first line of contact for developing partnerships with our families. They use a variety of methods to communicate and partner with our parents such as Remind messaging, emailing, phone calls, newsletters, and progress reports. We will continue to use these methods and add additional modes as deemed necessary. Our AIG specific website, brochure, and handbook will continue to be updated and translated for our non-English speaking students and families. Parent meetings will be held at each school every year to sign new paperwork and review any needed changes. Family nights are held at each school that showcase math, science, art, and literacy activities. Parent participate in hands-on activities with their child and learn how to help them at home. College and Career Fairs are held at the middle and high schools. Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to share student progress information through teacher conferences, phone calls, progress reports and report calls. Each school has an active Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO) who provide support both financially and through volunteers to enhance learning for all students. Because our specialists often serve students for many years, student and family relationships are strong and personalized. By fostering strong partnerships with parents and guardians, Ashe County Schools ensures that families are actively involved in shaping the educational experiences of AIG students.

*** Practice B**

Partners with community stakeholders, such as institutions of higher education, local business and industry partners, and others to enhance and support the local AIG program and services.

Ashe County Schools recognizes the importance of collaborating with community stakeholders to extend learning beyond the classroom and provide AIG students with real-world enrichment opportunities. The district actively cultivates partnerships with local businesses, institutions of higher education, and community organizations to support the academic, intellectual, and career development of gifted students.

Key partnerships include:

- Higher Education Collaborations – ACS partners with Appalachian State University and Wilkes Community College to offer:
 - Dual Enrollment Opportunities (CCP Program) for high school AIG students.
 - STEM and Humanities Enrichment Programs through university-sponsored camps, seminars, and competitions.
 - Professional Development for Teachers on best practices in gifted education.
- Local Business and Industry Partnerships – Community organizations and businesses collaborate with ACS to:
 - Provide internship, job shadowing, and mentorship opportunities for high school AIG students.
 - Support academic competitions such as Science Olympiad, Quiz Bowl, and Math Counts through funding and expertise.
 - Engage AIG students in real-world problem-solving experiences through project-based learning initiatives.
- Nonprofit and Civic Organization Support – Partnerships with organizations such as the Ashe County Chamber of Commerce, Ashe County Public Library, and local arts councils provide students with:
 - Enrichment activities such as creative writing workshops, robotics competitions, and public speaking forums.
 - Leadership development opportunities through involvement in community service projects.

<p>An intentional effort is made to include parents and other community stakeholders in activities and programs involving AIG students. Our LEA partners with Wilkes Community College, Appalachian State University and community businesses to glean support for our AIG program. Wilkes Community College Campus Annex is adjacent to our high school with affords the opportunities for high school students to take advantage of the dual enrollment program and Ashe County Early College. Our students are offered numerous opportunities through GEARUp and Upward Bound programs via a partnership with Appalachian State University. Our school system partners with Blue Ridge Energies, State Employees Credit Union, Skyline Telephone, New River Soil and Water Conservation District, American Emergency Vehicle, Ashe Memorial Hospital, Ashe County Chamber of Commerce and GE Aviation. These partnerships enhance the AIG program by providing AIG students with a broad range of authentic, rigorous and engaging learning experiences that range from internships to visitation days. During the summer months, our county offers Summer Career Accelerator Camps that all students can apply to attend. This camp opens doors to students who want experiences in diverse career fields. Through this camp, multiple community stakeholders are integrated into the curriculum through field trips, guest speakers, hands-on learning, job site visits, and job shadowing. ACS continually seeks new partnerships to expand access to advanced learning resources and ensure that all AIG students have access to a rich and diverse set of educational experiences.</p>	<p>* Practice C Establishes and utilizes an advisory group to develop, implement, monitor, and revise the local AIG program and plan. This advisory group is representative of the diverse populations of the district and is at least comprised of community members, AIG parents/guardians, AIG teachers, and other instructional and support staff.</p>
<p>Ashe County Schools maintains an AIG Advisory Group that plays a key role in shaping the district's AIG programming, policy development, and plan revisions. The group ensures that diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes and that the program remains responsive to student needs.</p> <p>The AIG Advisory Group is composed of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AIG parents/guardians representing elementary, middle, and high school students. ▪ AIG teachers and specialists from multiple grade levels. ▪ School and district administrators who oversee curriculum and student services. ▪ Community members and business representatives with an interest in gifted education. ▪ Higher education representatives who provide insight into postsecondary readiness for AIG students. <p>The advisory group meets at least twice a year to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review and evaluate AIG services to ensure alignment with student needs. ▪ Analyze student performance and participation data to identify areas for growth. ▪ Support the development and revision of the AIG Plan, incorporating feedback from all stakeholders. ▪ Provide recommendations for future program improvements, including new enrichment opportunities and instructional strategies. <p>The AIG Advisory Council plays a vital role in the development, implementation and monitoring of the AIG Program. The AIG Director and Specialists send out surveys aligned with the NC AIG standards to AIG students, their parents, their classroom teachers and each school principal. AIG Specialists also complete a standards-aligned self-assessment to help drive the needed changes for the program. The AIG Director and Specialists review and analyze the response data to guide program planning and goal setting with changes made as personnel and finances permit. AIG meetings are held with the director and AIG teachers/specialists. School counselors, parent reps, community members and testing coordinators</p>	

are invited to attend as deemed important. The local school board approves the AIG plan and supports its implementation. This advisory group meets periodically throughout the year to assess and monitor the AIG plan for updates or needed revisions. We review and seek input and feedback from stakeholders on standards and practices to insure updates are made to the AIG plan on a yearly basis. During these meetings, we review data from several sources (survey data, EOG scores, STAR, Panorama Surveys, MTSS data). To ensure broad and inclusive participation, ACS offers virtual and in-person meeting options, childcare services for attendees, and interpretation support for multilingual families. The district actively recruits diverse stakeholders to reflect the demographics of its student population and foster a more inclusive AIG program. Ashe County Schools collaborates with school administrators, AIG Specialists, and district leaders to intentionally recruit stakeholders who reflect the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity of the community. Invitations are extended to families from underrepresented groups, including multilingual learners and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, through direct outreach, school events, and partnerships with Title I and EC programs. This intentional approach ensures that the AIG Advisory Group includes a broad range of voices that mirror the student population.

*** Practice D**

Informs all students, parents/guardians, and the community of the following:

- Local AIG Plan
- Local AIG program services
- Policies and procedures relating to advanced learning and gifted education
- Ways to access advanced learning opportunities

Communication is ongoing and responds to the diverse language and other needs of the community.

Ashe County Schools is committed to transparency and accessibility in communicating AIG services, policies, and opportunities to students, families, and the community. The district has developed a multi-faceted communication strategy to ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed and engaged.

Key communication strategies include:

- AIG Website & Digital Resource Hub – A centralized online platform with:
 - The Local AIG Plan and its implementation details.
 - Referral and identification process guides.
 - Advanced learning opportunities, competitions, and scholarships.
 - Parent and student support resources (AIG Handbook and Brochure explaining AIG programming in Ashe County Schools)
- AIG Newsletters & Announcements – Distributed quarterly to share:
 - Updates on AIG program enhancements.
 - Success stories highlighting AIG student achievements.
 - Upcoming events, enrichment programs, and summer learning opportunities.
- Informational Meetings & Workshops – Held at least twice a year, covering:
 - AIG identification processes and service options.
 - Advanced learning pathways, including honors courses, dual enrollment, and acceleration opportunities.
 - Support resources for AIG students' social-emotional development.
- Translated Materials & Interpreter Services – Ensuring that families from diverse linguistic backgrounds receive AIG information in Spanish and other languages as needed.

- Community Engagement Events – Partnering with local organizations to host fairs, panel discussions, and Q&A sessions to educate families about gifted education.

Our AIG program makes a concentrated effort to operate with transparency and inform all stakeholders, especially parents of gifted students, of the local AIG program and plan. Our LEA actively shares information with parents and other stakeholders through parent meetings, brochures, AIG websites and handbook. Stakeholders at each school include the principal, guidance counselor, regular education teacher, AIG Specialist and EL teacher as needed. Parents/guardians are also included in all decisions regarding their child's placement and services. The AIG Plan is available to view on the district website for all community members and stakeholders, and hard copies are available upon request. The AIG Director attends regional and state meetings and ensures that any changes in AIG Plans, services or delivery is communicated to all stakeholders and incorporated into our local plan. The AIG Director routinely meets with AIG Specialists to share plan and policy updates and make needed adjustments to our program. Parents and families are kept aware of opportunities for AIG students through flyers, Blackboard Connect announcements, social media, the Remind app, personal contacts, posters, and district/school level websites. Efforts are being made to translate all documents into an AIG student's native language. If a document is not translated, we contract our district interpreter/translator or utilize Google Translate to assist families with understanding of documents. By ensuring consistent, inclusive, and transparent communication, ACS empowers families, students, and the community to take an active role in supporting the success of AIG students.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

Strengthen Parent and Guardian Engagement with More Personalized and Flexible Involvement Opportunities

- Offer individualized parent support sessions to help families navigate advanced coursework, acceleration, and social-emotional challenges of gifted students.
- Provide yearly Q&A sessions with AIG specialists and district leaders to address parent concerns in real time.

Expand Business and Higher Education Partnerships to Offer More Real-World Learning Experiences

- Strengthen our AIG Internship and Apprenticeship Program in partnership with local businesses, giving high school AIG students more hands-on career experiences.
- Collaborate with local universities to create summer or weekend enrichment programs for gifted students, focusing on STEM, humanities, and the arts.
- Partner with organizations like NCAGT, Appalachian State University, and local industries to fund new research-based gifted education initiatives.
- Expand job shadowing, mentorships, and career exploration programs that align with AIG students' interests and talents.

Increase Visibility and Accessibility of AIG Information for Underrepresented Communities

- Conduct targeted outreach initiatives to connect with multilingual learners, economically disadvantaged families, and rural communities to ensure equitable access to AIG information.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a comprehensive AIG communication toolkit including videos, podcasts, and social media campaigns to educate families in a variety of formats. ▪ Establish a bilingual AIG Parent Liaison role to provide support and outreach to non-English-speaking families. <p>Strengthen the AIG Advisory Group's Role in Decision-Making and Plan Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement a formalized feedback cycle where advisory group members review program effectiveness data and provide structured recommendations. ▪ Establish subcommittees within the advisory group to focus on specific aspects of the program, such as curriculum innovation, social-emotional supports, and policy recommendations. 		
Planned Sources of Evidence		
*	Spring Meeting- Advisory Council Meeting	
*	Link to District Page for AIG and sample of STEM for families page	
*	STEM community partnerships/Internships for high school students	
*	AIG Newsletters	
*	Comprehensive Needs Assessment Meeting (AIG parent and teacher reps)	
*	Parent contact logs from each specialist/school	
*	AIG files (digital and hard copy)	
*	School and district social media sites/photos of events, opportunities	
Type	Documents	Document/Link
AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources	Document Template	
	N/A	

Standard 6: Program Accountability	
Ashe County Schools (050) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0	<div data-bbox="272 67 378 2043"> <p>Standard 6: Program Accountability</p> <p><i>The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the local AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="410 67 508 2043"> <p>* Practice A</p> <p>Develops a written AIG plan to describe the local AIG program, in accordance with state legislation and SBE policy (N.C.G.S. §115C-150.5-.8 {Article 9B}), based on a comprehensive program evaluation. This Local AIG Plan has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="540 67 654 2043"> <p>Ashe County Schools develops and maintains a written AIG Plan that reflects a comprehensive program evaluation process and aligns with state legislation and SBE policy (N.C.G.S. 115C-150.5-.8 {Article 9B}). This plan is reviewed and approved by the Ashe County Board of Education and submitted to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) for review and feedback.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="670 67 914 2043"> <p>To ensure the AIG Plan remains responsive and effective, ACS engages in a structured evaluation process that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual program reviews to assess progress toward AIG program goals. ▪ Stakeholder feedback collection through surveys, advisory meetings, and focus groups. ▪ Data analysis of student identification, participation, and performance trends to address equity and effectiveness. ▪ Collaboration with district leadership to ensure alignment with Ashe County Schools' strategic initiatives. ▪ Use of state-provided self-assessment tools to evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. </div> <div data-bbox="930 67 1044 2043"> <p>This ongoing evaluation process informs necessary updates to the AIG Plan and ensures compliance with state requirements. The Board of Education formally approves the plan, and it is made available to stakeholders via the district website, school communications, and informational sessions.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1157 67 1255 2043"> <p>* Practice B</p> <p>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.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1271 67 1528 2043"> <p>Ashe County Schools ensures consistent and equitable implementation of the AIG Plan by developing systematic monitoring practices that assess the fidelity of program delivery in all schools. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular progress monitoring of AIG services by AIG specialists and district leadership. ▪ Annual audits of student records to verify proper identification, placement, and service delivery. These audits are in addition to the two headcount verification checks we do per NCDPI requirements. ▪ School-based and district-wide AIG team meetings to review implementation effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. </div>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing professional development for school personnel to ensure a consistent understanding of AIG services, differentiation strategies, and program expectations. ▪ Collaboration with school administrators and instructional staff to integrate AIG programming within the broader curriculum and intervention structures. ▪ District and school walk-through tools to monitor integrity of advanced level courses and classes that serve AIG identified students. Use locally-made template to track Talent Development (PETS Lessons K-3) <p>Implementation of the Ashe County Schools' AIG Program is monitored and evaluated to ensure compliance with legislation. The AIG Director, AIG Specialists, and AIG District Team continually and consistently monitor and assess the implementation of identification, services, and all components of the program. The AIG Specialists directly monitors and adjusts program implementation due to involvement with school-level teams, counselors, teachers of AIG students, and enrichment pull-out services at the elementary level. The AIG Director and AIG Specialists are in regular communication with the NCDPI Advanced Learning Department to ensure that Ashe County School's AIG Program is aligned with current legislation and state policies. Safeguarding the rights of students and parents/families, the district Local Plan has Due Process procedures in place. All pertinent information regarding legislation and policies are communicated to the AIG District Team and used to evaluate implementation and alignment of the AIG Program. Our local AIG Plan adheres to North Carolina's AIG legislation, Article 9B, and the six North Carolina AIG Program Standards which were adopted by the State Board of Education. The AIG Director, in collaboration with district and school administration, will continue to monitor the plan to ensure the fidelity of implementation of program components. Surveys are distributed to each school to gather feedback from stakeholders (teachers, students and parents) for improvement of the AIG program. At each school in our district, AIG specialists monitor programmatic details and oversee school programs. Specialists gather student data to create pools and monitor them for potential placement into the AIG program.</p> <p>By maintaining a district-wide system of checks and balances, ACS ensures that program services reflect the goals outlined in the AIG Plan and that gifted learners receive the appropriate level of support.</p>	<p>* Practice C Develops and monitors a budget using allotted state funds, and local funds if applicable, to address the needs of the Local AIG Plan in accordance with state policy.</p> <p>Ashe County Schools allocates and monitors state and local AIG funds in accordance with state policies to effectively support the implementation of the AIG program. The Finance Office and AIG Director work together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a strategic spending plan that aligns with the goals outlined in the Local AIG Plan. ▪ Prioritize professional development, instructional resources, and student enrichment opportunities. ▪ Conduct quarterly budget reviews to ensure funds are used efficiently and in compliance with state and local policies. ▪ Advocate for additional funding sources, including grants and local partnerships, to enhance program offerings. <p>By working in conjunction with individual School Improvement Plans and North Carolina State Board of Education guidelines, Ashe County allocates funds in the most beneficial manner for students. Ashe County Schools has four Academically and Gifted (AIG) teachers in grades K-8. State funds, allocated under Program Report Code (PRC) 034, are used to support two positions. State funds in Program Report Code (PRC) 001 supports one and a half positions, with the remainder of the fourth position paid from local funds. Local funds also support any instructional supplies and materials the teacher may need. The AIG Director, in conjunction with the Finance Director, ensures that all funds are used correctly. Budget transparency is maintained through annual reporting to the Board of Education, district leadership, and the AIG Advisory Group.</p>
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*** Practice D**

Maintains and analyzes multiple sources of student achievement and growth data, as well as annual dropout data for AIG students. Data is disaggregated to recognize patterns and trends over time and inform mindsets, policies, and practices for equity and excellence.

ACS maintains a data-driven approach to program accountability by collecting, analyzing, and using multiple sources of student data to assess the effectiveness of AIG services. The district:

- Reviews student achievement and growth data (CogAT/other nationally normed tests given by licensed psychologists, EOGs, EVAAS, CTE completion rates/ credentials earned, state and local benchmark assessments, AP/CCP/Honors course participation, dual enrollment, and performance-based assessments) to measure program impact.
- Disaggregates data by subgroups (race, socioeconomic status, multilingual learners, twice-exceptional students, etc.) to monitor equity and access.
- Conducts annual dropout data analysis for AIG students, ensuring that interventions are in place to support academic, social, and emotional well-being.
- Uses trend data to inform instructional decisions, refine services, and support underrepresented populations.
- Uses Panorama when meeting in school wide MTSS teams to evaluate students data pertaining to attendance, achievement, and social emotional surveys. If the program flags a negative trend in attendance, achievement, and social emotional surveys, faculty members assigned to students are alerted to the changes and can follow-up with students as well as counselors and support services staff. These surveys also allow students to express their opinions about classroom environments, rigor in courses, and how they view the school culture overall.
- Uses college/career plans to help guide students as they register for appropriate courses.
- Uses Lead Innovator of Success/Drop-out prevention staff to follow up with students who are flagged for early waring for dropout prevention needs
- Monitors number and success of internships completed by students who are identified in the academically gifted program.

The data will be used to inform mindsets within the school and district. Results of the data will help determine if our plan is being carried out effectively or if changes are need in the way we identify or service students in our AIG program. The AIG Program Coordinators, AIG Director, and MTSS school teams collaborate with school counselors, student services department, instructional coaches, and necessary staff to ensure early intervention strategies are implemented for AIG students at risk of underachievement or disengagement.

*** Practice E**

Maintains and analyzes multiple data sources focused on the referral, identification, services, and retention of students within the local AIG program to ensure that students' racial, ethnic, economic, or other demographic factors, including other exceptionalities and language differences, do not reduce their likelihood of access to and participation in gifted education.

Ashe County Schools is committed to ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have equitable access to gifted education services. The district:

- Analyzes referral and identification data to ensure diverse representation across demographic groups.
- Implements alternative assessment measures for multilingual learners, twice-exceptional students, and economically disadvantaged students.

- Tracks retention rates of AIG students to identify and address barriers to participation in gifted programming.
- Provides targeted outreach and support for families in underrepresented populations to increase awareness of AIG services by providing parent night information and information at pre-k and kindergarten events.
- Partners with EC, ML, and Title I specialists to ensure fair and inclusive identification practices.

Data Monitoring and Analysis Strategies:

1. Referral Data Analysis:

1. Data Points Monitored: Ashe County Schools tracks the number and sources of AIG referrals, disaggregated by demographic groups including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency.
2. Analysis Process: The district evaluates referral trends to identify underrepresented populations. For instance, if data reveals a lower referral rate for multilingual learners (MLs), targeted strategies are developed to address potential biases or barriers in the referral process.

2. Identification Data Analysis:

1. Data Points Monitored: Ashe County Schools examines the outcomes of the AIG identification process, focusing on the demographics of identified students.
2. Analysis Process: By comparing the demographics of identified AIG students to the overall student population, the district assesses equity in identification. Discrepancies prompt a review of assessment tools and criteria to ensure cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

3. Service Delivery Data Analysis:

1. Analysis Process: Ashe County Schools evaluates whether students from underrepresented backgrounds are participating in advanced coursework, enrichment programs, and extracurricular activities at rates comparable to their peers. Disparities lead to the development of targeted support mechanisms.

4. Retention Data Analysis:

1. Data Points Monitored: Ashe County Schools tracks the retention rates of AIG students within gifted programs, paying close attention to demographic factors.
2. Analysis Process: If certain groups show higher attrition rates, the district investigates potential causes such as lack of engagement, support, or resources, and implements strategies to address these issues.

Procedures are in place that ensure systematic screening, identification and placement of underrepresented populations. Data is analyzed from every subgroup during the screening process to ensure all students are considered for AIG placement. AIG Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to continually monitor these populations for students who show potential for giftedness. All Specialists maintain a "Wait and Watch" list, and this list is revisited every school year. Classroom teachers may make referrals at any time during the school year, and the AIG Specialist would closely review student data to determine the need for gifted services. Annual reviews ensure that screening, identification, and service delivery practices remain inclusive and aligned with state guidance.

*** Practice F**

Maintains and utilizes current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving K-12 AIG students to align with the goals and strategies outlined in the Local AIG Plan.

Ashe County Schools AIG Department and specialists work closely with Human Resources and school administrators to maintain accurate records of AIG personnel credentials and align staffing with the needs of the AIG program. The district:

- Tracks AIG licensure and professional development participation for teachers serving AIG students.
- Ensures that all general education teachers providing direct instruction to AIG students receive ongoing training in differentiation strategies.
- Uses AIG personnel data to inform hiring decisions, ensuring qualified educators are placed in AIG service roles.
- Use EVASS data to identify the teachers who demonstrate consistent high growth with the advanced student population.
- Encourages teachers to pursue AIG licensure by providing support for Praxis preparation, financial incentives, and professional growth opportunities.

The Human Resource and AIG Director maintains current data regarding licensure of AIG personnel. Our LEA utilizes the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) to manage the licensure and credentials of our AIG staff. Students who are AIG are placed with teachers in cluster grouping settings, pull-out settings based on AIG licensure and growth data with the AIG student population. These efforts ensure that qualified educators deliver high-quality instruction to gifted learners.

*** Practice G**

Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/guardians, families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the ongoing implementation and effectiveness of the local AIG program to support continuous program improvement.

Ashe County Schools values stakeholder input and integrates feedback from students, parents, teachers, and community members into ongoing program evaluation. The district:

- Conducts annual AIG surveys for families, students, and school personnel.
- Holds AIG Advisory Group meetings to discuss program strengths, challenges, and potential improvements.
- Uses focus groups and individual interviews to gather qualitative data from AIG students and families.
- Encourages teacher collaboration and feedback through PLCs, professional development sessions, and instructional coaching.

Feedback from stakeholders is critical to the successful monitoring and adjustment of the AIG program. Ashe County Schools (ACS) values ongoing stakeholder engagement and integrates feedback from students, parents/guardians, teachers, and community members to inform continuous improvement of the AIG program. Feedback is gathered through multiple modes and intentionally analyzed to strengthen services, increase equity, and align with the NC AIG Program Standards. ACS administers AIG surveys to families, students, and school personnel. These surveys are aligned to the North Carolina AIG Program Standards and are designed to capture perceptions of program effectiveness, communication, student support, and service delivery. The AIG Director and Specialists collaboratively analyze these results to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for program refinement. Summarized findings are shared with the AIG Advisory Group, school administrators, and district leadership for collaborative decision-making. In addition to surveys, AIG Advisory Group meetings are held annually and include a range of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school leaders, and community members. These meetings serve as formal opportunities to discuss stakeholder feedback, review program

implementation data, and generate actionable recommendations for improvement. ACS also uses school-based events intentionally to gather direct stakeholder input. During Open Houses, Family Engagement Nights, and Parent-Teacher Conferences, AIG Specialists engage with families through structured conversations and informal discussions. Parents are invited to share feedback on student experiences, service delivery, and areas where additional support may be needed. In particular, DEP review conferences provide a one-on-one setting in which families can share their insights on how well the services are supporting their child's learning. The information gathered is documented and used to adjust student plans or suggest modifications in service options when appropriate. AIG Specialists maintain ongoing communication with families through newsletters, the district AIG webpage, AIG progress reports, and report cards. These communications include opportunities to provide feedback via digital forms or direct email response. Additionally, Specialists hold follow-up conversations with families as needed to clarify suggestions or concerns. Teacher input is collected through PLCs, coaching sessions, and professional development discussions. This ongoing collaboration allows for embedded, real-time feedback from those delivering differentiated instruction and identifying potential AIG students. Through these intentional practices, Ashe County Schools creates a feedback loop that incorporates multiple voices and perspectives. All feedback is reviewed not only for individual student services, but also for program-wide planning and implementation decisions. These efforts ensure that the AIG program remains responsive, student-centered, and continually aligned with the goals of equity and excellence.

*** Practice H**

Shares local AIG program evaluation data with school and district personnel, students, parents/guardians, families, and other community stakeholders.

To maintain transparency and awareness, Ashe County Schools shares AIG program evaluation data with stakeholders through multiple platforms, including:

- Board of Education presentations and annual reports.
- AIG Advisory Group meetings and district newsletters.
- School-based AIG parent meetings and information sessions.
- Website postings and digital resources accessible to families.

Our LEA uses the following sources of data to review and revise the local AIG plan.

- Surveys--(parent, teachers and students)
- Student Performance--(e.g. formative assessment data, course grades, End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, and benchmark results, Educator Value-Added Assessment System reports)
- Formative/Summative Assessments
- Differentiated Education Plans and Individualized Differentiated Education Plans
- Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings
- Discussions during stakeholders meeting--(e.g. school faculties, District Leadership Team, AIG Specialists, AIG Advisory Council)
- Updates received during regional and state meetings
- Panorama Surveys
- MTSS data
- Check-in Data Days with district directors

These efforts ensure that families, educators, and community members remain informed about the impact of AIG programming.

*** Practice I**

Safeguards the rights of all AIG students and their parents/guardians through established written policies, procedures, and practices. The LEA plan includes: informed consent regarding identification and placement, reassessment procedures, transfers from other LEAs, and procedures for resolving disagreements.

Ashe County Schools maintains clear policies and procedures to protect the rights of AIG students and their families. These include:

- Informed consent for assessment and placement in AIG services.
- Reassessment opportunities for students who may require additional evaluations.
- Transfer procedures for students identified in other districts.
- Formal procedures for resolving disagreements, ensuring parents/guardians have a pathway to express concerns.

The local AIG plan is presented to the public through a presentation at a School Board Meeting. The AIG Plan is placed on the district website for access to all. Parent, teacher and students survey results will be disseminated by specialists and school administration and staff to help inform school improvement plan decisions . Upon completion and approval of this AIG plan, a link will be provided on our school district website for public viewing. A handbook explaining all rights and procedures and processes used is also housed on the district and school websites. Once a child is placed into the program, they are additionally given a brochure that gives quick facts, references to the plan, rights of students/parents, and contact numbers so that parents can have quick access if a question or need arises. Once a new plan is put if effect, Ashe County Schools will put progress data from surveys on the website and results will be published for parents and stakeholders. Ashe County Schools adheres to state guidelines and best practices to ensure fair and transparent policies for all AIG families.

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Process	Procedure
Informed consent for identification	* All third and sixth grade students are screened for placement using the CogAT test. In grades 3-12 EOG/EOC tests are used as screeners for achievement in reading and mathematics. Prior to all aptitude or achievement tests, an informational letter is sent home to parents/guardians detailing the assessment. Furthermore, in grades 3 and 6 a letter is sent home prior to giving the assessment to outline the purposes of the CogAT screening test. Once a student has gone through the screening process, parents are notified and a meeting is scheduled to gain consent to identify the student who has met criteria. During this one to one meeting with parents, the process and service options are thoroughly explained allowing time for parents/guardians to ask questions.

Informed consent for placement	<p>*</p> <p>Once the AIG committee decision is made, the parents/guardians are notified of the recommended student-to-service match. Documentation/signature of parent involvement is required for placement in any service delivery options. During the conference, the summary of Individual Student Eligibility and Placement Record is reviewed with the parent/guardian. This form explicitly details the evidence for the placement recommendation. The parent/guardian signs the form and agrees or does not agree for the child to receive services in the AIG program. If the parent/guardian agrees, a Differentiated Education Plan is created with support from the AIG Specialist/school staff and the parent/guardian. If any changes were needed, parents/guardians would be contacted immediately to inform them of the issue. Changes in services or placement will not occur without parental or guardian consent.</p>
Transfer procedures	<p>*</p> <p>Students entering Ashe County Schools who have previously been identified as gifted must meet the following criteria as presented in the AIG Plan for formal placement and services:</p> <p>Students in Grades K-3 – Transfer students identified as gifted from another system or state must meet Ashe County Schools AIG identification criteria to receive services . If criteria for early identification have been met, students will qualify for an individualized DEP and programming and services will be provided. If the student does not qualify, he/she will be reevaluated in grade 3 as outlined in the plan for all students. All students in grades K-3 will be encouraged to demonstrate their talents/giftedness through the talent development program in grades K-3.</p> <p>Students in Grades 4-8 – Students who enter the district already placed in AIG, from another district or out of state, maintain their AIG identification in Ashe County Schools. Student performance and assessment data will be used to determine appropriate services for the student.</p>
Reassessment procedures	<p>*</p> <p>In all grades, parents may request additional assessment and/or psychoeducational evaluations. If additional assessments are desired, parental permission should be obtained using a form letter that details the assessments needed. 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 at the time of testing. All students in all grades each year are considered to be potential candidates as we screen to ensure we provide appropriate services for all Ashe County students.</p>

Procedures to resolve disagreement	<p>The policy for resolving disagreements is as follows:</p> <p>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, including the school principal, 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Step 3: If agreement cannot be reached administratively, the parents/guardians may appeal to the Ashe County Schools Board of Education. The Board will offer a written decision to the parents within 30 school days.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard</p>	
<p>1. Establish a Data Dashboard for AIG Program Monitoring</p>	

The state emphasizes ongoing evaluation and data analysis to ensure AIG services are effective and equitable. A centralized data dashboard would allow the district to track key metrics in real time, ensuring proactive decision-making and increased transparency. This is a long-term goal based on having appropriate number of personnel who can create and maintain the dashboard. We have this data presently, but not in one concise place. The dashboard would allow easier transferability when students transition to middle and high school.

- Develop a user-friendly, digital dashboard that tracks AIG student identification, participation, achievement, and retention rates.
- Disaggregate data by subgroups (race, socioeconomic status, multilingual learners, twice-exceptional students, etc.) to ensure equity.
- Provide school administrators, AIG staff, and district leadership access to view trends and identify areas for improvement.
- Monitor Data Points: The district develops a way that monitors the types and frequency of services provided to AIG students, ensuring equitable access across all demographic groups.

2. Implement a Multi-Year AIG Program Audit and Site Visit Model

The state requires districts to monitor the fidelity of AIG Plan implementation across schools. Conducting site-based audits and classroom observations would ensure that AIG services are consistently delivered according to the Local AIG Plan.

- Establish a rotating site-visit schedule where district AIG leadership visits each school at least once per year to review implementation.
- Conduct walkthroughs and observations to assess differentiation, flexible grouping, acceleration practices, and social-emotional support.
- Provide school-specific feedback and targeted professional development based on audit findings.
- Data Monitoring and Analysis Strategies:
 - Referral Data Analysis:
 - Data Points Monitored: ACS tracks the number and sources of AIG referrals, disaggregated by demographic groups including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency.
 - Analysis Process: The district evaluates referral trends to identify underrepresented populations. For instance, if data reveals a lower referral rate for multilingual learners (MLs), targeted strategies are developed to address potential biases or barriers in the referral process.
 - Identification Data Analysis:
 - Data Points Monitored: ACS examines the outcomes of the AIG identification process, focusing on the demographic composition of identified students.
 - Analysis Process: By comparing the demographics of identified AIG students to the overall student population, the district assesses equity in identification. Discrepancies prompt a review of assessment tools and criteria to ensure cultural and linguistic responsiveness.
 - Service Delivery Data Analysis:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Data Points Monitored: The district monitors the types and frequency of services provided to AIG students, ensuring equitable access across all demographic groups. ◦ Analysis Process: ACS evaluates whether students from underrepresented backgrounds are participating in advanced coursework, enrichment programs, and extracurricular activities at rates comparable to their peers. Disparities lead to the development of targeted support mechanisms. • Retention Data Analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Data Points Monitored: ACS tracks the retention rates of AIG students within gifted programs, paying close attention to demographic factors. ◦ Analysis Process: If certain groups show higher attrition rates, the district investigates potential causes such as lack of engagement, support, or resources, and implements strategies to address these issues. 	<h3>3. Expand Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Efforts</h3> <p>The state highlights the need for ongoing, transparent communication with stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, and community partners). Strengthening these two-way communication efforts ensures that the AIG program remains responsive and well-supported.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a quarterly digital newsletter featuring AIG student achievements, program updates, and available resources. ▪ Launch an AIG Parent & Community Network where parents can engage in enrichment, advocacy, and networking opportunities. ▪ Continue to provide translated materials and interpreters to ensure accessibility for multilingual families. 	<h3>4. Strengthen AIG Student Support and Dropout Prevention Strategies</h3> <p>The state requires ongoing monitoring of AIG student retention and dropout rates. Addressing academic, social-emotional, and engagement challenges proactively can prevent underachievement and student disengagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop an AIG Mentorship Program, pairing middle and high school AIG students with older AIG students, alumni, or community mentors. ▪ Implement quarterly student check-ins to assess academic progress and emotional well-being. ▪ Provide leadership, internship, and community service opportunities tailored to gifted students. ▪ Expand mental health and executive functioning support, ensuring twice-exceptional and at-risk AIG students receive additional resources.
<h2>Planned Sources of Evidence</h2> <div> * Letters to families explaining screening </div>		

*	Parent Contact Log	
*	Procedures to Resolve Disagreements	
*	School Site Decision Form	
*	Permission to Evaluate	
*	Agendas, minutes or other materials from relevant group meetings	
*	Administrator observations of AIG specialists	
*	Documentation of Parent Communication Logs	
*	Rosters of AIG students enrolled in advanced coursework and CCP Classes, NCVPS, and NCSSM courses	
*	AIG Specialist Licensure Information	
*	Student EOG/EOC growth data and proficiency, CTE Completers	
*	Budget Statements for AIG dedicated purposes	

Type	Documents	Document/Link
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	Document Template	N/A

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* Approved by local Board of Education on:

05/05/2025 

AIG Related Documents

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Required Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
Local Board of Education Approval Signatures [Upload at least 1 document(s)]	Local Board of Education Approval Template	Ashe County AIG Local Board of Ed Approval
Optional Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A	Individual Student Eligibility Profile Form
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A	AIG Brochure
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources	N/A	
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources	N/A	
AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources	N/A	
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	N/A	

Glossary

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Phrase	Definition
Advanced Classes	Classes that 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 (AP Classes)	